

Are You Saved?

by James MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing if you're truly saved, and how it's demonstrated by abiding in God's word and living a life characterized by fruitfulness.

Duration: 49:58

Scripture: Matthew 7:21-23, Matthew 13:24-30, Matthew 13:36-43, Matthew 13:47-50, John 8:30-32, John 8:35

Topics: "Assurance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of knowing the truth and being set free by it. He refers to the passage in John 8 where Jesus tells his disciples that if they abide in his word, they are truly his disciples and will know the truth that sets them free. The preacher then reflects on his own journey of following Christ for 40 years and asks himself if he is truly abiding in Jesus' words and experiencing the freedom that comes from knowing the truth. He also poses five questions for the listeners to evaluate their own spiritual bondage and growth in Christ.

Transcript

If you abide in my word, you're truly my disciples, and you'll know the truth, and the truth will set you free. That is the life of a Christian. If you really believe, you're going to abide in my words.

And if you abide in my words, you're going to begin to know the truth. And guess what's going to happen? The truth is going to set you free. Day after day, week after week, month after month, there's going to be a growing pattern of freedom in your life.

That's how you know you're saved. Okay? Walk, walk in the word. Walk in the word.

Walk, walk in the word. This is the way. Why don't you take your Bible and turn to the Gospel of John, chapter 8. Let me read a passage of Scripture that we're going to allow to be our spiritual food today.

John, chapter 8, starting in verse 30, says, as he was saying these things, the context, of course, is the woman caught in adultery and Jesus teaching on being the light of the world and his predicting of some of what was going to come ahead. And then it says in verse 30, as he was saying these things, many believed in him. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

They answered him, we're the offspring of Abraham. We've never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say you'll become free? And Jesus answered them, truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.

A slave does not remain in the house forever. The son remains forever. So if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

I know that you're the offspring of Abraham, yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I've seen with my father and you do what you have heard from your father. The title of the message today is True Salvation Equals Growing Freedom.

Do you get it? I've been doing a little informal survey this week. I've been going up to people. If I had have seen you, I would have said it to you for sure.

I would have said, are you saved? And you would have given me some kind of an answer. And then I would have been like, how do you know you're saved? I've got to tell you, I like our church very much. Key word is very.

I really, really like our church a lot. It's, it's, okay, I love our church. And so I don't mean to be critical or anything, but I have been really, really surprised at the answers that people have been giving me when I've been like, are you saved? And then after they say yes, then I say, how do you know? And you get these really kind of weak answers, honestly, and not biblical answers for sure.

So I want to talk to you today about without question, the most important subject in the universe to you. I want to talk to you about your salvation. All right.

And I want to lead you through a little process of honestly reflecting upon this thing that so many of you would say you have. And my goal is not to make you think you don't have it if you do, but it's definitely to let you know that you don't have it if in fact you don't. And I just, we just, this is something you can't afford to roll the dice on, right? And you've got to have some real clarity on this subject.

The Bible calls it your salvation. If a doctor were to do surgery on you and remove a terminal tumor, you would say that he had saved you. And if a fireman were to come into a burning building that was about to collapse around you, and he were to take you out of the building before it collapsed, you would say that he had saved you.

And if a lifeguard were to jump off their chair on the beach and go out into the ocean that was dragging you out to sea in an undertow and pull you back in before you went way out, we would say that he or she saved you. All right? And the Bible teaches that you have a terminal tumor called sin. And it is such a strong undertow that it is dragging you out to sea, and that you are headed toward flames that never cease, but that God in His mercy sent His Son to die for your sin so that you could be saved.

Now, fact is, is everybody's not saved. And there's a lot of people who say they're saved, but they're not saved. Okay? And there's a lot of people in our church who say that they're saved, but they're not saved.

And you say, well, James, are you burdened about this? Let me just tell you that probably more than any other single thing, this keeps me up at night as it relates to our church. All right? Is that there are many people - the Bible uses the word many a lot in this regard - there are many people who think they are saved, but they are not. This is a message of this passage here I've not even spoken on in our church in

15 years, though the subject has come up.

And as I prepared this message, I gotta say, I honestly thought I should preach on this every year, one time at least, just this. Are you saved? Are you really saved? Are you sure that you're saved? And do you have a biblical reason for saying that you're saved? Because you're not saved because you say so. And you're not saved because you know how to be saved, any more than you're in Cincinnati because you know how to get there.

