

SERIES: Gospel of John: Seeing is Believing?
 SERMON: *Unsaved Believers*
 SCRIPTURE: John 8:31-59
 SPEAKER: Pastor Michael P. Andrus
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Some terms have pretty much fallen out of the Christian vocabulary over the years, for better or worse. One of those terms is “backslidden.” When I was a boy a backslidden person was a professing believer who quit coming to church or started smoking or was spotted buying a six-pack at the liquor store. While the term “backslidden” has pretty well fallen into disuse, that doesn't mean the problem it described is no longer with us. We still have professing Christians whose lifestyles are indistinguishable from those who make no profession of faith at all, though the particular areas of concern are probably different from what they were in the 50s.

Another term that has been out of use for much longer is one coined by the Puritans to speak of people who, though often exposed to the truth and though giving outward assent to it, were not truly converted. They were called “the Gospel-hardened.” The fact that we don't use the term today is, again, no indication that the condition it describes has vanished.

The Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day were often exposed to the truth—through His miracles and His teaching—and many of them made an outward expression of faith. In fact, twice in the 8th chapter of John we are told that some of these people “believed in Him.” But as the account unfolds before us, it will become clear that they were Gospel-hardened. In fact, I would call them “unsaved believers.”

Perhaps you have never heard that term before, but I believe it accurately describes not only these Jewish religious leaders but also many in the church today who call themselves “Christians.” They believe many right things about Jesus, they hold to the basics of Christian doctrine, they live reasonably moral lives, and they assume they are tight with God due to their family or faith connections, but they are, in fact, spiritually lost. They are unsaved believers. They are phony believers.

I don't know how any subject could be more important than knowing how to distinguish between the phony and the real in the spiritual realm. And that's what Jesus does in this passage before us as He answers several important questions:

What constitutes a *true* disciple?
 What constitutes *true* freedom?
 Who is a *true* child of God?

My use of the term “true” hints that there is a *phony* kind of disciple, a *phony* kind of freedom, and a *phony* kind of relationship with God. Actually Jesus more than hints at that; He hits us over the head with it. But the crux of the chapter will come at the end when we are confronted with a fourth, and *even more important*, question: “Who is Jesus?”

Now I grant that's quite an assignment for one sermon, so let's get at it by opening our Bibles to John chapter 8. We will begin reading with verse 30, and continue through the end of the chapter. This is a long passage of Scripture, and I will not be reading most of it again during the sermon, so please concentrate on the train of thought as closely as you can.

John 8:30-59 (ESV)

³⁰ *As he was saying these things, many believed in him.*

³¹ *So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." ³³ They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"*

³⁴ *Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷ I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. ³⁸ I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."*

³⁹ *They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, ⁴⁰ but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. ⁴¹ You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷ Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."*

⁴⁸ *The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" ⁴⁹ Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰ Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." ⁵² The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.'" ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?" ⁵⁴ Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.'" ⁵⁵ But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." ⁵⁷ So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before*

Abraham was, I am.”⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

The first question our passage deals with is this:

WHAT CONSTITUTES A TRUE DISCIPLE (AS OPPOSED TO A PHONY ONE)? (31-32)

“Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, ‘If you abide in my word, you are *truly* my disciples.’” The obvious inference is that if you do not abide in His word, you are not a true disciple. Now this is not the first time in the Gospel of John, nor will it be the last, that we have been introduced to the concept of deficient faith. As early as chapter 2 (v. 23) there was an example of faith that was not all it was cracked up to be. *“Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. (Oh, were they ever impressed with those miracles!) But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.”* While they believed in Jesus, Jesus apparently didn't believe in them.

Again in 6:60, following Jesus' discourse on the Bread of Life, we read, *“On hearing it, many of his disciples said, ‘This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?’”* And just a few verses later we read, *“From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.”*

Or consider chapter 12:42-43, *“Many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.”* Now to a certain extent I can empathize with the dilemma *these* particular people were facing. The synagogue was not only a place of worship; it was also the center of community life. Few of us here this morning have ever faced the kind of social and economic cost that public confession of Christ would have entailed for these people. But John is not very sympathetic; he says the root problem is that they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. There is again something deficient about their faith.

But here in John 8:31 we have perhaps the clearest example of phony faith in the NT. These religious leaders, who are said to believe in Him in verse 30 and again in verse 31 are, a few verses later, declared by Jesus to be slaves to sin (34), indifferent to Jesus' words (37), children of the devil (44), and liars (55). Then they blaspheme Him (48, 52) and actually try to murder Him (59).

