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Evidence and Effect of Truth

John 8:28-32

Intro: We are continuing our study of the last real, open conversation that Jesus will have with the religious leaders in the Gospel of John. Over the previous few chapters we've witnessed the steady deterioration of the relationship between them. This "falling out" began in ch5 after Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath, offending the Jews (leaders) and their traditional sensibilities. Jesus then leaves Judah to minister in Galilee. Upon His return, He finds that the religious authorities hadn't forgotten His earlier offense and are further incensed by Jesus' teaching of the truth.

Then we watched as they tried to eliminate Jesus by having Him arrested, but they failed. Then they tried to discredit Jesus and His teaching by trying to force Him to pass judgment on the woman taken in adultery. When that didn't work, they tried to disqualify His testimony concerning Himself based on a legal technicality. But, Jesus proved to be too smart for them in that as well. Finally, the last card they had to play was ridicule. As we saw last week, they began to make fun of Jesus by asking Him some very insulting questions. Jesus doesn't respond in shock or anger. Still, He does give honest and revealing answers to these scornful questions; answers that provide the strongest statements yet delivered in John that concerned the eternal fate of the lost. All except for the last question (v25).

Jesus' opponents had asked him, "Who are you?" Jesus doesn't really provide a direct response to this question. He merely reiterates that what He has said previously concerning Himself is true because it came from God the Father. Of course, His audience failed to grasp His meaning. They didn't recognize that He was speaking about the Father. For all of their education and religious acumen, these men suffered from an acute case of spiritual blindness that was directly related to their unwillingness to accept His claims as valid. But, Jesus is not willing to leave them in their blindness. He will provide an adequate answer to their insulting question in the very next verse, the first in our text.

28-29- In response to their question "Who are you?" Jesus declares that not only would He be lifted up but also that certain consequences will result

from this. What does lifted up mean? In some contexts, it means to exalt or elevate something. There are praise songs that talk about lifting Jesus up, of making Him prominence known by our worship and our lives. This is a wonderful concept but this is not what Jesus is talking about here. He's talking about His crucifixion. These 2 words – lifted up – bring us to some wonderful truths that are emphasized in the Gospel of John.

To fully understand what this phrase means we should take note that John mentions in 3 different places that Jesus will be lifted up and taken together, they will provide for us the full force of his teaching. The first text is in **3:14-15**. It stresses the necessity of His crucifixion. The 2nd is our text today and the 3rd is in **12:32**. These 3 passages actually carry us to the heart of John's Gospel and a proper study of them will reveal the consequences of this theme.

3:14-15- this verse makes it abundantly clear what is meant by this phrase. It doesn't mean to lift up Christ in our preaching, our worship or our lives although we certainly should. It means to be lifted up on the cross in death. This verse compares Jesus being lifted up to the lifting up of the serpent on a pole in the wilderness when many of the Israelites were bitten by deadly poison snakes and were dying. This verse also stresses the divine necessity of Christ's death (must). But why was it necessary for Christ to die?

It was necessary because nothing else could accomplish God's purpose. First, no one else existed who could pay the price of our sin so that we might be forgiven of our sin and go free. No man could do it. Men are sinners and each must pay the price of their own transgressions (unless they are Christ's). Only Jesus, who is more than a man and without sin, could pay the price of sin and so save us and so He did.

Second, it was also necessary for Christ to die because nothing but a crucified Christ will draw men to God. Nothing but this will even draw men to hear preaching. Political ideology doesn't draw men to God. It draws lots of people, but doesn't draw them to God. Man-centered religion and cults do not draw people to God. In fact, only the most callused of hearts can abide it for very long but not those who are honestly seeking truth. Only a crucified Christ – preached in the power of the Holy Spirit – will draw lost men and woman to God. Preach the gospel of a Savior who atoned for the sins of the lost by dying in their place and you will have hearers and you will draw them

to the Father.