Okay? It's not what you say. And I want to take you to some passages of Scripture. Keep your finger on John 8 because we're gonna spend really the majority of the message there.

But how many people would agree in trying to answer this question, are you saved? How many people would agree in voting here? How many people would agree that we're not wasting our time here today? All right? We are flat out not wasting our time. I want to be as clear as clear can be about this. So turn over in your Bible, please, to Matthew chapter 13.

Put that little ribbon thing in John 8. And we'll go back there in a minute to John 8. But right now we're gonna turn over to Matthew 13. This was a frequent teaching that came from the life of Christ. The difference between truth and error, light and darkness, wheat and tares.

Start in with me at Matthew 13, verse 18, please. Where it says, hear then the parable of the sower. He had just told the story but he reviews it here.

Verse 18. Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and that's the gospel, the good news that sins can be forgiven through faith in Christ.

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. Okay? So here's a guy who hears the word.

Here's the gospel. He doesn't understand it. He's thinking about it but he just doesn't really get it.

And then Satan comes and snatches away the message, the word, the seed that was sown. It's taken away. Saved or unsaved? I'll just go with what you say.

I'll just, interpretation by voting here. Saved or unsaved? Unsaved. Without question.

Unsaved. Heard the word. Didn't get it.

Snatched away. Verse 20. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.

I can go to heaven. I can go to heaven. I can go to heaven.

I really want that. Well, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, underline immediately, immediately he falls away. I want to go to heaven.

I want to go to heaven. I want to go to heaven. Yeah, well following Christ is going to cost you something.

I am so out of here right now. No one told me it was going to cost me anything. Saved or unsaved? Unsaved.

Hung around for a while. Things got a little challenging. I will pay no price for this.

Nothing and gone. Not saved. Never saved.

Didn't lose it. Never had it. Okay? Verse 22.

As for what was sown among the thorns, the seed, the gospel, sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word. Hmm. That's good.

Hmm. That church is close to my house. Hmm.

I kind of find that interesting. Hmm. I think I'll keep going back there until the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves, some say it becomes, but the better translation by far is proves, it proves unfruitful.

Unfruitful. So this is a person who has no fruit. They embrace the word in a superficial way, but they have hold up the universal symbol for how much fruit they have.

They have no fruit. Saved or unsaved? Unsaved. Unsaved.

Okay. Four professions. Here comes the fourth one.

Only one of the four truly saved. I hope this is you. Verse 23.

As for what was sown on the good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understand it, indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another 60, in another 30. Some bear more fruit than others. All truly saved people bear fruit.

Period. Okay? You with me? Let's go on now. Matthew 13, 24.

Are you saved? Are you saved? Matthew 13, 24. He put another parable before them saying, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away.

So when the plants came up and bore grain, the weeds appeared also. The servants of the master of the house came and said to him, master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds? And he said to them, an enemy has done this. So the servants said to him, do you want us to go and gather them? He said, no, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them.

See, here's the point. Look up here. Many people believe in Jesus.

That's the first main point tonight in your notes. Many people believe in Jesus. Many people.

And the truth of the matter is, early on, you can't tell. Wheat? Weed? You can't tell initially. You've got to wait till the plant's full grown.

When does the fruit come on the plant? Early or late? When does the fruit come on the plant? Spring or fall? Fall. All right? So initially, many people believe in Jesus. They pray the prayer.

They walk the aisle. They sign the card. They go through the Baptistry.

They do all the things that Christians do. But fact is, we don't know. Fact is, we don't know.

Jot this down. Profession does not equal conversion. Many people believe in Jesus.

In fact, James 2.19 says, you believe in God, you do well. Even the demons believe and tremble. The demons are rattled by what they believe.

Well, I think you'd all agree. Demons. Saved or unsaved? Okay.

Okay. So the demons believe and tremble, but they're not saved. And so belief does not equal automatically saved.

It just doesn't. It's the quality, the caliber, the character of the belief that ultimately proves whether the person is genuinely converted. And so here in this passage, you've got in one field wheat and tares.

Saved and unsaved. And for a long period of time, the master's like, yeah, you know what? Don't go out in the field and start ripping out the weeds or you're going to end up what? You're going to end up pulling up the wheat, too, because initially you can't tell the difference. You can't tell.