How can one account for such behavior from those who are said to “believe in Him”? Well, obviously, as Josh said earlier in the series, “There is belief and then there is belief.” They believe alright, at least in his miracle-working power (for who could deny it?), but they have not placed their trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. They seem interested in only a surface relationship with Him, an intellectual acquaintance perhaps, but He will not allow it.¹

In response to our question about what constitutes a true disciple, Jesus drives home three points:

A true disciple is one who is obedient to Jesus' teaching. Let verse 31 sink into your mind and heart: *“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.”* The key word here is “abide” or “hold to” (NIV). It means to remain in, to cleave to, to live by. It speaks of perseverance in the teaching of Jesus. It is easy enough to lay a Bible on the coffee table at home, perhaps bring it to church, or even read a verse a day to keep the devil away.

But Jesus demands something more – obedience.ⁱⁱ

A second truth He sets forth is that . . .

Obedience produces knowledge of the truth. *“If you abide in my word . . . then you will know the truth.”* Why the order of the terms we find here? One might think that knowledge leads to obedience, but Jesus says the opposite. He says we come to know the truth (and here he’s thinking primarily of truth about who God is, who we are, and how we can be rightly related to Him, not primarily by intellectual assessment of evidence, but by moral commitment.ⁱⁱⁱ Anselm put it this way: “Believe that you may understand.”

You see, mankind has a problem called spiritual blindness. The Evil One is the author of that blindness, and he has so tampered with our perceptions that we are unable to evaluate spiritual truth claims objectively. For example, take a person who has an anti-supernatural world-view (i.e. he operates on the presupposition that there is nothing beyond the physical forces of nature, someone like Carl Sagan, who famously said, “The Cosmos is all that is or was or ever will be.”) If that is his starting point, such a person is naturally going to deny *any* evidence presented for a miracle, like the resurrection of Christ. It just doesn’t fit into his world-view. *Any* explanation for the event is going to be deemed preferable to admitting a miracle. But a believer has a different starting point, namely, “In the beginning God . . .” He will examine the evidence surrounding miraculous claims, acknowledging those with strong evidence and questioning those where the evidence is weak.

Jesus promises that those who believe and obey His word will know the truth.

Knowledge of the truth leads to freedom. Jesus says, *“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* Freedom is, of course, something for which every human heart longs—political freedom, economic freedom, social freedom, religious freedom. But the fact is, some people think they are free when they are not. That was certainly true here. The offer of freedom Jesus makes implies that his listeners are in bondage, but this irritates them big-time: *“We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?”*

Now for these Jews to claim to never have been slaves is laughable, for they were in bondage first to Egypt, then Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and, even as they speak, they are political slaves to Rome. They must be thinking of the fact that they, as proud descendants of Abraham, had always maintained their traditions even in the face of pagan empires. In other words, they are counting on their Jewish heritage as their spiritual security blanket.

Well, these religious people claim to be free while Jesus hints that they are actually in bondage. How do we resolve the question of what constitutes true freedom?

WHAT CONSTITUTES TRUE FREEDOM (AS OPPOSED TO PHONY FREEDOM)? (33-36)

There is a kind of freedom that is really slavery. This is certainly true in the political realm. You've all heard of the Arab Spring, which began nearly a year ago, as one after another Arab population rose up against entrenched dictatorships. Unfortunately, recent elections in Tunisia and Egypt raise the distinct possibility that those who clamored for freedom from dictators may find themselves under an even worse slavery to radical Islam.

The same is true in the moral and spiritual realm. People who demand freedom to do whatever they want often wind up being slaves to their desires. Jesus says in verse 34: "*Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.*" You see, the very nature of sin is that it is habit-forming and enslaving.^{iv} I've heard people say, "I could stop this habit anytime I want, but I don't want to. I do it because I like it." I don't believe them. I *know* how hard it is to break sinful habits, and so do you.^v We don't do it because we like it; we do it because we can't help it. Do you really think any college student can honestly say, "I love getting wasted. It makes me feel so good about myself. I'm so proud of the things I say and do when I'm drunk. And there's nothing more fun than a hangover." No, of course, not. He does it because he is a slave to it – either to the alcohol itself, or to the attention he gets, or to the peer pressure. True freedom is not the liberty to do anything we please but the liberty to do what we ought, (which we can't do when we are enslaved to sin).