8:28- Here, the emphasis of the phrase is on the fact that the religious leaders would come to know certain things about Jesus, the truth about Him, only after they had killed Him. In this light, the verse points to the cross as the only basis for true knowledge in spiritual things. This truth is seen in 2 ways. 1) It's only at the cross that the stubborn and rebellious will of man is conquered. A rebellious will is man's biggest problem. It was evident from the very beginning. God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and only gave them 1 rule, just 1, and they just had to break it. They couldn't not break it! Now, since a rebellious will is the major obstacle to receiving God's truth and since it's only at the cross that this obstacle is removed; then it stands to reason that its only at the cross that the light of God's revelation is enabled to illuminate the soul.

Also, it's in the glory of the cross and the manifestations of God's power that surround it (resurrection, ascension) that we have the fullest proof of the divinity of Jesus and truth of His teachings. The evidence provided by the cross leads people to knowledge. It proves beyond any doubt the accuracy of His testimony and His teachings.

Jesus is telling the religious rulers here that after He is lifted up (after His crucifixion, resurrection and ascension), they would no longer be ignorant of who He is and would know that He is Jehovah. What happened at the moment Jesus died? A darkness had already fallen over the countryside and there was an earthquake. But, the most telling and spiritually revealing event that occurred simultaneously with His death was when the temple curtain, the massive veil whose sole purpose was to conceal the divine glory in the holy of Holies was torn in two from top to bottom. Even the pagan centurion in command of the execution detail proclaimed, "Truly this Man was the Son of God."

These are sobering words. What they mean is that all those religious leaders who rejected Christianity in the early chapters of Acts did so for the most part, not out of a lack of knowledge about Jesus but because of sin! They knew who Jesus was, at least most of them did and yet, they would not have Him as their Savior. Sadly, we see the same attitude today. Never has there been a period in history when there was more knowledge about Jesus available, free for the taking, than there is today and yet, so few people are willing to follow Him. A lack of knowledge can hardly be used as

an excuse by those of our well-educated and informed generation.

12:32- this verse speaks of the drawing power of the crucifixion. It says the crucified Christ is the great attraction. But exactly in what way does Jesus as the crucified Son of God draw men and women to Himself?

1) Christ crucified meets the 1st, deepest, greatest and most fundamental need of man: a Savior from the guilt of sin.

Every person of every race has sinned (**Rom 3:23**). We're all in the same boat and its sinking fast. Also, every sinner will have to answer for their sin to an infinitely holy God. Thus, all men need an atoning Savior who can, by His atoning death, pay the price for their sin. People know their need tho many try to forget it, ignore it or drowned it out by all sorts of means but the guilt of sin will not be ignored for long. It comes creeping back into the conscience in the wee hours of the morning, robbing its victims not only of their sleep but of their piece of mind. Nothing can give the guilty conscience any abiding peace except the atoning blood of Jesus Christ.

2) Christ lifted up on the cross draws all men unto Him because in being lifted up to die for us, Jesus reveals His wonderful love and the wondrous love of the Father for us (**I John 3:16a**; **Rom 5:8**). There is nothing that draws men like love and no other love draws like the love of God. A few years back, Focus On the Family bought a commercial spot during the Super Bowl. The whole commercial was just little children quoting parts of John 3:16 in order. It was such a simple message but it was reported that the response to that spot was overwhelming. The love of God conquers, the love of God draws. The vision of Jesus Christ lifted up for our sins has won millions to the Lord.

The religious leaders asked, "Who are you?" but no adequate answer can be provided for that question until the Son of Man is lifted up; that will be the definitive answer. The cross is important because it was absolutely necessary to God's eternal plan to save sinners; it's the basis for all true knowledge in spiritual matters and it draws sinful, rebellious individuals to Jesus by the unimaginable and unfathomable love that it displays.

30- When the religious leaders heard Jesus speak, they only became more opposed to Him. But, there were many in the crowd who heard the very same words and they believed in Him! They believed despite the opposition

of the rulers. Jesus message was so well received by some because His life was consistent with the message. He didn't just talk about unity with the Father, He demonstrated it in His actions, teachings and dealings with other people.

31-32- There's a minute discrepancy between **vs30-31**; it's almost impossible to notice if you're not looking for it specifically but once you see it, it then becomes impossible to ignore. In **vs30**, John says "many believed in Him" but in **vs31** Jesus begins to speak to those who merely believed Him. These verses make a distinction between those who had believed on Jesus for salvation and those who just believed certain things that He had said.

