

Continue In My Word

John 8:31-36



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FOCAL Read Responsively John 8:31-36 KJV Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue¹ in my word, [then] are ye my disciples indeed; {32} **And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.** {33} They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? {34} **Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.** {35} And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: [but] the Son abideth ever. {36} **If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.**

What is the *focus* of the Christian? What is the *purpose* that should drive us? Jesus summarized it this way:

"Continue or Remain in My Word"

This is the *core*, the *kernel* of His teaching, the *meat* of the lesson today. Focus on His Word. Continue in His Teaching.

1. The Saved Must Dwell In Christ's Word

FOCAL John 8:31 ^{KJV} Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, **If ye continue in my word, [then] are ye my disciples indeed**

Somehow within the Church of Christ we have become

¹ Aorist Active Subjunctive (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries) G3306, μένω, menō, *men'-o*, A primary verb; to *stay* (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy): - abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, tarry (for), X thine own.

confused over *what constitutes a Christian*. Christians are those who are *saved by faith in Christ*. The Bible tells us:

Titus 3:5-6 KJV "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; {6} Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

When you come to Christ trusting in Him then He comes to you. When you come to Christ admitting your fallen estate, *repenting* of your former life, and turning to Him, the Holy Spirit comes into your life. The Spirit of Christ *washes* you in the Blood, cleanses you, makes you whole. This is **shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior**. When you stand in a rainstorm, you're going to get soaked. When you kneel at the Savior's feet a river of Blood flows to wash that which filthy clean. The Christian can say, like David of old,

Psalms 51:7 KJV Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Those who have come and reasoned with God have discovered that great truth, that

Isaiah 1:18 KJV Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as

scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

But listen Beloved: believing in Christ for salvation is *not* the end of salvation, but it is the *beginning* of life. Jesus Christ never taught that, once saved, the saved vessel is free to walk away from the Master or to serve Him only with half a heart. The same context that tells us **not by works of righteousness which we have done** is the same text that tells us:

Titus 3:7-8 KJV "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. {8} [This is] a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

The same passage in **Ephesians 2** which states:

Ephesians 2:8-9 KJV For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God: {9} Not of works, lest any man should boast.

is also the same text which states:

Ephesians 2:10 KJV For we are his

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Illustrate The vessel that Christ has put a hand on is the vessel *destined and purposed for God's service*. The clay that the Master has put on the potter's wheel is the clay that will be shaped and molded to His glory. Only a mad potter would throw clay to the wheel then leave it to itself. Only a *cruel Father* would bring a child into this world, then leave it outside in the elements to find its own way. God does not save then abandon! God saves then *commands and oversees*. God does not call then, like some strange Child play *hide and seek* with those He called. He calls then He, the Infinite Creator of all that we see, begins to work in the life of those whom He loves. To paraphrase C.H. Spurgeon², we know that we are saved when God is at work in our lives. Our salvation is proved by our works! You *shall* be saved if you call upon the Lord. Some of you may say, "Oh, I wish my name were written down in the Bible, then I could know I was saved". Listen Beloved, this would bring me no comfort at all. Look in the Lexington telephone directory and you will discover there may be many others with your very own name. I happen to know that *John White*, though perhaps a unique name to many of you, but would it surprise you to discover that there is a famous *Methodist preacher*, another famous *Puritan preacher* now long deceased, and around *nineteen thousand preachers* with the same name. What of that unique name *David Buffaloe*, what if it were written in the Bible? Why, you may believe that name to be so

2 in his sermon, *One More Cast of the Great Net*, sermon 1931

uncommon that there only be one in the world. But I tell you there are about 211 others with my exact name who have lived or are living. If I found my name written in the *Precious Book of Scripture* I would find no comfort in that at all. But what I and you both should be satisfied in is that we *see Christ's character written in us*. The child of God knows he is saved because Christ is written in your heart, and you want to **continue in His word**.