Centuries ago St. Augustine observed that slavery to sin is actually more oppressive than any other form of slavery. "*At times a man's slave, worn out by the commands of an unfeeling master, finds rest in flight. But whither can the servant of sin flee? Himself he carries with him wherever he flees. . . He has committed sin to obtain some bodily pleasure. The pleasure passes away; the sin remains. Evil bondage!*" And not only does the sin remain, but so does the regret, the self-loathing, and the feelings of guilt which always accompany sin (at least until the conscience is completely seared).

Are you a slave to sin today? Maybe you've tried to clean up your act by means of New Year's resolutions. How's that working for you? It's been a week now – how many have you broken? Recognizing the reality of the slavery we are under is the first big step to finding freedom, because no problem can be solved until it is identified and acknowledged. But Jesus' pseudo-disciples refuse to even take that first step.

Slaves do not receive family privileges, but sons do. Verse 35, "*The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.*" A slave may visit his master's house occasionally but he isn't allowed to stay there. At any moment he may be dismissed or even sold. The master's son, however, is always welcome in his father's house.

These Jews obviously think that *merely* because they are physical descendants of Abraham they are home free in respect to the Father's house. In the early second century a Jewish rabbi named Trypho expressed succinctly the very attitude being expressed here, when he wrote, "The eternal

kingdom will be given to those who are the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, even though they be sinners and unbelievers and disobedient to God.” Jesus flatly denies that. They are presuming on rights which, being spiritual slaves, they do not possess.

In verse 36 Jesus presses home the *most important* truth possible about freedom:

If the Son sets you free, you are free indeed. Frankly, that’s one of my favorite verses in the Bible. As a *Free Church* pastor, I have always felt that this verse expresses the essence of our name. We celebrate (or should) the freedom available only in Jesus Christ.

Jesus has talked about sons in verse 35; now He speaks of *the* Son. He has talked about freedom; now He speaks of “freedom *indeed*,” i.e. of ultimate freedom. To help us grasp what ultimate freedom is, I want us to consider two analogies. First, think about the freedom which a convict experiences when he is released from prison. Maybe his sentence is commuted by a governor or reversed by a judge or ended by a parole board. That man is free, sort of. He’s not in prison anymore, but he still has his conscience to deal with, he doesn’t have a job and not many prospects for one, his former friends are suspicious, he can’t vote; frankly, his freedom is very limited and incomplete.

But if the governor or judge or parole officer were to adopt him as his own son, restore all his privileges, give him a fulfilling job, and treat him as though he were guiltless, then he would be *free indeed!* Friends, that’s exactly what Jesus, the Son of God, does when He sets a man free from slavery to sin. He provides freedom that is freedom *indeed*.

Or consider, secondly, a person who is deeply in debt, staggering under a heavy load of bills and financial obligations. What if this afternoon a total stranger were to come up and say, “I’ve paid off your house mortgage, your car loans, your hospital bill, your credit card balances, your school loans. You are debt-free and there’s absolutely no obligation to me or to anyone. You are free!” Can you even *imagine* how great that would be? Well, there *is* something even more fantastic. Jesus has assumed the entire debt of your *sin*—every evil deed, every evil word, every evil thought, every time you have failed to help someone in need, every time you have been less than honest—if you are a true disciple, He has forgiven it all and *set you free*—free from sin, free from guilt, free from condemnation. That’s *real* freedom. That’s freedom *indeed*.

Well, so far Jesus has established for us that a true disciple is an obedient disciple and that true freedom is that which is only available through Him. Third, He answers the question . . .

WHO IS A TRUE CHILD OF GOD (AS OPPOSED TO A PHONY ONE)? (33-47)

This whole discussion of freedom puts these pseudo-disciples very much on the defensive. They can clearly discern in Jesus’ words the inference that they are phony believers, so they fall back on their heritage.

The claims of the religious leaders:

1. “Abraham is our father.” (39) Again they appeal to their blood relationship with Abraham—a man of indisputable faith and one who was unquestionably a child of God. Jesus does not deny their physical relationship to Abraham, but He does deny its relevance, for spiritual sonship can never be guaranteed by a physical relationship. Nothing is clearer in the Scripture.

