

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

JOHN 8:31-9

Inscribed on the facade of the main building at the University of Texas is the phrase, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Whenever you enter the campus library you walk under those words.

The implication is that the university holds the truths that set us free. But UT stole those words from Jesus.

It's not man's truth that frees us, it's the truth Jesus spoke. It's His view of God, life, and man that frees us.

Jesus' full quote is found in John 8:31, *which is where we begin today*, “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Truth is found NOT in a university library. In fact, many of the college students who enter that library are in bondage to some vice... *whether it be sex, or booze, or academic pride...*

The truth that frees us is found in Jesus. “*If you abide in My word...*” He says, “*You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.*” His truth answers our questions, absolves our doubts, demolishes our fears.

Understand, this world's deception is what enslaves us. People succumb to slavery - *all kinds of slavery, especially slavery to sin* - when they believe they have no other alternative. Lies are the chains of bondage.

But Jesus' is THE truth. He frees us from deception, from coercion, from confusion, from condemnation.

And notice the key to knowing His truth. *"If you abide in My word..."* *"Abide"* means *"to trust or rest."*

Here's a helpful word picture... Lying in a hammock isn't like sitting on a stool. On the stool, you take a sit, *but you can still jump into action. You're in control.*

But when you lie in a hammock, you lose control. In the hammock your weight is off your feet. Your body rests in the hammock. And think of the words of Jesus as a hammock. Rest in His statements. Relax in His promises. Let faith in His Word take control of your life.

Real disciples abide in Jesus and in His Word.

Now recall Jesus is teaching in the Jewish Temple. His audience is two-fold - *His own disciples* and *the Jews who've been listening*. Now the Jews chime in...

"They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, 'You will be made free'?"

Nationalistic pride swells up within them.

They're Abraham's kids! In essence, they're saying, *"You can't free us, for we've never been slaves."*

Yet how could they say that? What about the 400 years they spent in Egypt? Or the 600 years prior to this, when Babylon sacked Jerusalem and took Jews captive to Babel. They were in bondage for seventy years.

Since then, Israel had been a province of first Persia; then Greece. *Even as this conversation happened a battalion of*

Roman troops occupied a fortress on the Temple Mount a few yards from where they stood.

For the last six centuries, Israel had been a political puppet at best. They were now a slave to their pride.

“Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.” Here, Jesus exposes their real bondage, it’s *spiritual slavery*.

I’m sure you’ve heard, “Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage...” Spiritual prison cells are made of faithlessness, fear, tainted perspectives, worry, foolishness, deception, disobedience, pride.

Realize, each time you give in to sin it’s harder to say “no” the next time. You weaken your resistance until you end up with the backbone of a jellyfish. These Jews were slaves to their own weaknesses and sin.

Prisons of the soul are created when we believe and act on lies. It’s the truth about me, and you, and God that sets us free! When a man sees the truth that in Christ forgiveness and victory over sin are possible; then he positions himself to experience true freedom.

Jesus adds verse 35, “And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

A slave will never obtain *family status* and permanent residence in the Master’s house. Only a son is family, *come what may*. And only Jesus, God’s Son, gives us real assurance. When you’re “in Christ,” God treats you just as He

does Jesus - as a Son. *That's real freedom! "If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed!"*

Jesus says in verse 37, "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father." They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this." Jesus says there's a difference between *pedigree* and *parentage*. You can have a person's DNA, but that doesn't mean you were nurtured by him.

And this was true of the Jews. They had Abraham's DNA, but after that their resemblance to him ceased.

They certainly didn't have his faith or insights.

Jesus tells them, "*You do the deeds of your father.*"

And He was about to identify the father who raised them, when they get in an ugly dig... "*Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father - God."* The Jews had obviously heard Mary's claims of a miraculous conception and virgin birth - but they didn't believe her. Here they cast aspersions on the legitimacy of Jesus' birth. This was an ugly insult.

It was really tacky for a group of distinguished priests to resort to denigrating a person's mother.

“Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.”

Recall this was the claim to deity Jesus often used.

