

## Reformation Sunday

### FIRST READING – Revelation 14:6-7

#### *The Messages of the Three Angels*

**6 Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. 7 And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”**

**14:6–13**† The three angels. A message of comfort after the warning (13:11–18) against false teachings. The vision assures the church that false teachers will never silence the preaching of the gospel. (CSB)

Three angels in succession (14:6, 8, 9) now announce the judgment of God on the two beasts conjured up by the dragon. Each angel is introduced as “another [ἄλλο] angel.” This indicates that they are not from among the seven trumpet-angels. They are among the many angels who appear throughout Revelation who are not part of the seven (e.g., the angels in 5:2; 7:1, 2; 10:1; 18:1; 19:17). (CC)

**14:6** *eternal gospel*.† The content of this “good news” is not found in v. 7, which is a summary of the purpose for which the gospel is proclaimed. The gospel is the good news of our redemption through the blood of the Lamb. It is eternal in that it will be preached to the end of time (Mt 24:14). (CSB)

Not a new Gospel, since there is only one (Gal 1:6–8). The messenger proclaims the enduring message of deliverance from evil, just as the new song (v 3) proclaims redemption anew. (TLSB)

The first angel, “flying in mid-heaven” has “the eternal Gospel to proclaim” to all the inhabitants of the earth (14:6). At first glance “Gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον) and the verb “to proclaim [Good News, the Gospel]” (εὐαγγελίζω) seem to be incongruous in this context, for they usually involve “Good News” that brings joy, specifically the forgiveness of sins through faith in the work of Christ (e.g., Rom 1:16–17). But here they include somber news of judgment, for the angel’s loud cry calls for all to “fear God ... because the moment of his judgment has come” (Rev 14:7). However, since this “eternal Gospel” includes also the purpose of moving people to “worship” God as the Creator of all life, this eternal news includes then not only the announcement of judgment (Law) but also the gracious call and invitation to such worship (the Gospel). The surrounding context is explicitly Christological, with 14:1–5 depicting the victorious Lamb and the victory song of the saints. In particular John most likely had in mind the concluding content of the “eternal Gospel”: the announcement of the judgment in view of the Lord Christ’s second coming at the End. For this return of the Lord would also be the final deliverance of God’s people from the dragon, his two beasts, and their hosts (19:1–16). This aspect of the “eternal Gospel” is pointedly suggested in 14:13 when a *blessing* is pronounced upon those who have died and are dying “in the Lord.” In addition, even when the “eternal Gospel” is proclaimed to all the nations for the initial purpose of moving people to “fear God” (14:7) because of their sins and his coming judgment, such proclamation has as its *goal* the repentance and salvation of all through the announcement of Christ’s forgiveness (See Mt. 28:19-20; Lk. 24:44-48; cf. Rev. 15:3-4; 16:8-11). Thus the “eternal Gospel” is the eternal message of God—of both judgment and grace—based on the person and saving work of Jesus Christ. And this eternal message has as a reference point (its end point, the τέλος, Mk 13:7, 13) the second coming of Christ, when he will both judge the unbelievers and deliver his believing followers. (CC)

**14:7** *give him glory* – The stated purpose of proclaiming the “eternal Gospel” is to move people to “fear God” and “give to him glory” and “worship him,” all in view of his coming judgment (14:7). Here is a clear definition of the purpose of proclaiming the eternal message of God. The “fear of Yahweh is the

beginning of wisdom” (Ps 111:10; cf. Job 28:28). Such fear comes from learning about God through hearing his Word (Deut 4:10). Fear of God is an essential part of contrition over sin and repentance (Acts 2:37) and is also a part of one’s faithfulness to God (Acts 9:31; Rev 11:18). Glory (δόξα) is given to God in and through Jesus Christ (Jn 17:5, 22–24; cf. 13:31–32). In particular, God is glorified (δοξάζω) when people come to him in Jesus’ name (Jn 14:13–14; 15:7–8) and when they thank him for what has been done to them by Jesus (Acts 4:21–22; 11:17–18). And it is God’s purpose that he himself thus be glorified through Jesus Christ (1 Pet 4:11), for his Son in exaltation is God’s glory (Acts 7:55). To worship God as the Creator is the end result of fearful repentance and giving glory to God through the redemption wrought by Christ. The heavenly hosts worship God as their Creator (Rev 4:8–11). The saints now join in this worship of God because of the victory of the Lamb on their behalf (5:9–14), the Lamb who by his blood has restored God’s people to their rightful place in worship of him as their Creator and Lord (1:5–6; 4:11). For the end purpose of God’s redemption is the restoration of his creatures so that they recognize and worship him as their God and Creator (Rev. 3:14; 11:15; 21:1, 5-7; cf. Rom. 8:18-25). (CC)

At first blush, this announcement does not sound much like the Gospel. However, it is indeed good news for the faithful, since the saints are repeatedly depicted as suffering at the hand of evildoers in Rv. (TLSB)

## EPISTLE – Romans 3:19-28

*No One Is Righteous*

**19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.**

**3:19** *law.* The OT (as in Jn 10:34; 15:25; 1Co 14:21). (CSB)

God’s voice, recorded in the Law. (TLSB)

This verse contains the picture of a defendant in a court of law who given the opportunity to speak in his own defense, is speechless because of the weight of evidence that has been brought against him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 4)

*those who are under the law.* Jews. (CSB)

Those subject to the Law; in this case, the Jews. Scripture proved their guilt. (TLSB)

“Those who are under the law” refers to “both Jews and Greeks [that is, Gentiles]” (3:9), in other words, all mankind. All mankind is under the damning burden and curse of sin. Everyone is guilty in God’s sight. God’s Law does all the talking in condemning mankind’s disobedience against him. Mankind has nothing to say in defense of our sin against God and his Law and must be silent before God, to whom we are subject (*hupodikos*, “accountable”). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

*every mouth ... whole world.* Jews as well as Gentiles are guilty. (CSB)

While some proclaim innocence, the evidence of sinfulness is clear. (TLSB)

That the heathen are guilty before God and deserve punishment because of their glaring abominations is evident. But the Jew, whose vices were hidden by a certain outward righteousness or appearance of piety, are no better than the heathen. The Law, which they had in preference to the heathen serves to silence

them also before God when He judges them and to make them appear worthy of punishment. (Stoeckhardt)

*held accountable* – It amounts to this that every mouth is stopped, that the whole world, Jew and Gentiles, deserve punishment. (Stoeckhardt)