For example, when the Scribes and Pharisees, the cream of the religious crop in Israel, first came to John the Baptist in Matthew 3 he said to them, *“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.”* Paul said essentially the same thing in Romans 2:28-29 says, *“For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.”* Their claim to be Abraham’s descendants is irrelevant. Deeds count more than ancestry.

But in verse 41 the Jewish antagonists present a second claim:

2. “God is our Father.” (41) Jesus has already hinted in verse 39 that they have a kinship that negates their kinship to Abraham, a spiritual kinship that is not divine but diabolic. Feeling cornered they lash out at Him: *“We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.”* The “we” in verse 41 is in an emphatic position and can be understood in this fashion: *“We were not born of sexual immorality,”* implying, *“like you were.”* This may be evidence that they knew there was something unique about Jesus’ origin, and unwilling to accept the virgin birth they are implying that He was born of some kind of immoral relationship. But while Jesus ignores this personal attack, He refutes their claim to be spiritually related to either Abraham or God.

The counter-claims of Jesus. Their claim is completely bogus because they bear no family likeness to Abraham.

1. “You don’t do what Abraham did.” (39) Abraham believed God, Abraham obeyed God’s commands, Abraham looked forward with rejoicing to the day of Messiah. They weren’t doing any of these things.

2. “You do what Abraham didn’t do.” (40) *“But now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.”* Do you remember how in Genesis 18 Abraham received three messengers from God? They told him God was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, where many of his relatives lived. Did Abraham try to kill God’s messengers because he didn’t like their news? No! Oh, he argued a bit, very politely, but eventually he accepted their word and continued to show them the utmost in hospitality, for he knew that any message which came from God must be respected. But these religious leaders are out to kill Jesus for telling them truth which came from God. How can they call themselves children of Abraham in any meaningful sense?

3. “Your real father is the Devil, not God.” (38,41,44) You've all heard a phrase that has been the watchword of liberal Protestantism for decades – “the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.” It has been used to promote the notion that we are all God’s children, there are many ways to God, and we’ll all end up in the same place. Just be nice and hug a tree.

A more accurate phrase for such people might be “the fatherhood of Satan and the brotherhood of man.” Look at verse 44 and ask if that isn’t exactly what Jesus is saying here, “*You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires.*” Just as family likeness is what establishes physical paternity, so identity of inner passions and desires establishes spiritual paternity. Since they have the same desires and lusts that Satan has – particularly falsehood and murder – they must be his children, not God’s.

Friends, please note that Jesus isn’t speaking here to pagans or agnostics or atheists, or followers of false religious systems. He is saying this to religious leaders, and not just *any* religious leaders but leaders of God’s chosen people, leaders of whom John has already told us that they believed in Him. Do we think we can cavalierly dismiss the implications for our own lives?

There is a final question raised in our text, and it is actually expressed by these unsaved believers in verse 53, “*Who do you make yourself out to be?*”

WHO IS JESUS? (48-59)

Well, they answer their own question:

The claims of the religious leaders. (48, 52)

1. You are a demon-possessed Samaritan. It’s not uncommon when arguments fail for people to resort to abuse and violence. Calling him a Samaritan is a racial slur. You’re a half-breed, Jesus, and a demon-possessed one at that. But worse yet ...

2. You are a blasphemer worthy of death. They pick up stones in verse 59 to stone Him to death. Since stoning was the penalty for blasphemy, they are, in effect, judging Him guilty of blasphemy. For exactly what we will see in just a moment.

And how does Jesus respond to their charges?

The counter-claims of Jesus:

1. “I do not have a demon.” (49). He ignores the racial slur but denies the demonism charge. In fact, He claims that it is His practice to honor His Father, which, of course, is as far removed from demon possession as is possible.

But then Jesus raises the ante, twice claiming (in verse 50 and 54) . . .

2. “The Father seeks my glory.” They are not giving Him the glory that is His due, but God is.

3. Obedience to My words results in eternal life. (52) *“Truly, truly I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”* This claim nearly drives them crazy. They respond, *“Now we know you have a demon.”* It’s beyond all doubt. Abraham died, the prophets all died, yet you say that if anyone keeps *Your* word he will never see death! Are you greater than Abraham? Who do you make yourself out to be!?! Hang on, He’s going to tell them.

But first His fourth claim is . . .