Human beings don't exist before conception. No other human had come *from God*. But Jesus had pre-existed before His birth. His origins were divine.

He continues, “Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.” And here Jesus is about to *drop the mic!*

The Jews have a father all right... Jesus tells them, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.” Jesus knew the devil firsthand. He had been dealing with him for a long, long time.

And above all else, Satan is a murderer. Life is God's gift. We're made in His image. Thus, to murder a human is to mar God's image. Murder is an attack on God. And Satan was “*a murderer from the beginning.*”

The first homicide wasn't when Cain killed Abel, it was earlier when Satan tempted Adam and Eve. They sinned and died spiritually. And the murder weapon was a lie. The devil promised they could be like God. You won't “*surely die*” - but they did in the worse way.

Jesus continues speaking of Satan, verse 44, “When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” In the Hebrew language the phrase,

“the father of” means **“the originator of.”** Satan was the first person to think of twisting the truth.

The devil has never play by the rules. His temptations are potent because they contain elements of truth laced with lies. He’s the master of half-truths.

The devil is a liar and murderer. And the Jews were acting just like him. During the feast, they’d entertained fake news about Jesus, and had plotted to kill Him.

Verse 45, **“But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.”** The Jewish leaders were so used to lying, they didn’t recognize the truth when Jesus spoke it.

He continues **“Which of you convicts Me of sin?”** The answer was no one! **“And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?”** Jesus is pointing out a contradiction, ***They couldn’t deny Him, but they wouldn’t believe Him!***

“He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God. Then the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?”

Earlier they tried to discredit Jesus by insulting His mother - *now they resort to racial slurs and blasphemy.*

The Samaritans were interracial. They were a mix of Jewish and Gentile blood. The term **“Samaritan”** was an insult to a Jew... And to also accuse God’s Son of having a demon was preposterous. *It passed the pale.*

Verse 49, **“Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. And I do not seek My**

own glory; there is One who seeks and judges. Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.” Jesus responded to their insults with a bold claim! The truth is He must be God, for He assumes the right to grant eternal life. *“If anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”*

By the end of this day, not everyone will believe in Jesus, but no one will be confused about His claims.

Verse 52, “Then the Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.’ The Jews revered Abraham and the prophets just below the angels. Abraham was called “a friend of God.” He was the father of their faith.

Yet both Abraham and the prophets were dead. *How can Jesus now grant eternal life?* For Him to do so, would mean He is greater than Father Abraham...

The Jews ask Jesus, “Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?”

Jesus answered, “If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word.” *And here Jesus drops the ultimate bombshell...*

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad... Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet

fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" At this time Jesus was probably in His mid to late 30s, but He certainly wasn't 50. Yet Jesus says He saw Abraham, who lived 2000 years before him.

How could that be? Yet, astute OT students will realize God's Son appeared to Abraham several times in Genesis. In Genesis 18 three mysterious visitors come to Abraham's tent. And when you read the text carefully you see one of the men speaks for God in the first person. Clearly, it was the pre-incarnate Christ...

It's also possible the High Priest Melchizedek was a pre-Bethlehem appearance... Abraham saw Jesus.

And if Jesus' previous statements were bombshells, here He drops a nuke. If Jesus had lived in the days of Twitter, verse 58 would've exploded the twitter-verse.

"Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." This was the name Yahweh revealed to Moses at the burning bush, "I am who I am. Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I am has sent me to you.'" Now Jesus quotes the same holy, revered name, "I AM," and applies it to Himself.

Jesus is removing all doubt about His deity. He's being crystal clear. Jesus is identifying Himself as the God who spoke to Moses from the burning bush.

And this was more than these narrow-minded Jews could bear. They knew exactly what Jesus had said. This is why they instantly go into assassination mode...

“Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” This too was a miracle. Jesus walked through a mob of bloodthirsty men. God must’ve supplied Him with a supernatural shield.

As a side note, John records seven of Jesus’ **“I AM”** statements in his Gospel. In 6:48 He says, “I am the bread of life.” In 8:12, “I am the light of the world.”