You can't tell. Back to the text, Matthew 13. An enemy has done this, verse 28.

Do you want us to go gather them? He said, no, lest in gathering the weeds you'd root up the wheat along with them. Here it is. Let both grow together until the harvest.

And at harvest time, I will tell the reapers, gather the weeds first, bind them in bundles to be burned. Saved or unsaved, those weeds? Unsaved. But gather the wheat into my barn.

All right. One more text to show you the same thing, also in Matthew, one that we seem to refer to a little bit more frequently. Go over to Matthew 7. Again, let me just really encourage you not to invest the time of this message thinking to yourself, boy, I wish Bill was here to hear this.

All right? And you can take Bill a tape, okay? This is for you right now. This is for you right now, right here. And by the way, I would just suggest to you that the more genuinely saved you are, the more delighted you are to review it, and the more marginal you are, the more aggravating this process is going to become.

So that should help you. Matthew 7, verse 21. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord.

Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. Not everyone who names my name will enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said it in a different passage of scripture, Luke 6, 46.

Why do you call me Lord? You don't do the things I say. So not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father underline that. It's the doing is the proving.

The doing is the proving. The doing isn't the saving. The doing is the proving of the saving.

But he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day, many will say to me, what day? Well, the day when we all appear before the Lord. He's like, you can't believe how many people on that day are going to be like, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Prophecy means to speak for God.

It's what I'm doing right now. Teach Sunday school class. Train your children.

Lead a small group. Did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not cast out demons in your name? How many people here have cast out demons in Jesus' name? Some? Not many. Not many.

What I'm trying to tell you is these are not the people down the street at the liberal church, okay? And by the way, this isn't a message for another church. I only preach to one church. It's our church.

I don't lie awake thinking about what's happening at Arlington Free Church or Moody Church or Willow Creek. They can answer to God for themselves in every other church. This is only about our church, amen? But us right here.

Because these are not marginal Christians. They're like, we prophesied in your name. We cast out demons in your name.

We did many mighty works in your name. Would you say that? Would you say, I have done many mighty works in God's name? Wow. Then I will declare to them, I never knew you.

I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. It's not what you said.

It's not what you did in serving me. Your life, your life was not characterized like a genuine follower of Christ. You just, you weren't a Christian.

You worked like you were a Christian. You worshipped like you were a Christian, but you didn't live like one. You were a Christian at church, but that was it for you.

It left with you as you exited the parking lot. I didn't know you. I never knew you.

Depart from me. Not I used to know you and then I forgot you. God doesn't forget us, amen? Not I used to know you and I forgot you.

I, key word, never knew you. We never had a thing. You thought we had a thing.

We had nothing. I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

Saved or unsaved? Unsaved. Alright. Now, just to remind you how important this process we're going through right now is, the Apostle Paul said, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

This is as serious as serious gets. I guarantee you a hundred years from today this is the only thing that will matter to you. Not your bank book, not your job, not the economy, not the presidential election, not your burdens about your family.

This is it now. I'm on it. Your salvation.

Because if many people who prophesied in his name and cast out demons in his name and did wonderful works in his name, if many people are going to hear that, you would be prideful to think that there won't be people from Harvest who will hear that. I didn't know you. If the Apostle Paul himself said, examine

yourself to see if you're in the faith.

If Paul himself said, I fear that having preached to others, I myself would be disqualified. If Paul lived with the reality that at the end of the day, if his walk didn't match his talk, he didn't have it, no matter how many sinner's prayers he prayed. Okay.

Paul said at the end of the day, the proof's in the pudding. If my faith hasn't changed me, it hasn't saved me. Okay.

Now back to John chapter 8. And let's bear up under what Jesus said to the true and false people in that passage. Many people believe in Jesus. So hopefully I've spent enough time on this now that you're asking yourself the question very appropriately, which you should be asking yourself, well, maybe I don't have it.

If you're not asking yourself that question right now, I'm concerned for you. I ask myself the question very thoroughly this week. Do I really have it? Because many people believe in Jesus.

Note this second thing. It's kind of come out of John 8, 31, and we're going to go through this text verse by verse now. Genuine disciples abide in Jesus' words.

That would be a phenomenal answer to the question. If I were to say to you, my brother, are you saved? I think you would say, yes, I am. All right.