### **An Adapted Psalm Corroborates – 3:20 (CC)**

In 3:20 Paul pronounces a verdict against the world and every person in it: “consequently, from works of the Law, every fleshly person will not be declared righteous before him, because through the Law [is] a recognition of sin.” Aside from 2:17–29, much of Paul’s discussion thus far might have been affirmed by most Jewish hearers, though 3:1–8 illustrates how there may have been objections along the way. The truths of 3:10–18 would have to be grudgingly accepted since those words are drawn directly from their own Scriptures. Here the applicability to “both Jews and Greeks” (3:9) may also have been challenged. But Paul’s summation in 3:20 introduces a thought which would have been “diametrically opposed to Judaic thinking on the Law.” (CC)

What is ultimately intended to come from the Law’s speaking is a realization that is fully in line with what the psalmist David declared to God: “Before you every living being will not be declared righteous” (יְהוָה לֹא יִצְדַּק אִישׁ בְּצִדְקוֹתָיו, Ps 143:2; LXX 142:2). Ps 143:2 is then rendered literally by the LXX as οὐ δικαιοθήσεται ἐνώπιόν σου πᾶς ζῶν. Paul has been building his case all the way up to 3:20 to make this verdict stand. All are under God’s “righteous decree” of death (δικαίωμα, 1:32). All are “storing up ... wrath in the day of wrath and of the revelation of the *righteous judgment* of God” (δικαιοκρισίας, 2:5).

**3:20 will be justified.** Conclusion shows that statements of 2:7, 10, 13 were hypothetical. Works cannot earn salvation. (TLSB)

Here the purpose for God giving His Law is that it would show us our sin. The Law was never intended by God to serve as the basis for one to prove his own righteousness standing before God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 4)

“By works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight.” Man cannot manipulate God or make God change the truth of his condemning Law, thus to favor one person over another or to distinguish one person over another. If this were possible, it would actually serve the opposite purpose of revealing how much the same we are in our sin before God, the only true judge before whom all mankind actually stands. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

*through the law comes knowledge of sin.* The Law serves as a mirror. When we hear its commands, it clearly shows us that we have sinned and are guilty. (TLSB)

Psalm 130:3 “If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?”

Ecclesiastes 7:20 “There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.”

**3:9–20** While we are tempted to think that obedience to the Law can save, Paul shows the Law’s diagnosis: we are sinners incapable of saving ourselves (v 20). Only when we see this are we prepared for the Good News of what Christ has done for us. • Lord, I know that I am a sinner. Forgive me. Help me see Jesus and trust in Him alone. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Righteousness of God Through Faith*

**21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. 27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.**

**3:21–5:21** Having shown that all (both Gentiles and Jews) are unrighteous (1:18–3:20), Paul now shows that God has provided a righteousness for mankind. (CSB)

**3:21-24** But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, . . . through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.” Drastically different from God’s Law, wherein all mankind is revealed to be the same in its sin, is God’s Gospel of the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, which we have through faith. This distinguishes us before God from unbelievers because of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection (*apolutrōseōs*, “redemption”). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

### **Righteousness Revealed with *and* without the Law (3:21)**

The verb “is being revealed” (ἀποκαλύπτεται) in 1:17 emphasizes the present impact, which is also part of the meaning of the perfect tense verb πεφανέρωται in 3:21: “but now . . . a righteousness of God has been revealed and *is now out in the open*” or “*is now well-known*.” At the same time, as Romans 4 will make abundantly clear, Paul is not arguing for a “new” way to righteousness. This is corroborated by, and further informs, the interpretation of the second half of this verse. (CC)

Here in 3:21 he notes how this righteousness is “apart from the Law [νόμος]” and, at the same time, is “being testified to by the Law [νόμος] and the Prophets.” There is a similar dual statement in 3:20 about what does not come “from works of the Law” (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου), namely, a declaration of righteousness for anyone (οὐ δικαιοθήσεται), as well as what does come through it, a proper recognition of sin. In 3:21 there is something which is separated from “the Law” (νόμος) as well as that to which “the Law” (νόμος) bears witness. (CC)

**3:21** *But now*. There are two possible meanings: (1) temporal—all of time is divided into two periods, and in the “now” period the righteousness from God has been made known; (2) logical—the contrast is between the righteousness gained by observing the law (which is impossible, v. 20) and the righteousness provided by God. (CSB)

Paul revealed our unrighteousness; now he reveals the righteousness of God, which is Christ Jesus. (TLSB)

These words are small but mighty! They introduce the transition between our total inability to keep the Law and the good news that grace is the sole basis for our righteousness before God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 4)

*apart from the law* – Jesus’ sacrifice fulfills the OT Law. Paul now defines righteousness and the righteous community, functions formally held by the Torah in Israel. God’s righteousness is not earned by our works. (TLSB)

The law does not speak in the Gospel. God demands nothing of man in the preaching of the Gospel but only promises, gives and presents, namely, the NT blessing of righteousness. (Stoekhardt)

*righteousness of God through faith* – This righteousness of God, that counteracts sin, guilt and wrath, is truly not our own righteousness, not something good in us, but a righteousness that rests outside of us in God, in God’s judgment, and so is as firm and immovable as God Himself. What God says, judges, decrees, is valid in time and in eternity. He whom God declares righteous is righteous, even though all the world and all devils condemn him, even though his own conscience pronounces him guilty and judges him. (Stoekhardt)

**3:22–23** *There is no distinction.* A parenthetical thought: All who believe are “justified freely” (v. 24), not “all have sinned ... and are justified freely” (vv. 23–24). (CSB)

### **The Righteousness of God for All (3:22–24)**

The beginning of 3:22 stresses the “righteousness of God” (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ). The middle phrase, “through faith of/[in] Jesus Christ” (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), emphasizes Jesus as the basis and/or object of faith. The next phrase, “into all those who believe” (εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας), either turns attention toward human believing or reinforces the previous phrase with an added emphasis that righteousness through faith is for all. The universal availability of this righteousness of God is, after all, “one of the most conspicuous motifs of the epistle.” This is evident by the manner in which “into all those who believe” (εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας) virtually replicates “for everyone who believes” (παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι) in 1:16. (CC)

The inclusion of Jews and Greeks is not explicit in 3:22, though it becomes a main focus in 3:27–31. Any presumed distinction is silenced by the final clause of 3:22, “you see, there is not a difference” (οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν διαστολή). The point is not, of course, that everyone is the same. Numerous differences exist between people who are living apart from the righteousness of God from faith, as well as among those in Christ (see, e.g., 12:3–8; 14:2, 5). There are distinctions in gender, language, culture, station in life, gifts, and so forth. The predominant differentiation in Romans is between Jews and Gentiles. Paul only uses “difference” (διαστολή) two other times, but once is in 10:12, where he more fully expresses the thought: “for there is not a difference between Jew and Greek” (οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν διαστολή Ἰουδαίου τε καὶ Ἑλλήνος). (CC)

**3:22** *righteousness of God* – The righteousness bestowed by God. (Bauer)

The righteousness of God is God’s alone; man is taken up into it and set in it. (subjunctive genitive) It is a conjunction of judgment and grace which He enjoys and demonstrates by showing righteousness, by imparting it as His pardoning sentence. (Kittel)

Psalm 48:10 “Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth; your right hand is filled with righteousness.”