John 10:7, “I am the door of the sheep.” In 10:14, “I am the good shepherd.” In 11:25, “I am the resurrection and the life.” In 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Lastly 15:1, “I am the true vine.”

I’ll never forget the day. My son Zach was 12 years old. He asked me to hold his glasses. And just for kicks, I slipped them over my eyes. And to my surprise, the whole world became sharper. For the first time, I realized I needed glasses. A month later an eye exam confirmed it. And I recall saying to the optometrist, “Doc, this can't be. I've always had 20-20 vision. What's going on?” His answer was depressing, “Well Sandy, when you get older your eyes just start to deteriorate.”

Hey, who's getting older? But we all do! Your eyes grow dim... some people go blind. It's tough to accept.

Yet in Chapter 9 we find a man who had no problem accepting his blindness. For his eyes had never seen.

Chapter 9, “Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth.” Every twenty minutes someone in the US goes blind. It’s a terrible tragedy to lose your sight.

There's only thing worse, and that's to have never had the opportunity to see in the first place.

*Imagine being **born blind**. You live your whole life having never seen a sunset - or an azalea bush - or a dogwood tree blossom - or the smile on a giggly child.*

A man born blind has no reference point. He has no recollection to draw on. He has no paints or brushes to color in the pictures on the canvas of his imagination.

His mental images all look alike - *grey, and empty, and blank*. Such was this blind man's sad lot in life.

Verse 2, **"And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"** What a contrast in perspectives!

As we'll see later Jesus looked at this man and thought of **alleviating his suffering**. His disciples saw him and thought of **affixing blame**. Jesus asks, **"How can I help?"** His men ask, **"Who can we condemn?"**

But the disciples were only reflecting the current understanding of disease and suffering among the Jews at the time. The rabbis believed every illness or natural disaster was caused by some specific sin.

Sin and suffering supposedly had a cause and effect relationship... *Tornados touch down on the evil. Cancer strikes the carnal. Heart attacks happen to the heathen. Forest fires destroy the faithless, etc., etc.*

One Jewish rabbi commented, **"There is no death without sin, and there is no suffering without iniquity."**

Other rabbis went so far as to teach that a child could sin in utero and be punished with a deformity.

Other Jewish rabbis were crueler. They asserted that if a child was born with a disorder it had to be the result of their parent's sin. Imagine the enormous guilt this showered on parents. Jesus' disciples were merely echoing the erroneous theological theories of their day.

In verse 3, "Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him." Jesus shoots down the theology of the rabbis. *Birth defects, incurable illnesses, natural disasters* can't always be pinned on a specific sin.

They may not be due to any particular sin at all.

When sin entered the world the whole created order became subject to randomness and futility. Theologians call it "The Fall." Today, Mother Nature doesn't always work in sync with her Father God. **And suffering is now the fallout of the fall.** Every pain isn't necessarily sent from God. But He has no qualms about taking our suffering and using it for His glory.

Author Frank Anderson has a great insight on the story in John 9, "The Bible explains suffering, not so much in origins as in goals. The purpose of pain is seen, not in its cause, but in its results. The man was born blind so God's work could be displayed in him."

The disciples asked Jesus, "*Why was this man born blind?*" In essence, He answers them, "It doesn't matter, what counts is how God will use the situation to bring Himself glory!" God allowed this man to be born blind so the people in the Temple

that day - and people in all the ages since - might behold the wonders of His Son!

Here, **a man who was born blind encounters a Man who can turn on the lights!** *A sensational miracle* occurs and a *spiritual message* will follow...

In verse 4 Jesus says, **“I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.”** One of the marks of Jesus’ ministry was His sense of urgency. As the sun rises and the day begins; then sets and the day ends; God’s plans have a start and a finish. **And when the sun goes down on the last day, all that are *not saved* will *never be saved*.**

This is why, like Jesus, we need to be busy doing the works of God. **George Mueller once wrote, “When the day of recompense comes, our only regret will be that we have done so little for Him, not that we have done too much!”** It’s day now, but the nighttime is coming.