Now, some may wonder if it is actually possible to believe certain things about Jesus, or believe what He has said and still fail to believe on Him. The obvious answer is – of course! We have several Biblical example of this failure. Judas – one of the 12: he clearly believed something about Jesus; enough to be one of the earliest preachers. But, Judas was not a converted man. Then there's Simon the sorcerer in **Acts 8**. He believed after he had seen the miracles and signs that Peter and the other apostles performed. He was baptized and became a member of the church. But he was not a true believer either and later was rebuked for his unbelief by Peter. The greatest example is all the demons, of which James tells us that they "believe and tremble." Each of these believed certain things about Jesus but they did not and still do not believe unto salvation.

The story is told of the French acrobat who made a name for himself in America by walking a tightrope across the Niagara Falls. Once he pushed a wheelbarrow across. Another time he stopped in the middle and cooked an omelet.

Once, he carried a man across on his back and then turned around and carried him back. After he put his rider down, he turned to a man in the audience close by and asked, "Do you believe that I could do that with you?" "Of course," the man says, "I've just seen you do it." "Well, hop on and I'll carry you across!" "Not on your life!" he says.

That's the difference between believing something on an intellectual level only and the belief that the Bible calls for when it asks us to believe on Christ. To believe in the biblical sense is to commit yourself to Christ, to trust

Him to carry you over the churning waters and whirlpools of life. The other belief is only intellectual assent. God wants the first kind of belief. Jesus' words were not directed at those who had believed properly, but to those who had believed only on the inadequate, intellectual level. It was to these people, the weak in faith that Jesus speaks to in [vs31a-32](#).

We should understand that Jesus is not reprimanding them for their weak faith. The point here is that Jesus takes notice of this inadequate faith and seeks to encourage it. Intellectual belief is not saving faith, but saving faith may come from such beginnings. Jesus speaks to those who only believed His teachings and tries to lead them farther. He doesn't disparage their small faith but neither does He praise it. He offers them a conditional sentence, "If..." He doesn't send them away nor does He promise the blessings of the Christian life. There is still more to be received. "You believe something; believe more! Continue in My word until you come to rest in Me as your Savior."

Jesus doesn't just encourage them to continue in their faith, He provide them with tangible incentives to bring this about. 1) Verified discipleship – they would not be disciples in name only (as many are today) but true disciples.

A true disciple doesn't have to go around telling everyone what they are because the truth will be self-evident. You don't have to be a part-time, hit or miss disciple – be a thoroughbred by continuing (abiding) in His word (teachings).

2) Know the truth – you will have certain knowledge in spiritual things. You won't know everything but what you do know you will be certain of. This sounds strange in a day and age where all truth is thought to be relative. Sadly, the statement itself is illogical but that doesn't prevent a lot of people from believing it. Jesus promises truth and the certainty of it ([John 7:17](#)).

3) Set free – Jesus Himself will set you free; thus, your freedom will be on a higher and greater level than anything men can offer. In Christ, we are set free from three terrible masters: sin, self, and Satan. We are set free from them to serve Jesus.

In our text we have seen both the evidence and effect of truth. The evidence of the truth of Christ's teachings and His testimony concerning Himself and

the Father are clearly displayed in His crucifixion. The cross proves His claims, it proves His obedience and it proves His unity with and complete submission to the father's plan of salvation.

The effect of truth is that it makes disciples, true disciples. It provides certain spiritual knowledge and makes that knowledge certain. It brings freedom! There's nothing like the freedom we can have in Jesus Christ. No money can buy it, no status can obtain it, no works can earn it and nothing can match it. But this freedom can never be found except by abiding in God's word and being Christ's disciple.

Do you believe on Jesus or do you just believe Him? There is an eternity of difference between the 2. 1 is the best possible position to be in: having an atoning Savior who has paid for your sin and enables you to live for Him. The other is the worst possible position to be in: thinking you have a Savior when you actually do not. Churches are full of people just like this. Don't let one of those people be you! 😊