

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will do Bible study together from John 8:1-59. We will use “the five steps” method of Bible study. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. You may join our Bible study every week by preparing for the next Bible study. You may also gather a few people around you and use this method of studying the Bible together. Doing Bible study together with a few other Christians is one of the best ways to grow to maturity as a Christian.

(S) **STEP 1. READ.**

Let us read John 8:1-59. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read John 8:1-59 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER.**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in John 8:1-59. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is in John 8:30-48 about the fact that believers in Jesus Christ can become enemies of Jesus Christ.

First. We read about believers in Christ who turn into enemies of Christ.

In John chapter 8:30-32 we read about many Jews who put their faith in Jesus. Jesus said to them that they are only true disciples of him when they continue to obey his teachings. If they continue to keep his teachings, they will know the truth and the truth will set them free. In the verses that follow it becomes clear that some of these believers in him began to vehemently oppose him. They felt that they did not need to be set free, because they had never been anyone’s slaves. Jesus said that by nature every human being is a slave of sin and needs to be set free. They said that they as Jews had always been free, because they were Abraham’s children (33-34). Jesus said that if they were really children of Abraham they would believe in the Messiah and not try to kill him. They then said that they were not illegitimate children of Abraham and had God as Father (39-41). Jesus said that if God really was their Father they would love Jesus Christ. But because they rejected his words and wanted to murder him, they were children of the devil, because the devil is a murderer and the father of lies (42-44). Then these Jews abused Jesus and called him a Samaritan and demon-possessed (48). This passage shows a transition of attitude towards Jesus Christ; first they were favourable, then they became hostile against him.

Second. What is the difference between superficial faith and saving faith?

This passage shows that it is possible for people to first put their faith in Jesus Christ and afterwards stop believing, back-slide, fall away or actually become enemies of Jesus Christ. There is a big difference between *superficial faith* and *saving faith*. Superficial faith is merely a mental persuasion, a belief that certain facts are true for a certain period of time. Superficial faith does not involve any commitment. But saving faith is a wholehearted personal surrender to Jesus Christ and leads to salvation. Saving faith involves the intellect, the emotions, the will and all actions. Saving faith means that you commit your whole life to Jesus Christ.

Whenever the present continuous tense of the verb “to believe” is used in the original Greek text it indicates genuine saving faith! For example, John 3:16 literally says, “Whoever *continues to believe* in him, shall not perish, but have eternal life”. The present continuous tense is also used in John 3:18: “Whoever *continues to believe* in Jesus Christ is not condemned, but whoever *does not continue to believe* stands condemned already, because he did not believe and continue to believe in the name of God’s one and only Son”. (Also Jn 6:35,40,47; 7:38; 11:25-26; 12:44,46; 14:12; 17:20).

It is very important for us Christians to realise that certain people in the church only have *superficial faith*. They will probably fall away some time later and consequently will not be saved. On the other hand, when people have a genuine saving faith, they cannot back-slide and will be saved. God himself will complete the good work that he began in them (Phil 1:6)!

(T) An important truth for me is in John 8:32-36 about the meaning of true freedom. In John 8:31-36 Jesus says, “If you hold to my teaching, ... you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. ... If the Son has set you free, you will be free indeed.” Jesus is teaching the character of true freedom as well as the way to acquire true freedom.

First. Freedom according to the world.

In the world in which we live, many people say that freedom means *to be able to do what you want*. Their kind of freedom believes that you are ‘the captain of your own soul’ and ‘the master of your own destiny’. They say that nobody should tell you what to believe or what to do. They proclaim that freedom should have no boundaries and no limitations. Everybody should decide himself how he wants to live.

Now Jesus says that this freedom according to the world is no freedom at all! Jesus says that the freedom according to the world is in reality *slavery to their own beliefs and habits!*

Second. Freedom according to the Jews.

The Jews maintain that they had never been spiritual slaves of anybody. They mean to say that the Jews have never been slaves to idols as the Gentiles have. The Jews believe that they have always served the God of the Old Testament.

However, Jesus was not speaking of the freedom from idolatry, but about the freedom from sin! The Jews conveniently forgot how many times they had sinned and rebelled against God in their past history. Some of the Jews standing around Jesus rejected his teachings and believed in the lies of their religious teachers. Other Jews standing around Jesus were planning to kill him.

Jesus says that the freedom according to the Jews is no freedom at all! Jesus says that believing the lies told against Jesus comes from the devil and that the desire to kill others comes from the devil. What the Jews called ‘freedom’ was in reality ‘slavery to their own sins’!