Jesus’ words in verse 5 stirred up the faith of the blind man, **“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world... When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.”** Here is one mudslinging campaign that had a happy ending.

“And (Jesus) said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, Sent).” For all of His miracles proved that Jesus had been **“sent”** from God.

“So he went and washed, and came back seeing.” It was a miracle. The man born blind now has 20-20 vision. And understand, **the spit was not the it!**

In Mark 10 Jesus healed blind Bartimaeus by just speaking the word. He healed blind eyes on other occasions through different methods. It wasn't the spit - it was the power of God that opened the man's eyes.

But the spit played a role. The ancients believed human saliva had medicinal properties. Perhaps Jesus used the mud packs, something tangible, to stir up and stimulate his faith. Likewise, in Acts, it wasn't *Paul's handkerchiefs* or *Peter's shadow* that healed, but they were tools used by God to stir up a sluggish faith.

Verse 8, “Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, “Is not this he who sat and begged?” Some said, “This is he.” Others said, “He is like him.” He said, “I am he.”

Therefore they said to him, “**How** were your eyes opened?” Throughout Chapter 9 you'll notice everyone is concerned with “**how**” this miracle took place. This is always the case. We're intrigued with a miracle's *mechanics*, but God is more interested in its *message*.

If you could figure out *how* the miracle occurred it wouldn't be a miracle. **The point of any miracle is Who, not How.** “**How**” and “**who**” are the same three letters, but in God's eyes **Who** is more important than **how**.

Well, the fellow “answered and said, “A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the

pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight." Verse 12, "Then they said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know."

As we move through Chapter 9 notice the progression in this man's relationship with Jesus...

In **verse 11** he calls Him **"a man."** In **verse 17** the healed man says, **"He is a prophet."** In **verse 33** the blind man calls Jesus **"a man from God."** And in **verse 38** **Jesus is called "Lord,"** and worthy to be worshipped.

Verse 13, "They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes." Of course, Jesus **always** healed on the Sabbath. *Jesus relished the confrontation.* Nothing did more than Jesus' healing to contrast *God's compassion* and *the Jew's callousness.*

"Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." It's always amazing how petty and picky the legalist can be. The rules grow so large in his mind that's all he can see.

Man-made rules cloud out *the love of God - the power of God - the wonder of God.* These Jews were so prejudiced and narrow-minded they looked past an obvious miracle and focused only on a technicality.

When it's obvious God is at work there comes a time when you should start questioning the technicalities!

Verse 16 ends, "Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them." Apparently, some Jews were starting to see *spiritually* as the man was *seeing physically!*

"They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight (they questioned the miracle), until they called the parents of him who had received his sight.

And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself." His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ (or Messiah), he would be put out of the synagogue." Rather than testify of Jesus and show some gratitude for healing their son, the parents take the fifth! They pass the buck. "Our son is a grown man. Let him speak for himself!" They feared the Jews!

Yet, their reaction should not have come as a shock. They'd left their son on the street to beg for a living.

They cared more about their social standing than the boy they brought into the world. "Oh, heaven forbid, we get kicked out of the synagogue, and lose our friends."

Though this man's blindness wasn't the result of his parent's sin, let me suggest many of our young people today are blind spiritually because they have a mother and father who are just as pathetic as these parents.

Parent, do you care more about your image, than the work Jesus wants to do in the life of your kids?

Back to the trial, verse 24, "So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner." In other words, deny Jesus - *tell us what we want to hear.*

"He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see." I like the old quote, "A man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument." The work of God in a person's life speaks much louder than the skepticism of folks around them.

Verse 26, "Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?"

He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" Here's a little tongue and cheek... *Do you want to be His followers? Is that why you're so interested in Him?* The formerly blind man mocks them. He must've infuriated the Jews.

"Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples." If they'd been smart they would've stopped arguing with this guy. A half-hour earlier he was blind as a bat. If they want to discredit Jesus' miracle they shouldn't

be talking to this man. *They are about to reveal their own blindness...*

They argue, “We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from.” The man answered and said to them, “Why, this is a marvelous thing (in other words, *you got to be kidding?*), that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes!” *Any man that gives sight to the blind has to be from God?* This man is about to give the theologians a lesson in practical theology...