Jeremiah 23:6 “In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.”

*through faith in Jesus Christ* – Paul uses forms of this expression often (Gal 2:16; Php 3:9; 1Tm 1:14; 2Tm 1:13; 3:15). Grammatically, the expression may speak of our faith, which trusts in Christ and His work. It may also indicate Christ’s faithfulness in completing the work of salvation. Both explanations teach true doctrine: Christ earned our salvation by His faithfulness and gives us the benefits of His work through the gift of faith. (TLSB)

But what is the relation of faith to righteousness? According to the apostle the righteousness which avails before God existed before it was revealed, before preaching and faith. The preaching of the Gospel, which reveals and offers this righteousness, renders possible and first awakens faith. Righteousness is received through faith. Faith is merely the medium of acceptance. (bag) Through faith we take the righteousness Christ prepared. (Stoeckhardt)

This contains an objective genitive which has Jesus Christ as its object. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 4)

*no distinction.* Between Jews and Gentiles (see 10:12). (CSB)

**3:23** *all...fall short* – Every human, aside from Christ. (TLSB)

Some may seem to come closer than others, but no one can live a holy life. “Scripture shouts everywhere that we are far away from the perfection that the Law requires” (Ap XIIB 45). (TLSB)

The persons spoken of are they that believe. Therefore, all who believe have, before they became believers, sinned and so fallen short of the glory of God. (Stoeckhardt)

Isaiah 53:6 – “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Isaiah 64:6 – “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.”

Romans 3:12 – “All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

1 John 1:8 – “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

*glory of God.* What God intended man to be. The glory that man had before the fall (see Ge 1:26–28; Ps 8:5–6; cf. Eph 4:24; Col 3:10) the believer will again have through Christ (see Heb 2:5–9). (CSB)

Glory is a visible manifestation of the holiness of God. Glory emanates from His presence (Is. 6:3). Like the moon reflects the sun’s light, we are to reflect God’s “light.” In Romans 1:21–23 wicked humanity exchanged the glory of God the Creator for the glory of created things. This deadly exchange results in the perverse worship of “things.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 4)

This glory of God, is not the future glorification of God, in which the believers will finally share, or the original image of God which man had. All who believe have sinned and are, therefore, without all glory,

all honor, and all esteem before God, since all without exception become righteous in this way: that they in the knowledge of their sinfulness and complete unworthiness before lay hold of Jesus Christ in faith. (Stoeckhardt)

### **The Basis for God’s Declaration of Righteousness (3:24–25)**

“Being declared righteous” occurs both “undeservedly” and “by his [God’s] grace” (3:24). “Undeservedly” (δωρεάν) is used as an adverb which modifies the action of the participle “being declared righteous” (δικαιούμενοι) and expresses *manner*. It could emphasize that the declaration comes “freely,” as the reference to “grace” will soon reinforce. But “undeservedly” makes better sense, especially in light of 3:22–23. The fact that “all sinned and are lacking the glory of God” (3:23) underscores that any righteous declaration on God’s part is completely undeserved. (CC)

**3:24 justified.**† Paul uses this verb 22 times, mostly in 2:13–5:1; Gal 2–3. It is translated “justify” in all cases except two (2:13; 3:20, where it is translated “declared righteous”). The term describes what happens when someone believes in Christ as his Savior: From the negative viewpoint, God declares the person to be not guilty; from the positive viewpoint, he declares him to be righteous. He cancels the guilt of the person’s sin and credits righteousness to him. Paul emphasizes two points in this regard: 1. No one lives a perfectly good, holy, righteous life. On the contrary, “there is no one righteous” (v. 10), and “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (v. 23). “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his [God’s] sight by observing the law” (v. 20). 2. But even though all are sinners and not sons, God declares everyone who puts his trust in Jesus not guilty but righteous. This legal declaration is valid because Christ died to pay the penalty for our sin and lived a life of perfect righteousness that can in turn be imputed to us. This is the central theme of Romans and is stated in the theme verse, 1:17 (“a righteousness from God”). Christ’s righteousness (his obedience to God’s law and his sacrificial death) is credited to believers as their own. Paul uses the word “credited” nine times in ch. 4 alone. (CSB)

Legal justice can recognize the fact that man is righteous; it cannot make him righteous. God makes man a gift of His acquittal, gives him, effectively, the status of righteousness, lets him stand and count as righteous in His eyes. The acquitting and restoring grace is lavish, generous, without reserve. It is in the last analysis wholly inexplicable, being hidden deep in the abysses of the love of God. But it is neither sentimental nor arbitrary, it does not drown sin in tears, neither does it simply ignore sin. The God of grace deals with sin effectually and at a fearful cost to Himself. (Franzmann)

Ephesians 2:8-9 “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Grace cannot be earned; it must be given by God. (TLSB)

*grace as a gift.*† The central thought in justification is that, although man clearly and totally deserves to be declared guilty (vv. 9–19), God declares him righteous because of the redemption through Christ. This is stated in several ways here: (1) “freely” (as a gift, for nothing), (2) “by his grace,” (3) “through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” and (4) “through faith” (v. 25). (CSB)

*redemption.* A word taken from the slave market—the basic idea is that of obtaining release by payment of a ransom. Paul uses this word to refer to release from guilt, with its liability for judgment, and to deliverance from slavery to sin, because Christ in his death paid the ransom for us. (CSB)

Gk *apolytrois*, the buying back of a slave or captive, to set the person free. Christ gave His life to set all people free when He died on the cross. “We receive the mercy promised in Him by faith and set it against God’s wrath and judgment” (Ap IV 82). (TLSB)

**3:25-26** God distinguishes Christ Jesus as the righteous and just justifier, by the atoning sacrifice of his sin-free lifeblood on the cross. By faith in his atoning sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sin, we are in his righteousness and have been justified, distinguished. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