Those who come to Christ to be saved and then walk away with never a concern for the Master *need to be concerned about their salvation*. Read these words again:

FOCAL John 8:31 KJV Then **said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in My Word, [then] are ye my disciples indeed;**

Jesus spoke this truth - **continue in My Word** - not to *unbelievers* but to *believing Jews*. These people whom He *primarily addressed believed* - that's **past tense** - on Jesus. Now it is certain that there were unbelievers in the crowd - there always are. We see these unbelievers begin to *argue* with Jesus later on in this discourse. But the Holy Text tells us that *those who belong to Christ* are expected to **continue or abide in His Word**. Look further at this text. Jesus now uses what a computer programmer would call a *Boolean statement*. He says:

FOCAL John 8:31 KJV Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, **If ye continue in My**

Word, [then] are ye my disciples indeed;

Illustrate The **if** of Christ's teaching emphasizes that those who have *truly* believed in Christ *will continue* in that state. **Dr. Hoyt Wilson** told an interesting story at Pastor's Conference the other day that relates to this. He said that someone offered to sell his dad a car one day and, after his dad looked it over quickly, he agreed to the sale. Dr. Wilson then said his dad paid the man off and then went back to work. Later on that day Dr. Wilson said his dad went back to the car - a nice looking vehicle - and tried to start it. Nothing happened! When he opened the hood he discovered that the car *had no engine*. It looked good on the outside, but without an engine it was no more than a thousand pound paperweight!

The same is true in the realm of Christianity. Christ said **if you continue in My Word, then you are My disciples**. Those who belong to Jesus *must* continue in His Word *because* they belong to Him. God never takes the clay and leaves it clay. The shepherd boy did not stay in the field, but after God anointed him he became King David. The displaced Jew named Moses runs away from Egypt only to discover a Burning Bush and a Call to Leadership. A rich man from a pagan family in Ur walks away from where he was and becomes Abraham, the father of many nations. A liar and a thief named Jacob meets God and is changed into Israel, the Prince of God and the father of the Chosen People. An unknown fisherman hears the Master call one day and, following Jesus, Peter becomes a fisher of men and an Apostle. Those who followed Christ found themselves molded by

the very hand of God, made better and better with each passing day. The *pauper* became a *prince* because the *pauper* surrendered to the *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*. The *blind and leprous* were made to see, and the *dead walked in life* because they all met Jesus. Those who belong to Jesus **continue in His Word** because they must. He is the Creator, and we are the Created. He is the Potter and we are the Clay.

FOCAL John 8:32 KJV **And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**

Those who are in Christ's employment agency find themselves *bettered*, not worsened. I have never met anyone who said to me at the end of life's journey, "Oh, I wish I had never followed Christ. How much fun I missed in life, how much joy I could have had if I hadn't followed Him. Oh, I wish I had spent more time in sin's embrace, because sin is so lovely, so precious, so filling to me". Nay, nay I tell you. When I have talked with people on their deathbed their lamentation has always been that they *wish they could have done more for God*. They are uncertain about the future, and concerned about their final destination in eternity. I have even talked to older Christians who, when I tell them about the wonders of Heaven and the glorified body which Christ has promised us, they say "Oh, I hope so". They sigh and *hope* for a better home, *hope* that they will make it in to eternity. Why is this? Perhaps because they have not felt the fingerprint of God on their lives.

Illustrate They fear that - if they go to the tomb - they will find that it is not empty but that it contains the bones

of Christ. They fear because perhaps they *have not continued in His Word*, and because they have not continued in His Word they do not feel Him to be close. The tomb is empty, My Beloved, yet only those who **continue in His Word** have that assurance. The disciples who huddled hidden in the locked room were not the first to see the Risen Savior. Keep your eyes on the world, keep your eyes *on the unbeliever and fear him* rather than God, and you will never see Him. But, *be like Mary*³ and *seek the Master*, and you shall be the first⁴ to see Him. When you **continue in His Word** you see the tomb empty, the stone rolled away, and the Master ever before you. You will find Him to be true to what He has said:

FOCAL John 8:32 KJV And **ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**

that you are **free indeed**. When you surrender your life to Christ's Word, and *focus on His Will and not yours*, you find that you are truly free. You are free from the fear of man and you are free from the fear of death. You are freed from sin. You are freed from Satan.