Third. Freedom according to Jesus Christ.

In John 8:34, Jesus teaches that everyone who sins is a slave to sin! With this statement, Jesus immediately wipes out the distinction between a Jew and a Gentile. All people have sinned. Thus all people are at some point in their lives *a slave of sin*. People like the Jews who are born in a particular religion think that they know God. But to have some knowledge of the God of the Bible and yet continuing to sin makes the sin of the Jews stand out more clearly! As long as people, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, continue to sin and do not want to stop sinning, they are slaves of sin and not free at all!

There are two consequences of being a slave of sin.

One. A slave is a prisoner of his master, called *sin*, and he is *unable* to deliver himself from his bondage!

Two. A slave has *no permanent place* in the family, because he is usually sold to other masters again.

Slavery to sin is a hopeless experience, because a person is unable to free himself from his own sins. Slavery to sin even leads to greater slavery. Bondage to one particular sin leads to bondage by another kind of sin. For example, a person who is a slave of sexual immorality often also becomes a slave of spiritual false teachings!

Jesus teaches that *true freedom only happens when a person becomes bound to Jesus Christ*. He says, “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed!” Thus, whoever is bound to Jesus Christ is set free from sin! But whoever desires to be free from Jesus Christ remains bound to sin! Whoever wants to have the freedom according to the world, without boundaries and limitations, remains a slave to the boundaries and limitations of his own sin!

Therefore, freedom is not the *right* to do whatever you *wish* to do, even if it is wrong, but it is the ability to do whatever you *should* do, that is, to do whatever pleases Jesus Christ. True freedom cannot be found outside Jesus Christ. True freedom can only be found by becoming bound to Jesus Christ! If Jesus Christ sets you free, you will be free indeed!

(S) STEP 3. QUESTION

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 8:1-59 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. “Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?” Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (8:21-24). What does Jesus mean when he says that people will die in their sins if they do not believe in Jesus?

(T) In John 8:24 Jesus says, “If you do not believe that ‘I am’, then you will indeed die in your sins”. The words “I am” means *I am the one I claim to be*. Basic to this construction are the following Old Testament expressions. In Exodus 3:14, the LORD (H: Jahwe) says, “I am who I am”, meaning, *I was, am and always will be the One I revealed myself to be*. In Deuteronomy 32:39, the LORD says, “I myself am He! There is no god besides me”. And in Isaiah 43:10, the LORD says, “You are my witnesses ... so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me”. The same construction is used several times in the Gospel of John. In John 4:26, Jesus says, “*I am* the Messiah”. In John 9:9, the former blind man says, “*I am* the former blind man who used to sit and beg”. In John 18:5-8, Jesus says, “*I am* Jesus of Nazareth”. Here in John 8:24, Jesus says,

“I am all that I claim to be: the One sent by God the Father, the One who is from above, the Son of Man, the only-begotten Son of God, equal with God the Father, the One who has life-in-himself, the very essence of the Scriptures, the Bread of life and the Light of the world.”

All the people who do not believe everything that Jesus claims about himself, will “die in their sins”. They will not simply die a physical death. They will be thrown in the eternal death, which is hell. All people who reject Jesus Christ will not experience peace or comfort when they die physically, but only dark despair. Jesus whom they rejected will not be present to help them in their need and despair. They will only experience the wrath of God and everlasting perdition in the lake of fire. They can never go to the place where Jesus is going, that is, to heaven where God the Father is.

2nd Question. (8:37-45). Who are the true children of Abraham?

(S) One. The Jews as a race are not the true children of Abraham.

In John 8:37, Jesus acknowledges that the Jews are the *physical descendants* of Abraham. But in John 8:39, he says, that if they were truly Abraham’s *spiritual descendants*, they would have done the works that Abraham did. Abraham welcomed the messengers of God and had faith that God would do what he had promised. What did Abraham believe? John 8:56 says that Abraham rejoiced at *seeing the day of Jesus Christ*. God had promised him that he would bless every nation on earth in one of his descendants (Gen 18:22). This descendant is the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16). Abraham believed in Jesus Christ and he looked forward to his coming. But the Jews did not do what Abraham did. They opposed Jesus Christ, rejected his teachings and finally plotted to kill him! Therefore, the Jews as a race are NOT the spiritual descendants of Abraham. Jesus concluded that the Jewish religious leaders were the children of the devil. The devil was a murderer and a liar from the beginning of creation. And now the Jewish religious leaders and teachers were doing the same thing: they were murderers and liars. Their attitude, words and actions show that the devil was their true spiritual father. God is the spiritual Father only of people who welcome Jesus Christ and believe in his message!