But then when I said to you, how do you know you are? If you're like, well, in Iwana in 1974, I'd be like, wrong answer. Don't tell me how it happened. Give me evidence.

Evidence number one, genuine disciples abide in Jesus' words. You would say, I'm abiding in Jesus and in his words. I asked this of my daughter-in-law today.

I said, are you saved? She said, yes. I said, how do you know? And she said, because I have a growing hunger and desire for God's word. Great answer.

Look at John 8, 31. Jesus said to the Jews, as he was saying these things, verse 30, many believed in him. So he's like, oh, you're all in, huh? You're all in? Well, great.

Verse 31. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, if you abide in my word, you're truly my disciples. If you abide in my word, you're truly my disciples.

And so Jesus was seeing all these people raising their hands and walking to the front, and somebody was singing Just As I Am, and they're all signing cards, and they're getting water in the baptistry and everything. And Jesus is like, oh, this is a wholesale response. Look at the hundreds of people coming here.

He's like, yeah. Well, that's great that you all believe in me. You all believe in me, do you? Well, how about this? If you abide in my word, you're truly my disciples.

In other words, time will tell. Maybe you're wheat, maybe you're tares. Time will tell.

At the end of the day, the proof is going to be this. Do you abide in my word? The word abide means to remain or to continue. Are you remaining in God's word? Are you continuing in God's word? Salvation

happens at a moment in time, but it's demonstrated over time.

Got it? So I sit in my office and I try to think of these crazy analogies, right, to help you get that. Salvation happens at a point in time, but it's demonstrated over time. You get saved in a moment, but whether you really did get saved will be shown over the weeks and months and years.

Do you get it? So I thought of this crazy analogy. I was thinking to myself, what if, what if, God forbid, what if you had a horrible terminal virus? And I said, you can't believe how to get healed. Here's how you get healed.

In order to be healed, you have to believe that George Washington is the greatest person who ever lived. And if you believe that in your heart, you're going to be healed. What would you say immediately? I believe that so much.

I believe it. But see, I wouldn't know whether he really believed that or not. He might believe that he was the greatest man who ever lived.

He might believe that Pastor Rick is the greatest man who ever lived. He might believe that some other person, but see, I don't really know what he believes. He says, I believe it's George Washington, but how am I going to know whether he really believes it? Does he get healed? I'm going to just watch for a while.

And after a week, after a month, after a year, if he's going to the doctor over and over and over and the medication's not working and he dies, I'm going to be like, yeah, I don't think you really believe that about George. But if he gets healed, then I'm going to be like, he believed it. Okay.

That was my little silly analogy I thought of. And I don't know whether you're really saved or not, and you don't know whether you're really saved or not by telling me what you believe or how you believed it or when you decided that. You know you're saved by looking at your life.

Did you get healed? Okay. That's the thing. Genuine disciples, Jesus says, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.

Well, abiding in Jesus' word is abiding in what has been revealed in his word about him. That he's God. That he's our substitute.

That he's the only hope of salvation. That he's Lord. Look up here.

That he's the reason for living. That he's the purpose for life itself. That all that really matters in this world is to live and serve Jesus Christ.

Live for him and serve him. If there's a growing pattern of that in your life, you are his disciple indeed. So I found myself reflecting as I prepared this message.

I've been following Jesus Christ. I professed my faith in Christ when I was seven years old, a little boy, seven years old. So this year I've been following Christ for 40 years.

Am I knowing the truth and is the truth setting me free? Am I abiding in Jesus' words and proving to be his disciple? So I began to reflect upon that and I wrote this down. Some of you who are newer to Harvest, maybe not so sure. Those of you who have known me longer.

I wrote down this and I want you to do this analysis yourself. I'm more loving than I used to be. My heart for the people in our church and their true spiritual condition.

I think when I was a young pastor there was just so much I didn't get about what's really on the line here. And so I think the Lord's making me more loving. And it might surprise some of you to know I'm more truthful.

I just really have less regard for anything other than what is true. Less interest really in what you think about it or if you believe it or if you care. I want to speak it lovingly but I just want to speak the truth, you know.

I'm not particularly burdened that you're going to get rattled about whether you're saved or not. I want you to get rattled about whether you're saved or not, okay. I don't think you're going to be up in heaven and go, man I wish you hadn't worked me through that.