Verse 31, “Now we know that God does not hear sinners (*that is, God isn't obligated to hear sinners, and He's not*); but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.” God is more inclined to hear a believer. These are true generalizations.

But the man continues, “Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind.” This was an unprecedented miracle. Thus, “If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.” The man's logic was overwhelming. His healing was a miracle only God could perform.

“They answered and said to him, “You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?” And they cast him out.” Wow, they didn't like the *message* so they canceled what was said, and threw out the *messenger*. How pompous and blind they had become.

Bible scholar, Alfred Edersheim, explains that the rabbinical Jews had three kinds of ex-communication...

First was a simple "rebuke." It lasted seven days. It was a probationary move - a mild form of discipline.

The second was an "admonition." The guilty person was ostracized from the synagogue for thirty days, a month. For that time he was treated as an outcast, a sinner.

Finally, the most radical ex-communication was when the unrepentant person was "cast out," or literally, "un-synagogue-ed." He was permanently alienated from the community of Israel for an indefinite period of time. No one was allowed to *speak to* or *eat with* the excommunicated. The person was considered dead.

It's interesting the Pharisees had three interviews with the man who was healed... **Verses 13-16** end in a simple rebuke. **Verses 17-23** involved his parents who fear ex-communication. And after **verses 24-34** they toss the man out for good. It could be they ran him through all three phases of their ex-communication.

It's sad though, that one of the first sights this man's eyes saw was the venomous looks on the scrunched-up faces of these angry and close-minded Pharisees.

Verse 35, "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" I love this, as soon as Jesus heard he was cast out, He sought to take him in.

He searched for the man, and "*found him.*" This is why chapter nine is the harbinger of things to come!

A man is cast out of Judaism but is welcomed in by Jesus. And he'd be the first of many more to follow.

After Jesus' resurrection, folks left Judaism by the droves to be members of His Church. Legalism blinds everyone living under it, but when Jesus enters our lives we can see! *The blind continue to receive sight!*

Jesus had asked him, *"Do you believe in the Son of God?"* And *"He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" He wants to believe....*

Verse 37, *"And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." The first time he met Jesus he heard His voice but didn't actually see Him. Now he looks Jesus in the face.*

"Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him." Remember, the Jews detested idolatry. By the first century, they'd been cured of the idolatrous tendencies that brought on God's judgment in the OT... At the time they worshipped no one but Yahweh.

But this man knew he had found God in Jesus. He worships Him, *and Jesus does nothing to stop him!*

Recall, in **Acts 14** after Paul heals a lame man in Lystra, the people want to worship him and Barnabas, but Paul shuts it down. Paul and Barnabas were mere men - not worthy of worship. Jesus on the other hand, allowed people to worship Him **because He was God!**

Verse 39, *"And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind."*

I like the comment made by author Phillip Yancey, "What began as a tragic tale of one man's blindness ends as a surreal tale of everyone else's blindness."

A newspaperman once wrote a story about three little girls outside a toy store. One of the girls was blind. The other girls were trying to describe to her toys she'd never seen. It was futile. Yet the journalist was touched by the scene. It was the subject of that day's column.

That night the reporter planned to visit the DL Moody crusade. He was a skeptic and intended to pick the evangelist to pieces with a scathing editorial. But during his message, Moody referred to the reporter's own words to describe a pastor's job. How difficult it is to explain the glories of Jesus to a man spiritually blind.

Again the newspaperman was moved with emotion. He realized how blind he'd been and came forward that night to Moody's invitation to receive Christ...

Today, Jesus is giving us the same invitation, "If you think you see, you'll remain blind, but if you realize you're blind to spiritual things you'll suddenly see!"

Verse 40, "Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, 'Are we blind also?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.'" The Pharisees were blind because they assumed they saw the truth clearly.

Pride always causes spiritual blindness.

The know-it-all is the person who is most ignorant. It's only when we admit that our vision is impaired will God put the mud packs on our eyes and help us see.