

Teaching Points

We're in the midst of a lengthy conversation between Christ and some Jews. Throughout the conversation we've seen some mighty claims from Jesus. Alongside Christ's claims we've also seen resistance from His audience. Basically, these verses depict the light of the world speaking truth to a crowd that's not willing to receive His claims.

There are several comments from Christ that reveal why His hearers don't receive His sayings. In verse 19 He says that they do not know His Father. In verse 23 He tells them that they are of this world. And then in verse 37 He tells them that His word has no place in them.

Our focus for tonight is going to be on verses 37-47. In this section of the conversation Jesus makes an important distinction between being physical and spiritual descendants of Abraham. As we'll see, this crowd is sadly deluded. They believe they are children of Abraham but Jesus tells them they are actually children of the devil!

See how this crowd rested in their identity as ethnic descendants of Abraham. In verse 33 they say, **"We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone."** Then in verse 39 they say, **"Abraham is our father."** They were essentially telling Jesus that they had no need of the freedom He was talking about because they were children of Abraham - and that was supposedly enough.

Think about their position for a moment. Abraham was a great man of faith in the Old Testament. We know that he was the recipient of great promises from God. God made a covenant with Abraham regarding his descendants and blessings that would be brought through them to all the families of the world. Furthermore, we know that he was declared righteous in God's sight because of his faith. **So, these Jews in John 8 draw confidence from the fact that they are related to such a prominent Old Testament figure.** In their minds being a descendant of Abraham means blessing and favor from God.

In verse 37 Jesus acknowledges that these Jews are physically descended from Abraham. **"I know that you are Abraham's descendants..."** He doesn't deny the fact that they are genuine ethnic Jews. But He wants them to understand that being a physical descendant of Abraham isn't enough.

Discussion Question: What does it mean to be a true child of Abraham?

Thoughts: *The apostle Paul speaks directly to this issue in Galatians 3. Galatians 3:7, "Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham." Galatians 3:9, "So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham." Abraham was a man who lived by faith! That's the defining feature of his relationship with God. So then, only those who live by faith can truly be considered sons and daughters of Abraham. Having faith like Abraham is more important than sharing ancestral bloodlines with him.*

Sadly, this crowd shares Abraham's blood but not his faith. They claimed to be Abraham's children - but they acted nothing like him. That's why Jesus says, **"If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham."** (v. 39). Jesus makes it clear that these people are not Abraham's children - at least not in the way that matters most.

All this leads Christ to a devastating conclusion. These people are not children of Abraham but children of the devil! He tells them plainly in verse 44. **"You are of your father the devil..."** Note the following about Christ's explanation here:

1. These people are not able to understand Christ's speech nor listen to His words (v. 43). Jesus is talking about a moral inability on their part. It's not that they're merely unwilling to hear Christ. According to Jesus, they cannot receive His sayings. In other words, they lack the ability to respond the right way. This is part of what it means to be a child of the devil.

2. Their rejection of Christ is consistent with their desires. This is not a group of people who desperately want to believe Jesus but are being blocked by God. In reality, as this crowd rejects Christ's claims they are doing precisely what they want. See verse 44, **"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do."** Again, their unbelief is not forced on them against their will - it's acted out according to their desires.

3. Our choices flow out of our nature. The devil is referred to as a liar and a murderer from the beginning (v. 44). His children are just like him - liars and murderers. Jesus calls them liars (v. 55) and twice accuses them of wanting to murder Him (vs. 37, 40). On the other hand, God is referred to as the one who speaks truth (v. 26, 31-32). His children are just like Him - truth lovers. Jesus says God's children hear the truth and live in freedom (vs. 36, 47).

This is the reason for verse 37, **"He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."**

So, what is the take away from all this? What's the bottom line? These words paint a grim picture of unregenerate humans. We are by nature **"children of wrath"**. This crowd is a vivid picture of what it means to be dead in trespasses and sins. They reject Christ's claims because they cannot receive His word. This is the bad news.

But we end our study tonight by referring back to verses 34-36. Jesus Christ has the power to take slaves of sin and make them free. He is the light of the world who overcomes the darkness.

So, there is no hope for enslaved sinners except that the Son of God might have mercy on them and set them free? Yes. That's the point. Freedom from sin and eternal life are not found in being physically descended from Abraham. These immeasurable blessings are only found in Christ. **Let us look to Him alone for hope. Let us abide in His word. Praise God for His Son who sets us free!**

Prayer Focus

Reflect on the power of God that raises dead sinners to new life in Christ. This should incite praise, joy, thankfulness, and humility. It should also cause us to not lose hope for a lost and dying world.