I think you're going to be like, man thanks for making sure I really had this, you know. More loving, more truthful. You know you probably feel this way yourself.

I think as time goes on you just get more humble. Less sure of yourself. Less confident really of anything other than the Lord.

I can't tell you how many times I felt the Lord's hand on my back putting me on my knees. And I just think that's the work of the gospel going on in our lives. I find I'm more confident in God than I used to be.

When things aren't going the way that I want them to, I just find I have a greater capacity to say I just don't know when this is going to work out but I believe it is. I just believe it's going to work out. And I'm saying all that to say that I've really done some, am I happy with my life? Not entirely satisfied I can tell you.

Do I have a lot more growing to do? Without question. But I mean I hope it doesn't frustrate you to have me say as I really really looked at it, I'm saved. I mean who wants to go to a church where the pastor's not saved, right? And there's no pride in saying that.

But you have to have it, loved one. You have to have this growing thing in your life. You have to be able to observe I'm not what I could be, I'm not what I should be, but I am not what I was.

There has to be a growing, growing from glory. Listen, we all with unveiled faces are beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord and are daily being changed into that image. That's the life of a follower of Jesus.

So genuine disciples abide in Jesus' words. Jot this third thing down. And this is so key.

Abiding leads to freedom. That's why he says if you abide in my word you're truly my disciples and you'll know the truth and the truth will set you free. That is the life of a Christian.

If you really believe you're going to abide in my words and if you abide in my words you're going to begin to know the truth. And guess what's going to happen? The truth is going to set you free. Day after day, week after week, month after month, there's going to be a growing pattern of freedom in your life.

That's how you know you're saved. Okay? You're abiding in his word and there's a growing pattern of freedom in your life. The word abiding means continuing as I said.

Remaining. All right? And it leads to true freedom when Jesus says and you'll know the truth. That's not just in your head by the way.

It's not just I got the facts. I memorized John 3 16. I got it.

I got it. I got it. All right? But it's an experience.

The word in the original is an experiential knowledge. Not just head but hard understanding of the facts. Look at and they matter to me and it moves me.

I'm not tired of the gospel. I'm not bored with it. It's not some stale thing that I learned in Bible school.

Okay? It is a greater and greater treasure to me. It means more and more to me the gospel. That's the idea.

I know it and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. Jot these two words down. James, free from what? Number one, power.

Free from the power of sin. That's what he's talking about. Even when I want to do what is right, what is best for me, what I know is for my own good, before Christ I did the wrong.

I wanted to do the right. I did the wrong. Now sometimes I still want to do the right and I do the wrong.

But more and more I want to do the right. I really do. And more and more I do choose the right.

I'm not where I used to be. I'm not bothered by the truth. It's not an irritant to me.

It's not an inconvenience to my agenda. More and more I'm getting free from the power of sin. Sin used to be able to say to me, do this.

And I'd be like, okay. Now sin says to me, do this. And I'm like, I don't want to feel like that made me feel last time.

I don't want that in my life. I want this is way better for me. And the power of sin is broken in my life.

We've talked about that a lot from Romans 6. The power of sin and then the pain of sin. The hurtful, destructive consequences of sin. When God says don't, he means don't hurt yourself.

Choose to sin, choose to suffer. That's not something Pastor James says anymore. I know that myself.

I don't want to suffer the consequences of choosing sin. I don't want to go back down that hallway again. I don't like it.

It only makes me miserable. I've had enough of that. See, free from the power of sin and growing freedom from the pain of sin.

You know, freedom is a word that's so misunderstood, isn't it? So many young people are clamoring for freedom as they do in every generation. See, we are free not when we can do what we feel will make us happy. That is not freedom.

Freedom is not the ability to do what I feel will make me happy. Freedom is desiring to do what you should do. That's real freedom.

And that's the growing pattern in the life of a believer. Not just do's and don'ts. I want to do the right thing.

I want to. And what I want is right. I want the right, and I want to do it.

Freedom. Notice that Jesus says, you shall know the truth, and the truth will shall set you free. And clearly there's a process implied there, and this is the part I want you to get.

There won't be many people here who have never professed their faith in Christ. If you haven't, you'll have an opportunity here today. There won't be many people who haven't done that.