4. I know the Father and am always obedient to Him. (55) *“You do not know God but I know Him and I keep His word.”* Earlier in verse 46 He had challenged them to find one sin He had committed, but their silence to that challenge was deafening. He is claiming sinlessness.

He continues to pile it on in verse 56.

5. Your hero Abraham rejoiced to see my day. (56) In fact, *“He saw it and was glad.”* Enraged they respond, *“You aren’t even a half century old and you’re telling us that you saw Abraham who died 2000 years ago?!?”*

Then Jesus offers the *coup de gras*:

6. I am God. Perhaps you don’t see those words in the text, but that’s *exactly* how they understand what He says in verse 58, *“Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”* In view of how John started his Gospel, claiming the pre-existence of Christ (*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”*), we might have expected Jesus to say here, “before Abraham was, I was.” But instead He uses the present tense, *“I am.”* Why?

I remind you of something already mentioned twice in this series: When Moses stood at the burning bush in Exodus 3, he asked God, *“Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”* God said to Moses, *“I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’”*

Jesus here uses the personal name of God and claims that name for Himself. G. Campbell Morgan hits the matter right on the head when he says, “These are the words of the most impudent blasphemer that ever spoke, or the words of God incarnate.”^{vi} The religious leaders opt for the former and decide He must die.

Conclusion: Do you see now where I got my sermon title? *Unsaved Believers*. There were clearly people in Jesus’ day who believed many right things, had many right connections, in fact, were religious to the core. But they were not God’s children.

But as one wise student of the Bible wrote, “As we read the(se) stern words . . ., let us not ask so much how He the Lord of Love should so speak to the Jews, as whether we have deserved that the Lord of Love should so speak to us.”^{vii}

Is our faith just a shallow acknowledgment that Jesus did some great miracles? Or does it constitute a full allegiance to Him as the unique and eternal Son of God? Is our faith just a shallow recognition that He was a great teacher? Or does it constitute an abiding obedience to what He taught?

I am convinced that the greatest danger in the evangelical church today is not rank heresy or blatant denial of truth, but rather the fact that what we believe has so little impact on how we live.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10:9-10, *“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”* If you believe, but it hasn’t penetrated your heart, if it hasn’t changed your life, you yourself may be gospel-hardened. In fact, you may be an unsaved believer. But if you turn in faith to the risen Christ and rely completely upon His sacrifice as the payment for your sin, you will be saved and have eternal life. If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed!

ⁱ. They remind me of a philosophy professor I had at SMU who thought he was being extremely open-minded when he said, “I’m inclined to believe in the resurrection.”

Inclined to believe!?! Of what good is that? When Peter stood up in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost and preached to thousands he didn’t say, “Please consider whether the evidence might possibly lend itself to the hypothesis that Jesus might actually have risen from the dead.” Instead he said, *“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God . . . has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. . . . Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ”*

ⁱⁱ. I remember a visit I had in my office with a woman who was a radical, pro-abortion feminist who accepted the gay agenda and believed there was nothing immoral about premarital or extramarital sex. Yet in the course of our conversation she assured me at least four times that she was a Christian and resented any insinuations to the contrary. Now I don’t presume to have access to the Lamb’s Book of Life, but friends, if words mean anything at all, this woman is deluded when she claims to be a Christian. She may be a Christian in a cultural sense, as opposed to being an atheist or a Buddhist or a Muslim. But she is not a Christian in any biblical sense of that term.

But that’s a relatively easy case. What about those who are pro-life, moral and social conservatives, and even vote a straight Republican ticket, but cheat on their taxes, treat their spouse like dirt, have a little relationship on the side, take the Lord’s name in vain regularly at work? Do Jesus’ words apply to them also? “If you *abide* in my word, you are *truly* my disciples.” I challenge us to ask ourselves if we are abiding in the words of Jesus.

ⁱⁱⁱ. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel of John*, on 8:32.

^{iv}. John Calvin observed, “Isn’t it interesting that the greater the pile of vices one is buried under, the more fiercely and bombastically he often extols his free will?”

^v. Alexander MacLaren pointed out very cogently, “It is a far commoner thing for a man *never* to have done some given evil, *never* to have got drunk, *never* to have stolen, or the like, than to have done it only once.” (Quoted by S. Lewis Johnson in seminary class).

^{vi}. G. Campbell Morgan, quoted by Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 473 (footnote).

^{vii}. W. Temple, quoted by Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 454.