You are part of the Family of God!

3 Mark 16:9^{KJV} Now when [Jesus] was risen early the first [day] of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

4 John 20:16-18^{KJV} Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. {17} Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and [to] my God, and your God. {18} Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and [that] he had spoken these things unto her.

2. The Unsaved Dwell In Sin's Servitude

FOCAL John 8:33-36 KJV They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? {34} Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. {35} And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: [but] the Son abideth ever. {36} If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Jesus makes it very clear that **whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin**. In the past few years we have heard the phrase *nominal Christian* pop up, and believed that this is a new phenomenon in the Church of America. It seems that now we are supposed to classify Christians as *nominal* (those who are saved but not very committed to Christ) or *notional* (those who consider themselves to be Christian but either do not have a “personal commitment to Jesus Christ” or do not believe that they will experience eternal favor with God based solely on His grace and mercy). For instance, **Dan Brown** the author of the heretical work *The Da Vinci Code* considers himself a Christian. On his website Brown answers the question:

ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN? Yes. Interestingly, if you ask three people what it means to be Christian, you will get three different answers⁵.

Dan Brown is what you might call a *notional Christian*.

5 http://www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci_code/faqs.html

By the way, *nominal and notional Christianity* is not a new thing, but it's been around since the Church was first formed. In 1863 *C.H. Spurgeon* preached a sermon called **Nominal Christians - Real Infidels**, and wrote:

"O my Hearers, as though Christ spoke to you by me, so I ask you this question—**How can you, as candid persons, how can you as honest men, admit this Book to be true, when it tells you that your whole head is sick, and your whole heart faint? When it warns you that, dying as you now are, without a work of Divine Grace in you, you are lost to all eternity—how can you, I say, admit these things to be true, and yet prove by your apathy and carelessness that you do not believe them?**

May God press that inquiry home upon you! **Our Lord Jesus Christ came not only to reveal your need, but also to set forth His claims.** The claims of Jesus of Nazareth are briefly stated by Peter, **"Repent and be converted, everyone of you, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."** He demands repentance—that is, a change of mind—the changing of your mind with reference to sin, caring no more for its pleasures, despising it and turning away from it. A change of mind with regard to holiness—seeking your happiness in it. A change of mind with regard to Christ Himself, so that you shall no longer look upon Him as without form or comeliness,

but as a most precious Savior, such as you need."⁶

Illustrate I will not ask - as Dan Brown says - **three people what it means to be a Christian.** Why ask *unsaved man* what it means to be a son of God? Why ask the *foolish mortal* what it means to be immortal? Why, I'd rather ask a toad frog how to make a biscuit! I'd rather ask an alligator how to be a good parent, or ask a *mosquito* how to *give blood*! Why would I ask this fool anything? Let's instead ask Jesus Christ, the

".. **only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made ..**"⁷

What did Jesus say?

a. A Christian *is not a servant of sin*. We read:

FOCAL John 8:34, 36 ^{KJV} ... Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Those who belong to Satan *serve sin*, and sin is *anything* that is an offense to our God. You can always tell what *sin is* by what *sin does*. **Mark Aulson** said:

6 Nominal Christians—Real Infidels, Volume 9 www.spurgeongems.org, NOMINAL CHRISTIANS—REAL INFIDELS, NO. 492, A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 1, 1863, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

7 The Nicene Creed, 325 AD, Council of Nicea

"Sin has a diminishing factor to it. It always gives it's best in the beginning. It never gets better after that. It only gets worse."