Most of the people sitting here have professed their faith in Christ. What I'm telling you is, is you don't know whether you are truly converted because many people believe in Jesus. They prophesy in his name.

They cast out demons in his name. They do lots of stuff. The way that you know you're saved is do you abide in his word? And then by abiding in his word is there a growing pattern of freedom from sin in your life.

Freedom from the pain of sin. Freedom from the power of sin. Okay? Now the text, because I just want to go through the text with you.

I'm at verse 32 now. You'll know the truth, and the truth will make you free. Now the text kind of goes back through those same points in reverse.

Many people believe in Jesus. Genuine disciples abide in his words. Abiding leads to freedom.

Now I'm on page two. False disciples don't recognize bondage. If you are saved, you're abiding in his word.

You love his word more and more, and you're doing it increasingly, and it's leading to freedom. If you're not a true disciple, you're like bondage. Notice in verse 33, they answered him, we're the offspring of Abraham, which it's hard for us to appreciate this, all right? But the Jews were so proud of their spiritual heritage.

They're like, do you know who our daddy is? Do you have any idea who you're talking to? We are the spiritual elite of the universe, all right? We are descendants of Abraham. They were so offended. They answered him, we're offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone.

How is it that you can say you'll become free? Now if you're doubting even for a minute that these people are unsaved, just jot down some of these references. In verse 33, they verbally oppose Jesus and say he has a demon. In verse 48, they verbally abuse him further.

Verse 48, they call him a Samaritan and say he has a demon. And then in verse 59, they try to stone him, okay? So how many people would agree that if Jesus came in here today, the people who rose up and rushed to the front and tried to throw rocks at him probably aren't the saved among us, okay? I think that's probably not refutable. So they're very prideful and they say, we are offspring of Abraham.

We have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say you'll become free? Well, here's how. False disciples don't recognize their bondage.

No awareness of personal sin or its hold on their life. You talk to an unsaved person and God's not really working in their life at this point. You point out to them their sin.

They're like, what are you talking about? You get out of my face, man. I don't have no sin problem. It's not wrong what I'm doing.

And they'll back you away. No awareness of personal sin. None at all.

How can you say you will be free? They were insulted. Don't you know who you're talking to? And notice how Jesus responds in verse 34. Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.

What an interesting way of phrasing it. How gracious the Lord is. He says, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.

So question, who commits sin? Who commits sin? Lift up your voice. Who commits sin? Everyone. So when he says everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin, what's he really saying? Not only we're all sinners, but we're all slaves to sin.

He's like, you say you've never been in bondage to anyone? Yeah, well, everyone's a slave of sin. Everyone. Except Jesus.

He never sinned. He was God. But every human being born in sin, chose to sin, all of us sinful, sinful people.

If that bothers you, you're like, I'm Abraham's descendant. I've never been in bondage to anyone. Bible says it over and over.

All we like sheep have gone astray. Each one of us has turned to his own way. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

All of us are sinners. No perfect people here. No perfect, just forgiven people here at this church.

No perfect people. Some have big sins. Some have little sins.

Some people think their sins are big, but they're little. Some people think they're little, but they're big. Just a room full of sinners here.

False disciples, though, will not recognize this. Genuine disciples recognize their sinfulness. Jesus says, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.

False disciples are not especially convicted by their sin. Not enough to repent. Not enough to change.

Not enough to hunger for freedom from their bondage and the pain it produces. They might talk a good talk. They might act a spiritual game, but push them about their sin, you're going to have a blow up.

Okay? So let's do a little bondage check up here. Just a little bondage because a sin is slavery, and if you're a true disciple, you have a growing pattern of freedom. If you're a false disciple, you have some slavery in your life.

You're slave to sin. So here's a little bondage check up. Five questions to ask yourself.

Number one, do you have a secret sin that is increasing its control on your life? Do you have a secret, maybe a secret sensual sin? By secret, I mean maybe no one even knows about it except for you. And instead of its control, because all of us know what it's like to other things. But here's the question I'm asking you.

Not do you know about it, but is it encroaching on your life or is freedom encroaching on its control? Is it getting better or worse? Are you getting free or more deeply into bondage? Because the people who are not truly saved are going deeper and deeper into bondage. And the ones who are truly saved are going higher and higher and further and further into freedom. So do you have a secret sin that is increasing its control, its intensity in your life? Or do you have a story that's really the opposite of that? Number two, do you have a capacity to hold on to an offense? If someone slights you, if someone injures you, God forbid if someone abuses you emotionally or physically, do you have a capacity to hold on to that thing? And I will not forget and I will review this and I will make you pay.