*propitiation by his blood.* The Greek for this phrase speaks of a sacrifice that satisfies the righteous wrath of God. Without this appeasement (“propitiation”) all people are justly destined for eternal punishment. (CSB)

Gk *hilasterion*, in the LXX, the ark of the covenant’s cover, where the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices. See note, Ex 25:17. As the propitiation covered the ark of the covenant, Christ’s righteousness covers the sinner. He is the sacrifice for sin. (TLSB)

Propitiation – In the OT used in connection with sacrifice, when in some way blood covered sine and effected atonement. Jesus by His blood exercised propitiative function and effected atonement between God and men. Concordia Dictionary)

This word carries with it the image of the OT mercy seat and recalls the blood sacrifices of the old covenant (Lev. 17:11). The grace of God permitted for the life of the slain victim to be substituted for the life of the sinner. Christ is the one who pays for the guilt of sin and also performs the sacrifice. This is reflected in our hymnody: “himself the victim and himself the priest” (LSB – 637) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 4)

Propitiation, in the original Hebrew “Kapporeth,” is taken from the sacrificial ritual of Israel. Kapporeth was the name of the golden cover over the Ark of the Covenant, therefore, the mercy-seat. Thus Christ is compared to and appears as the Antitype of the OT mercy-seat. (Stoeckhardt)

The atoning power and efficacy of the mercy-seat rested in the blood of a sacrificial animal with which it was sprinkled every year. The significance of the OT offering was the following: If an Israelite had sinned against a commandment of God, according to the precepts of the law he took an animal from his herd, without fault or blemish and brought it to the tabernacle, later to the temple. In the court of the sanctuary he laid his hand upon the animal’s head. Thus he substituted the animal himself and symbolically transferred to it his sins and guilt (Lev. 16:21). Thereupon the Israelite killed the animal for offering. By his sin the Israelite had forfeited his life and merited death. However, in his stead the guiltless life of an animal was given into death and its bloodshed. The animal, to which the sins of the Israelite were imputed, atone for the punishment of the sinner. (Stoeckhardt)

First then did the functioning priest take part in the sacrificial act. He took the blood of the animal and spread it on the horns of the altar of burnt-offering, or waved it to and fro on the side wall of the altar, or poured it out on the ground around the altar, thereby bringing it into the presence of God. For the altar was the place where God came together with His people (Ex. 29:42). The blood of the animal came between the sinner and the holy God and so covered or atoned for man’s sin. The blood-offering, applied to the altar of God, covered the sins or the sinner before God, so that God no longer saw his sins, no longer regarded them, no longer reckoned them to his account. The blood served as atonement for sins, while in and with the blood the life, the soul, of the animal gushed forth, and thereby the punishment of the sins was atoned. Lev. 17:11: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon

the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” The blood of the animal did not in itself have the power to atone or the sins, but only inasmuch as it prophesied of the better Offering of the NT. The basic idea of the offering, therefore, was vicarious satisfaction. (Stoeckhardt)

The significance of the offering is the foundation for the right understanding of the sprinkling of blood by the high priests upon the Ark of the Covenant on the great Day of Atonement. The sacrificial act of this day, culminating in the sprinkling of blood, was the OT highest and most perfect act of atonement. On this day all the sins of Israel during the past year were atoned. Lev. 16:30: “For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord. (Stoeckhardt)

The essential characteristics of this great act of atonement are the following: The priest took a young bullock as sin-offering for himself and for the priesthood and two he-goats as sin-offering for the people and placed them before the Lord, before the door of the tabernacle, later before the door of the temple. Hereupon he slew the bullock of the sin-offering for himself and the priesthood. The he filled the pastil burners with coals from the altar of burnt-offering and his hands with holy frankincense; and carrying both into the holy of holies, he caused a cloud of smoke to arise by laying the frankincense upon the burning coals. Thus the mercy-seat over the Ark, the place of God’s presence, was covered so that he could safely approach it. While the holy of holies became filled with smoke of the incense, the high priest returned to the court for the blood of the bullock. Re-entering the holy of holies for the second time, he sprinkled first the front side of the Ark’s covering, then seven times on the ground before the Ark. By this act he atoned for his own sins and for those of the priesthood. The sprinkling upon the Ark served as atonement for the persons of the high priest and the priests, the sprinkling before the Ark as atonement and cleansing of the holy of holies, which became unclean through the sins of the priesthood. (Stoeckhardt)

After the atonement of the priesthood was completed, the high priest left the sanctuary for the second time, returned to the court, and there killed the ram, selected by lot as sin-offering for the congregation. With its blood he went into the holy of holies for the third time and sprinkled the blood in the same manner as before. The significance of the double sprinkling of blood was identical in both instances. The sins of the congregation and then the impurity of the holy of holies resulting from these sins were atoned. In similar ways, by means of blood, the holy place and the court, especially the altar of burnt-offering, were cleansed from all impurity of the children of Israel. And so the service which the congregation provided through the priesthood is and at the sanctuary was a divine, God-pleasing service. (Stoeckhardt)

The most characteristic thing at the offering of the Day of Atonement was that the blood of atonement was brought into the holy of holies and sprinkled upon the covering of the Ark or the mercy-seat. The vessels of the holy of holies formed the throne of the God of Israel. The Ark of the Covenant, wherein was concealed both tables of the law, was the base, the golden plate over the Ark the footstool of the throne. On this plate stood two golden cherubim’s, whose wings spread over it. Between the cherubims, over their outstretched wings, moved the cloud, that is, the cloud of divine glory, in which Jehovah manifested His presence in the holy of holies over the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 40:34; 25:22; Lev. 16:2). By applying the blood of the offering to the Kapporeth, the priest brought it into the immediate presence of God. Thus the blood of atonement was really and truly valid before God. However, between the tables of the law in the Ark and the holy God, enthroned over the cherubins, was the mercy-seat, sprinkled with blood. The mercy-seat, sprinkled with blood, covered the tables of the law, covered the transgressions of Israel before the eyes of God, so that God no longer saw and regarded them. The mercy-seat with its

blood, however, changed God's wrath over sin into grace and good pleasure. Accordingly the thought of atonement and reconciliation found its strongest and most concrete expression in the offering of the Great Day of Atonement. (Stoeckhardt)