Two. The believers in Jesus Christ of every race on earth are the true children of Abraham.

The apostle Paul in Romans 4:11-16 teaches that Abraham is the father of all believers in Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:6-16 teaches that all people who rely on their own effort to keep the law are cursed by God, because they all fail to keep the law. But all people who rely by faith on Jesus Christ are blessed by God, because Jesus Christ fulfilled the law in their place. Therefore, all the blessings and promises of God in the Old Testament are not given to Abraham’s physical descendants, but to Abraham’s one descendant, Jesus Christ! Believers in Jesus Christ of any race on earth are the real spiritual children of Abraham. Nobody can claim that he has certain advantages above others because he is a physical descendant of Abraham. Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ is a real spiritual descendant of Abraham.

3rd Question. (8:51). What does Jesus mean when he says, “If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death”.

(T) *To keep* the word of Jesus means to accept his message by faith, to obey it and to stand guard over it so that nobody will take it away. It is not enough to accept the message of Jesus once. A person must continue to believe that message and live his whole life by it. Jesus is not impressed by people who make a commitment or gesture towards him once in their life. He takes serious everyone who again and again commits himself to live out the message of Jesus Christ. Jesus promises that those who keep his word “will never see death”. Because the Jews took everything Jesus said ‘*literally*’, they failed to understand the teachings of Jesus. Jesus was not speaking about physical death, but about spiritual death. Jesus was speaking of the most serious *death* possible. He was speaking of *death in relationship to the Living God*. He was speaking of separation from the presence and loving care of the God of the Bible and experiencing his holy anger and righteous condemnation forever. Jesus promised that every person that keeps his word will never be separated from the presence and loving care of God and will never experience the wrath and condemnation of God!

4th Question. (8:56). How did Abraham actually see the day of Jesus Christ?

(S) In John 8:56, Jesus says, “Abraham rejoiced at seeing my day; he saw it and was glad”. It does not mean that Abraham actually saw Jesus Christ. He saw “the day of Jesus Christ”. When God promised Abraham to give to him a son, he rejoiced exceedingly. Twenty five years later this son was born and he called him “Isaac”, which means *laughter*. Why did the promise of the birth of a son and the realisation of that promise mean everything to Abraham? In Genesis 12:3,7 and 22:18, God promised to Abraham, “In your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed”. Thus, not only the temporal joy of having a son, but the spiritual blessing that would affect the whole world, was connected to this son! All the families of the earth would be blessed through one of his son’s descendants. Abraham understood that this one descendant would be the Messiah, the Hope of all mankind, the Saviour of the world! Hebrews 11:4-13 says, that not only Abraham, but before him Abel, Enoch and Noah did not receive the things that God promised. They only saw the things that God promised by faith and welcomed them from a distance, that is, from a long time before these promises were realised. It was in this sense, that Abraham saw the day of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Abraham saw Jesus Christ by faith and welcomed him from a great distance by faith, that is, from a long time before

Jesus Christ actually came. Abraham and all the Old Testament believers believed and rejoiced in the future coming of Jesus Christ. The New Testament believers and we who believe today believe and rejoice in the fact that Jesus Christ has already come.

(T) **STEP 4. APPLY** Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of *possible applications*.

A possible application from John 8:3-5. Adultery is certainly a very serious offence. In the Old Testament Law, both the men and the women that were caught in adultery were killed. However in the mean time, Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice of atonement for sins. If a person truly repents and confesses his sin to Jesus Christ, Jesus forgives him and cleanses him from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Nevertheless, there are still some religious leaders and teachers today who are only interested to catch offenders of their own religious rules and laws and then kill them. That is because they do not know Jesus Christ and the New Testament teaching of grace, but still live under the Old Testament law. Christians must always interpret the Old Testament laws in the light of the first coming of Jesus Christ and in the light of the New Testament teachings.

(S) A possible application from John 8:15 Do not judge. To judge is the task of Jesus Christ (5:22). Jesus did not come to condemn the world for their obvious sins, because the world already stands condemned. Jesus has come to save the lost and condemned people in the world (3:17-18). He did not come to judge people with human standards (8:15), even though there is much to say in judgment of the religious leaders and teachers of the Jews (8:26). Jesus has come to judge the people who think that they have no sin and believe that they are self-righteous (9:39).

(T) **STEP 5. PRAY** Do not forget to take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Prepare next week's Bible study. Use "the five steps" method to prepare John 9:1-41.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".