That's a bondage. That's a bondage. And the disciples of Jesus, they're increasingly forgiving.

And the false disciples, they're increasingly offended and bothered and angry. Find a false disciple in their 50s or 60s, angry, angry, bitter. What you did, you did me wrong.

I will never forget it. That's not a true Christian. A true Christian has a desire to reconcile.

A true Christian is always holding out the olive branch. It might take me a day or a week or a month to get myself right after what happened, but I'm going to find a way to let go of that and give it to God, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ has forgiven you. All right.

Do you have a capacity to hold on to an offense or do you have a need to reconcile as truly saved people do? Number three, do you have a reflex reaction to reminders about sin in your life? Okay. So, you know, here, stand up for a second. You know, when if you had like a little sensitive spot, let's just imagine for a moment that you had had open heart surgery this week and I didn't know it and I was just like, how's it going? And like every time I touched you, you're like, like that.

Well, that would be very understandable. But do you know that some people are like that, Chris? Did you know that some people are like that spiritually? And coming to church becomes a really difficult thing for them because what happens is it might be happening to you right now and I don't even know it and I don't mean it, but I'm, and you're like, yeah. Martha, get your things.

We are out of here right now. Not a great sign. Not a great sign.

And I'm not saying that I'm easy to listen to. God forgive me. All I'm saying is, is that the true disciples have a hunger for the truth, the truly saved and the unsaved, anything that just broaches their pride.

They're like, get off of it like that. Okay. Number four.

Do you find overt discussions about spiritual intensities, disquieting or even aggravating? Do you find that if you're in a conversation and someone's like, I love the Lord so much and wasn't that a blessing what happened here? And I'm just telling my brother about Christ and how he can change his life. And people start talking about the Lord and you don't like it. Can we go back to the cubs, please? Can we talk about the weather for a few minutes? Because you're really getting on my nerves over here.

Do you know what I'm talking about? Not a great sign. Unsaved. I don't care how many cards you signed, how many times you've been baptized.

I don't care. You're going to hear I never knew you if when the things of the Lord come up and you're like, get off of that. Last question.

Do you battle a critical spirit toward people who appear devoted to Christ? Do you secretly, as I'm preaching God's word, do you secretly, are you arguing with me right now? Are you just like, no, no, no, no. He says in the Bible, I don't know. Are you arguing? Or when the worship team's up there singing, when all those beautiful kids were singing, do you find yourself saying, yeah, but their parents are so brainwashed.

Them, those kids, those poor kids. Wait till they get to college. They'll figure it out.

There's people like that. They come to church every week. And then the worship team's up there singing.

You're like, she's so phony. She's just up there for her own. She just wants it.

He, I know. But there's people like that. You say, some of you are giving me this look like, are there really people like that? There really are.

You might be sitting beside someone like that. Not a good sign. False disciples don't even recognize bondage.

Hopefully we've drawn a clear picture of that for you. You've never been in bondage to anyone. And then this is the key.

And it might happen to some this week. We'll call this message subtitled Operation Crowd Reduction. Okay.

All right. We won't need to be shuttling for a few weeks. Because here's the fifth thing.

False disciples don't remain in Christ. They just don't. You say, you got a verse for that? Yes, I do.

Verse 35. The slave does not remain in the house forever. Now, can you say that without your heart breaking? The slave will not remain in the house forever.

The slave will eventually say, I've heard enough of this. I'm not going to go over there and have the pride turned over in my heart every week like some giant rototiller. I don't want it.

The slave will not remain in the house forever. And some of you, sadly, are here without family members who will not be here because the slave will not remain in the house forever. Or 1 John says it this way, 1 John chapter 2, they went out from us because they were not of us.

If they had have been of us, they would have remained with us. But they went out from us so that it might be manifested they were not of us. And eventually what happens is that the false disciple eventually defects, walks away.

And when it's someone in our family, we become so burdened and concerned for the person. But in reality, the true spiritual condition is being revealed. And there's grace even in that.

If we don't try to couch it with something else, if we tell it like it really is, not saved. Not yet. Not yet.