What happened to the second he-goat or the scapegoat was to symbolize through an outward act how God now considered all the sins and impurities of Israel of the past year. To this end the high priest placed both his hands upon the head of the live goat, confessed all the sins and transgression of Israel, thus putting them upon the head of the goat. Thereupon the goat was led far out into the wilderness and left there in order to show the people that they were completely and forever free from their sins. To be sure, the atonement occurred with the application of the blood of the first goat. But since it was physically impossible to use the dead goat, therefore, another goat had to take its place in order to symbolize to the people how they were released from their sins as a result of the atonement. In this respect both goats formed the one act of atonement. (Stoeckhardt)

Christ appears as the Antitype of the OT Kapporeth and the Counterpoint of the OT offering. For He is a "propitiation in His blood," by virtue of His blood. In one person He is the Offering as well as the Priest and the Mercy-seat. Christ Jesus stepped into the sinner's place and took upon Himself the guilt of the whole world. Men did not offer this substitution or themselves, for they continued and delighted in their sins. They desired no Redeemer, no offering for their sins. Unasked, of His own accord and out of free grace, God ordained and gave His Son to men as their Mediator and Atoner. God Christ's a propitiation. The Lord put all our sins upon Him and imputed them to Him (Is. 53:6). God made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21). And Christ of His free will took out sins upon Himself (Is. 53:4; 1 Peter 2:24). And thus He offered Himself for us. (Stoeckhardt)

He is at one and the same time Offering and Priest. He gave His life into death; He shed His own blood in the stead of sinful men, who were worthy of death. With His holy, precious blood He appeared before God Himself. He is our Mediator in the highest throne. He pleaded His blood before God and once and for all atoned for the sins and the guilt of the whole world. He turned God's wrath into pleasure. Marked and covered with His own blood, He stands as the NT Kapporeth between sinful men, the transgressors, and the great holy God and covers all our sins, guilt, shame and weakness before God, so that He no longer reckons them to our account. Therefore, men are completely and forever free from their sins, rid of all their transgressions and impurities. That is what propitiation in His blood includes. (Stoeckhardt)

Christ is a "propitiation through faith." His atonement is perfect and needs only to be accepted in faith. Faith it is that applies to itself, that claims for its own, Christ's atonement and redemption and the righteousness which avails before God offered through it. The distressed sinner takes refuge in Christ through faith and there finds protection from God's wrath and judgment. (Stoeckhardt)

The nearest object of faith is the Word. God set forth His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He made to be sin and the Atoner for sin, openly before the eyes of whole sinful world through the preaching of the Gospel. In the Gospel the crucified Christ is set forth before the eyes of men (Gal. 3:1). Sinners hear the Gospel of Christ, of His atonement and redemption and the righteousness which avails before God. They thus become righteous before God. (Stoeckhardt)

1 John 2:2 "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

1 John 4:10 “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

*blood...faith.* Saving faith looks to Jesus Christ in his sacrificial death for us. (CSB)

Faith does not earn anything; it receives God’s gift. (TLSB)

*divine forbearance* – Christ’s work shows that God both justly punishes sin and graciously forgives sinners. (TLSB)

*passed over former sins* – Patience with sinners. (TLSB)

God did not ignore sin. He delayed the punishment until Christ paid it. Some thoughtless modern theologians have likened Paul’s teaching on the atonement to child abuse because the Father sent the Son as a sacrifice. This assertion ignores Christ’s willingness to make full satisfaction for sins. Christ is true God “reconciling the world to Himself” (2Co 5:19). The Father sent the Son the way a patriotic father sends his son to war for the good of his nation. A father does not send a son cheerfully, but sincerely, anticipating sacrifice, victory, and reunion. (TLSB)

### **God’s Righteousness Ratified (3:25–26)**

The end of 3:25 reveals the driving theme of this section. It is not primarily centered on people, not even “all those who believe” (πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας, 3:22), but rather clearly focuses upon God’s “righteousness,” which is mentioned in 3:21, 22, 25, and 26. The “righteousness of God” (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) has been revealed and is now out in the open (3:21). This “righteousness” comes through “faith of/[in] Jesus Christ” to all who believe (3:22). Yet these believers all sinned and are lacking the glory God bestowed upon them (3:23). How can such people be declared righteous freely (3:24) without God somehow being “unrighteous” (ἄδικος) for the opposite reason suggested in 3:5? Paul here explains. The redemption price was paid by Jesus (3:24) whom God publicly set forth as the sacrifice of atonement in his blood, which stands as “proof of his righteousness” (ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ, 3:25). By that phrase Paul asserts that the purpose and result of all this serves to demonstrate *God’s* righteousness. Paul reinforces and restates this when he returns to the thought in 3:26 with “toward the proof” (πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν). (CC)

**3:25b–26** The sins of God’s people, punished symbolically in the animal sacrifices of the OT period, would be totally punished in the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross. (CSB)

**3:26** *show his righteous* – God’s righteousness in Christ is still effective. (TLSB)

By His bloody offerings Christ satisfied God’s righteousness. Divine righteousness demanded punishment. And in Christ the sins of all men of all generations until the end of the world, are punished. The punishment of sin is death and damnation. (Stoekhardt)

It was an altogether free impulse of divine love, which we call grace, that moved God to redeem lost mankind. But surely since God planned and carried out the work of redemption and salvation, He did not deny His righteousness. He could not, for He would have denied Himself. He rather yielded completely to His righteousness and just wrath. That Christ, men’s substitute, who took men’s sins upon Himself, had to give His life and blood was a demonstration of divine righteousness. Where sin, there also punishment, even though the sin lay on Christ. (Stoekhardt)

Deuteronomy 32:4 “He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he”

### Through Works or Faith? (3:27–28)

“Then where is the boasting?” (ποῦ οὖν ἡ καύησις;). The initial question of 3:27 ties most directly back to 2:17 and 2:23. There Paul depicted the “Jew” as relying on the Law and boasting in God (καυχᾶσαι ἐν θεῷ, 2:17), and, then, boasting in the Law itself (ὅς ἐν νόμῳ καυχᾶσαι, 2:23). Where now is “the boasting”? The divine passive “it was shut out” (ἐξεκλείσθη, 3:27) implies that it was excluded *by God*. The translation “shut out” communicates, as in baseball, that such Law-based boasting in God (2:17) leaves you with nothing. Paul does use “boasting” (καύησις) positively when the ground for boasting is appropriate (see the textual note), but boasting “in the Law” (2:23) will get you absolutely nowhere before God. (CC)

**3:27-28** We are distinguished (passively) by faith. That is why we have nothing to boast of that would distinguish us (active). Christ Jesus fulfilled the Law of God for us (active). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