Illustrate Consider two men who could *amen* this statement, Joseph and David of Biblical fame. When *Joseph* was offered to have a little *secret sexual dalliance* with **Potiphar's wife** he ran away from this sin. Because of his faithfulness to God he eventually became the right hand man of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and the savior of his family. Because Joseph was faithful the nation Israel was born, the nation out of which our Blessed Savior *came in the flesh*. If Joseph had been unfaithful and enjoyed the pleasure of secret sin for just a few moments, would he have been the rich, fertile soil by which God would bring forth abundant Grace? Grace begets grace, and blessing begets blessing, but sin begets sin, and cursing begets cursing. Consider now King David who, when he should have been off in battle with his army, languished at home in the sin of sloth. In **2 Samuel 11:2** we see that the sin of sloth allowed his eyes to roam and take in the nakedness of Bathsheba. Once he saw her the Word of Christ was sure. **Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.** David began to dance sin's dance, to serve that master, and look how far he fell before he came back to Christ. Sloth led to *sexual sin* and *lies*, and out of this soil grew up a plant called *murder*. This black garden continued, fertilized by disobedience, until it's fruit became the *blood of innocent Uriah* - Bathsheba's husband - and the *blood of an innocent child*. **Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin**, and those who serve sin find that it pays off in death, not in life. The Scripture warns:

Romans 6:20-23 ^{KJV} For **when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.** {21} What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things [is] death. {22} But **now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.** {23} **For the wages of sin [is] death; but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

The Jews whom Jesus addressed said:

FOCAL John 8:33 ^{KJV} **We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man**

This is a LIE! These people are in bondage right now. They are *physically* in bondage to Rome at this time in Biblical history. In 61 BC Pompei conquered Jerusalem, and from that point in history Israel was subordinate to Rome. In the *spiritual* realm these Jews are yet in bondage to sin. They are doubly in bondage: in bondage to the Roman Empire, and in bondage to sin.

b. A *Christian is a son of God*. The Christian *cannot be nominal nor notional* - the Christian is, by the words of the Master, a **freed son of God**. As a freed son of God you are freed to serve - not sin, but Jesus. Our Lord said:

FOCAL John 8:35-36, 42 ^{KJV} ...the servant abideth not in the house for ever: [but] the Son abideth ever. {36} If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. {42} If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me."

Illustrate The *servant* does not abide in the house forever. Servants come and servants go, depending on the whim of the owner of the house. But *sons abide forever*. One of the jobs I held as a bi-vocational preacher was in a printing company. People were always coming and going. After I had been there about a year the family that ran the company had a small internal dispute and one of the sons who worked there left for other employment. This young man stayed away for about 2 years, but after I left the company he came back and took up his old position. Sons abide forever, but servants come and go.

Those who are Sons of God *must* love THE Son of God. **If God were your Father then you would love Jesus.** Love would be that which drives you to serve Him and not sin. Servants come and go. Sons abide forever. You may have walked away from Jesus for a time, and like the Prodigal Son of Luke 15⁸, come to realize that you have chosen to serve sin rather than the Savior. You find yourself eating with the pigs. You're forcing down the same swill that Satan has convinced the world to eat, and as you gag on this maggoty mess you realize:

Luke 15:17-19 ^{KJV} ... How many hired servants of my

father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! {18} I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, {19} And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

So you get up, and head home with a heart filled with shame. You will throw yourself on the mercy of the Father, hoping that He will receive you. As you top that final hill you see Someone, dimly, standing at the gate of Glory. And as you get closer you realize that it is not a servant who waits for you, but it is Father Who runs to greet you. Nay, you will not eat with the servants, for you are not a servant but a Son. You are not paid wages, but you are called home. God is your Father, and Jesus Christ the One Who brought you into this Great Family of God!

Come home, Beloved. **If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.** May God touch your hearts with these words.