Again. Verse 35. The slave does not remain in the house forever.

The son remains forever. Once saved, what? Always saved. Once saved, always saved.

Say it. Once saved, always saved. If you're truly saved.

Time will tell. We're going to watch. Okay.

And next time someone comes up to you and says, are you saved? Don't go, yeah, I am. I believe. Okay.

That's like saying I'm in Cincinnati because I know how to get there. Okay. You're saved.

You know you're saved through faith in Christ at a point in time. You know you're saved by the growing pattern of abiding in Jesus' words and knowing the truth that sets you free. No growing pattern.

No assurance of salvation. False disciples don't remain in Christ. And by the way, I would just say this.

You pray this for our church. This is one of the importances of strong biblical preaching. Because if you don't preach the truth, what happens? There's no reason to defect.

If I'm just giving a lot of pop talks on felt needs and blah, blah, blah. The false disciples, they don't leave. There's no reason to leave.

He's talking about all the things that interest me. There are churches all around America and all around the world filled with tears. Filled with tears.

There's no departing. There's no leaving. There's no need to do so.

Because there's not enough truth there to even offend someone. Just a lot of pop psychology and shallow teaching that makes people feel good till Tuesday. It doesn't set you free.

All in favor of freedom. Listen, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. Many people believe in Jesus.

Genuine disciples abide in his words. Abiding leads to freedom. False disciples don't even recognize bondage and they don't remain in Christ.

Therefore, if the son makes you free, you will be truly free. Let's bow together in prayer. Father, how good that we could spend these moments together as a church family, gathered in various places, but one in spirit, one in commitment to your truth.

Thank you for the good news of the gospel that sins can be forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ. Lord, right now I just want to pray for anyone here who has never come to know him whom to know is life eternal. Who has never received the free gift of salvation through repentance and faith.

If you're here and you're saying to yourself, you know, I'm not saved. Heaven would receive you in this moment. If you would just pray simply from your heart, God, I know that I'm a sinner.

I acknowledge the fact that I've broken your laws and I'm deserving your judgment. But I do believe that Jesus died to pay for my sin and I do believe that he rose from the dead to prove that he is God. And right

now I confess him as my Lord and Savior.

Jesus said, if you'll confess me before men, I'll confess you before my father. And so I want to encourage you if you prayed that prayer from your heart. I'm not going to give an invitation today.

I'm not going to have you walk to the front. It's not wrong to do that, but I don't feel led to do that. I'm going to ask you to do something more difficult than that.

If you prayed that prayer from your heart and you meant it, I want you to tell someone about it before this day ends. I want you to go to someone and say, I prayed to commit my life to Christ today to ask him to forgive my sins. I received the gift of eternal life.

I did it and I meant it and I settled it. You tell them that. The focus of this message, though, has been upon people who came in here already professing.

But the truth is, is that you see an alarming gap between what you profess and what you're actually living. You've not been abiding in Jesus' words. There's not a growing pattern of freedom and righteousness in your life, and you know there's not.

But you do love Christ and you do want to live for him. And so today your decision is, I'm coming back to the focus of living for Jesus Christ, not just resting in some eternal salvation promise, but living the life of a Christian as a way of evidencing what I profess. If I was just verbalizing the decision that you want to make because you've been listening to this, just slip your hand up high and hold it up and say, yes, James, I want to give a better demonstration in my life that I'm following Jesus Christ.

I am seeking a growing pattern of freedom. Hold it up high and don't take it down. Hold your hand up high till it's tired.

Yes, I want to give a truer demonstration of abiding in Jesus Christ and growing freedom. Father, I pray for every one of these people with their hand lifted up right now and as they feel in their body the weight of a hand high in the air, let them feel even greater still the weight of a life that must match what it says is true. We want to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Faith without works is dead, and we know that we cannot save ourselves. That is by grace alone, but as an offering of our gratitude for the salvation you have given, we want to live a life that is pleasing to you, holy. So help us, we pray.

Give us strength. Cause sin to repulse us. Cause righteousness to draw our heart like a magnet.

Cause us to be more loving. Cause us to be more forgiving. Cause us to be less easily offended and more hungry for right relationships.

Forgive our pride and help us we pray to give a true demonstration of a life that is grateful for this great gift of salvation. How great you are to give it to us, God. How great you are to save us.

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