**3:27** *then what...boasting* – By nature all men have a proud heart and the inclination to glory in themselves and in their own accomplishments. (Stoekhardt)

No one deserves salvation; all receive it by grace. (TLSB)

*what kind of law* – The principle of faith is an exclusive principle, intolerant of compromise. No compromise is possible between faith and works of law. We hear the echoes of the battle Paul once fought for the churches of Galatia (cf. Gal 2:16; 3:2) (Franzmann)

Or, principle. The Law does not save; it shows our need for God’s redemption, which is received through faith. (TLSB)

*law of faith.* John Chrysostom: “What is the ‘law of faith?’ It is, being saved by grace” (NPNF 1 11:379). (TLSB)

**3:28** *we* – Paul and fellow Christians. ( TLSB)

*by faith.* † When Luther translated this passage, he added the word “alone,” which, though not in the Greek, accurately reflects the meaning (see note on Jas 2:14–26). An alternate translation might be “through faith,” as Paul generally employs two prepositions: *dia*, “through,” and *ek*, “as a result of ” e.g., 1:17; 3:22, 25 and several manuscripts at 3:28)—indicating that faith is not man’s contribution or decision, but a gift of God (cf. Eph 2:8–9). (CSB)

“Upon this article [justification] everything that we teach and practice depends ... we must be certain and not doubt this doctrine. Otherwise, all is lost” (SA II I 5). (TLSB)

*justified apart from* - khorece – To be separated from to without. Luther says it means by grace alone.

GOSPEL – John 8:31-36

*The Truth will set You Free*

**31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” 33 They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’” 34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. 37 I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. 38 I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”**

When editors of the text and commentators make a paragraph at verse 30 or 31, this does not imply that we are to insert an interval, either of hours or of a day, between the paragraphs, as is generally done. John connects verse 30 with what precedes by means of tauto and genitive absolute, “while he was saying these things,” and verse 31 with verse 30 by means of *oun*, “accordingly, Jesus was saying” to these believers. Any interval is shut out. John’s remark in verse 30 and in the preamble of verse 31 are merely explanatory of the words which Jesus now utters, for they are words intended only for believers, and we must be told that and how such believers were present. John’s explanatory remark is exactly like the one he inserted a moment ago in verse 27 in order to make plain to us why Jesus turned to prophecy in verse 28. (Lenski)

From verse 21 to the end of the chapter is one uninterrupted narration. The persons participating are the same throughout, Jesus and a crowd of Jews. At first all are hostile to Jesus, but by the time we reach verse 29, a goodly number are actually won to believe in Him not through miracles, but through the words of warning coupled with grace which these men had just heard. In the same way or other, not indicated by John, these believers manifest their change of heart. At once Jesus has a word for them in particular. No sooner does He utter it than the hostile crowd of Jews raises further objection. They act just as they did from the start: they pick at some point to which to object (compare verse 22 and verse 25; also verse 13 and 19). John does not need to say in verse 33 who these objectors are, for we have heard the from very start, and their objection is of the same type as before. Jesus answers then in verse 34, etc. But they go on. The clash becomes more and more intense until these Jews take up stone and Jesus leaves them. (Lenski)

**8:31-36** Verse 30 concludes: “Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.” He had been speaking of his faithful imparting of the Word of the Father in word and deed. Against this background the Lord goes on to address these (and all) adherents to the faith, warning against any “faith” unwilling to be formed and reformed by the faith revealed in Christ. Jesus’ summons to the truth stands in stark contrast to the lie and the father of lies, which have enslaved Christ’s believing opponents (cf v 44). As with other such bold contrasts (e.g., light/darkness, 1:5; life/death, 5:24; blind/seeing, 9:41), John’s Gospel delineates the unmistakable difference between the truth and the lie, and between the disciple who remains in Jesus’ word and the “disciple” who will not. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

Jesus is speaking within the context of the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn 7:2–8:59), which commemorated Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness after having been freed from the slavery of Egypt. During this sojourn, God gave to Israel the way of the Law. This section continues the theme of John’s Gospel that Jesus is himself the true Torah of God, the Word of God who is the way of discipleship that leads to the Father. Jesus has just indicated that he does nothing “on [his] own” but does only that which the Father teaches him, and so he pleases the Father “always” (Jn 8:28–29). The Jews understand their identity as grounded in Abraham and in their loyalty to Moses (cf. Jn 9:28). True discipleship, however, is found in Jesus, who is the way to the Father. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

This chapter is something of a heavyweight in John’s Gospel. First, Jesus is challenged to render judgment in the case of the adulterous woman; the accusers obviously expected Jesus to fail and be

embarrassed regarding that situation. Then Jesus' "light of the world" message beats the Pharisees with their own words regarding proper application of the Law. Thereafter the Savior uncovers sin and works faith in the hearts of some of the listeners. The verses following our text explicate the question not of religious liberty but of spiritual freedom. This is followed by Jesus' charge that some of his hearers are beholden to Satan—no sweet little Jesus here! And finally, we hear one of the great dogmatic statements of the New Testament: "If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death. . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (8:51, 58). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**8:31-32** John's language is suggestive. *ean humeis meinēte en tōi logōi tōi emōi*, "If you abide in my word" (ESV). But Jesus is himself "the Word" (*ho logos*, Jn 1:14). "You are truly [*alēthōs*] my disciples" (ESV). In the next verse, Jesus says that "the truth [*hē alētheia*] will set you free." But Jesus is himself "the truth" (Jn 14:6). *alēthōs* has the meaning of "authentically," "truly," "not only in appearance." To be truly the disciple of Jesus is to be to Jesus as Jesus, who is the truth, is to the Father (8:28–29). As the truth, Jesus is the perfect expression of the Father's will. Those who are truly the disciples of Jesus are those who follow the way, which is Jesus himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

John 8:31–36 is simple and straightforward, part of an extended conversation Jesus has with the Jewish people and leaders beginning with his announcement, "I am the light of the world" (8:12). Back and forth they go until v 30, "As he was saying these things, many believed in him." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

**8:31** *believed*.† Here seems to be imperfect and transitory. Their words show that these people were not true believers (see vv. 33, 37). (CSB)

Within the context of John's *Gospel*, it could well be that Jesus' dialog is with Jewish disciples who had, at one time, believed him but had fallen away and become hostile. In v 37, he acknowledges that he knows they seek to kill him. He labels them children of the devil (v 44) and a heated discussion follows. Hardly rabbi-disciple talk! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 4)

*tous pepisteukotas autōi*, "who had believed him." The perfect tense here is puzzling. It would normally convey true and enduring faith, but that goes against the sense of what follows. Does v 30 refer to one group and v 31 to another? Or are they the same, and a different group is designated by the "they" of v 33? In fact, nothing in the text indicates such a change of subjects. It seems best to understand Jesus' words as addressed to one and the same group (hence a strong warning against any self-confident "discipleship"). This requires understanding "believed" to mean that their "faith" was for now at best shallow, perhaps an acknowledgment that Jesus speaks the truth but an unwillingness to trust in that truth. The NIV does not convey it, but the text has a "therefore" that may be a significant bridge connecting v 31 to v 30, and a witness to this understanding: "Jesus *therefore* said to the Jews who had believed him." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

"*Jews who believed*." What kind of faith did they have? The Jesus-is-an-interesting-fellow kind of faith? Well, saving faith is "abiding" faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

Looking at verses 30, 33 and 37, it seems at least a portion of the group who Jesus was addressing did not really believe or were very tentative.

Jesus spoke to those who believed while, apparently the unbelieving Jews were listening too. The tender faith of those new believers needed strengthening. Others whose new faith wavered already had left Him (6:66). (PBC)

It is a disappointing price that Christ asks of those who were beginning to believe in Him and were saying: “We will remain loyal to You even at the risk of life and limb.” Christ looks askance at them and says: “Yes indeed, if your faith in Me were only genuine and sincere! But it seems to Me that you will not remain faithful to Me.” And now Christ begins to speak about the true and the false disciples of the divine Word: “Many hear the Gospel and remain with it for utilitarian reasons. They reap money, goods, and honor from it. My dear friends, who would not like that! (Luther)

Many of the Jews had indeed come to faith, but their minds were still held in the bondage of a carnal understanding. Their idea of discipleship was that of an external adherence to Christ, of professing allegiance to Him as their Leader. (Kretzmann)

*if you abide* – *meno* – Continue, stay, remain, endure or stand.

This encounter with those “Jews who had [once upon a time?] believed him” takes us beyond the Reformation reality of how we are justified into the realm of how we live out that relationship daily. God has declared us righteous. Now what? Live it out! Jesus says, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples” (v 31)—and you will know a liberating truth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 4)

*meinēte* indicates perseverance, steadfastness, and immovability in purpose. As Jesus remains in the Father, we are to remain in his Word. *gnōsesthe*, “you will know,” is not to know cognitively with the mind but experientially with the will and the heart. *To have faith* is a close synonym of *to know*. The language of *truth* occurs frequently in John’s Gospel; the language of *freedom* only in this context. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

After faith has been kindled in the hearts of a goodly number of the present audience of Jesus, the great need is that they continue in the blessed course upon which they have entered. The pronoun *humeis* (*you*) is emphatic, “If you on your part remain,” etc., i.e., “you” having come to faith. This singles them out from the rest of the Jews. We must not overlook the implication in the verb, “remain” in my word. Jesus acknowledges that these men are now in His word; in other words, they now embrace His word by faith. He uses the aorist subjunctive “continue,” actually and definitely remain, be fixed and established in His word. The opposite would be to drop the word they have taken up, definitely to leave it again, namely by a return to unbelief. It indicates that these Jews now believed in what Jesus had told them; to believe “him” = to believe what He says. Theirs was the genuine type of faith, resting on the word. All they needed was to become permanently fixed in that faith. (Lanski)

Then Jesus speaks directly to those “Jews who had believed in him, ‘If you abide in my word.’ ” *Abide* means “to remain in, to live in, to dwell in.” “In my word” is where the true disciple of Jesus needs to remain. How do you remain in the faith? You remain in Jesus’ Word. The Word of God is faith’s bread and butter, faith’s fuel, and the air faith breathes. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

To draw close to Jesus, the Word, they literally needed to remain in (here, “hold to”) His Word (here “teaching”). Jesus had power to still storms. He fed hungry crowds and healed illnesses. That all had an impact and drew people to listen to Him. But how did He keep disciples? He held by His Word. (PBC)

Speaking to those whose belief in Him was superficial, Jesus explained that discipleship meant accepting all of His teaching and remaining faithful to it. (TLSB)

Abiding is a major theme in John, defining the relationship not only persons in the Trinity (1:32-33; 14:10; 15:10), but also between believers and Christ. (5:31; 15:7, 9-10). “I wish to follow with all my strength the lowly Jesus; I wish Him, who loved me and gave Himself for me, to embrace me with the arms of His love, which suffered in my stead; but I must also feed on the Paschal Lamb, for unless I eat His Flesh and drink His Blood I have not life in me. It is one thing to follow Jesus, another to hold Him, another to feed on Him. To follow Him is a live-giving purpose; to hold and embrace Him a solemn joy; to feed on Him a blissful life.” (Note on John 6:56 and quoting St Bernard of Clairvaux – (TLSB))

John 15:10 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

1 John 2:28 “And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.”

2 John 9 “Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.”

*my teaching* – logos - God’s Word, the Scriptures. Words that would have the substance of doctrine from God but not necessarily always direct quotes.

The continuing or remaining in the Word of Christ is the characteristic of the true disciples of Christ, the adhering strictly to the Word which He has left for our instruction in the gospels and epistles. There we find Jesus revealed, and through the understanding of Jesus as the Christ we have true knowledge, the knowledge of the truth; and that knowledge is the only factor which will give Us true liberty. Without Christ, all men are servants, slaves of sin, Rom. 6, 17-20. But in Christ there is deliverance from sin, true freedom. Only those men are truly free that have accepted the salvation of Jesus; only they have a will which is interested in good works and able to perform them. (Kretzmann)

We still have Jesus’ Word today. His Word leads us to Him and keeps us with Him. The mark of true followers of Jesus is that they remain true to His Word, where they learn the truth, and the makes them free. (PBC)

Jeremiah 9:24 “but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD.”

John 7:16-17 “Jesus answered, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. <sup>17</sup> If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”

John 17:3 “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

*you are truly my disciples* – mathaytes It denotes the men who have attached themselves to Jesus as their Master. Unlike the people of Jesus’ day, they did not choose him but he chose them (John 15:16). Disciple always implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life of the disciple. The basic meaning of the English noun “disciple” and is “learner.” Essentially a disciple is one who accepts, learns from, and follows a teacher and his instruction.

While these beginners in the faith must learn more and more of the precious word of Jesus and while further portions of the word such as the portion they already possess, will tend to hold them in the faith for the them to remain in the word of Jesus means primarily what Paul puts in the admonition in 1 Cor. 15:58, “Be ye steadfast, unmovable.” (see also Ephesians 4:13-14) (Lenski)

The Word is the vehicle of Jesus bringing Him to us and us to Him. To remain is not only a mark of discipleship but its very essence. (Lenski)

John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Acts 2:42, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Matthew 16:24, “Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (self-denial)

Luke 14:24-26, “Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For whoever wants to save his life <sup>a</sup> will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. <sup>26</sup>What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Self denial, cross bearing – renunciation)

Luke 14:33, “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.” (Leaving it all)

John 15:8, “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” (Fruitfulness)

**8:32 know** – Of course, intellectual apprehension is included, but much more is involved (7:17), namely the knowledge derived from a living experience with the blessed power of the truth. “Shall know” does not refer to a remote future but to one that begins at once and continues and grows. (Lenski)

“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” This verse is often quoted out of context and even given a worldly connotation. What is the truth that sets you free? The truth of Jesus, the light of the world. The truth that Jesus has come from the Father to speak as the Father taught him (v 28). Jesus contrasts his truth with the lies of the devil, that “murderer from the beginning” (v 44). Ch 8 will finish with Jesus saying, “Before Abraham was, I am” (v 58). Those who refuse to believe consider this blasphemy (v 59), but for those who believe, this truth sets them free. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

*the truth.* Closely connected with Jesus (v. 36; 14:6), it is not philosophical truth but the truth that leads to salvation. (CSB)

The One who is the truth (14:6) necessarily speaks the truth. To know him and his saving work is to be freed from bondage to sin and to the lie. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

“What is truth?” So Pilate asked later on (18:38). Truth is not theological theory, but a person (see 1:17 and 14:6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

By “truth,” “reality,” is meant, and the Greek article here indicates the specific reality and actuality that exists in God and in Jesus, and all that they give to us and do for us by divine grace. Compare the term in 1:14. It is not in any sense philosophic, so that the language of philosophy should define it. It is not an abstraction formed by operations of the intellect but divine and everlasting fact, which remains such whether men know it, acknowledge it, realize it or not. It is a unit “the truth,” although it consists of many united and unified parts. Thus also Jesus speaks of His “Word” and of His “words.” It centers and circles about Jesus who, therefore, also calls Himself “the truth,” (14:6). In His own person and His life Jesus embodies, incorporates the saving realities of God. (Lenski)

Only in Jesus and His teaching will anyone be free from sin, death and Satan’s rule, and thus free to serve God with a pure heart. In contrast, Judaism taught that study of God’s Law made a person free. (TLSB)

John 1:14 “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 1:17 “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

John 14:6 “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

John 18:37 “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

John 17:17, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

*free.* Freedom from sin, not from ignorance (see v. 36). (CSB)

Cf. 14:6. Only in Jesus and His teaching will anyone be free from sin, death, and Satan’s rule, and thus free to serve God with a pure heart. In contrast, Judaism taught that study of God’s Law made a person free. (TLSB)

For by realizing we are set free; hence the more we realize, the more we are set free. The one action grows immediately out of the other. Any measure of inner penetration on the part of the truth produces a corresponding measure of freedom. Moreover, these results have already begun in the believers Jesus addresses; for to believe the word of Jesus ever so little means to realize the truth to that extent and to be set free correspondingly. (Lenski)

This liberating effect implies that here “the truth” is viewed as an inward and spiritual power, one that conquers an opposing, an enslaving power. The implication is also that only “the truth,” or the Word of Jesus, is able to crush that opposing power and to set men free. Hence, all who bar out from their souls this liberating power of necessity remain under the enslaving power. (Lenski)

A glorious prospect is held out to the believing Jews by Jesus, one to inspire them to ever greater faith in order to be free from all delusion and spiritual bondage. Liberty! (Lenski)

What do we learn for Jesus? We learn that He is God sent from God to save us from sin. We learn that we have forgiveness with Jesus. We learn that Jesus leads us to our heavenly Father. Those truths set us free – free from the curse of sin, free from death, free for eternal life. (PBC)

Romans 6:22 “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life”

1 Peter 2:16 “Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.”

He stirs their thoughts with this. They were subject to the Romans and greatly oppressed by them. They had no kingdom of their own. They yearned to be free and have their own king again. Now Christ tells them: “If you want to be free, to have your own king, to be rid of all tribute, and to shake off your yoke and bondage, you must believe in the Son. My kingdom is not of the world, nor is it that of the emperor. It is a kingdom of truth; it is the genuine kingdom, in which there is real life. Its life is different from this temporal life. In it truth will really make you free. But this does not exempt you from paying taxes, revenue, and tribute.” Even today the peasants would like to see the time when they would not have to submit to or obey anyone, when there would be neither prince nor emperor, neither count nor lord, when the servants would be lords, and a maid would be the mistress, when a subject could be the ruler. This the Jews would have liked, and this prompts Christ to say here: “I am not speaking now of an earthly kingdom. I am not concerned now with earthly kings. If they are tyrants, let them remain tyrants, and let them answer for it. If they fleece and flay their poor people, what is that to Me? In the end they will suffer for it. But I want to lead you into a kingdom where you will be truly free, where you will be kings, princes, and lords. If you remain faithful to My Word and believe My message, then you can rest assured that you will become kings. All you must do is to believe the Word.” (Luther)

**8:33** *they answered him* – John here writes “against him,” affording us this hint that these objectors are the unbelieving Jews who again seize on one certain expression. Those who assume that the believing Jew here speak against Jesus must assume that the believing Jews in one instant, they lose their faith in the next and in a moment become more vicious than ever. (Lenski)

*Abraham’s descendants* – The name “Abraham” here broached runs on through the remainder of the conflict to the very end. It constitutes the acme of Jewish assurance and pride – does so to this day. The emphatic *su* (you) gets its force from the feeling of outrage that Jesus should presume to say anything against Abraham’s seed. (Lenski)

Of course, the Jews insist that they are “offspring of Abraham [belonging to the covenant] and have never been enslaved to anyone.” How ironic, since they were at that moment subject to Roman occupation! But that’s not the half of it. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

From a position of pride as descendants of Abraham, they are unable even to face the truth of their *political* servitude, much less that which Christ will now address, their bondage to sin and to the lie. The “you” is emphatic: “How can *you* say?” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

The irony is that the salvation we so earnestly desire can become a scandal to us. Jesus promises these Jews a relationship with him (discipleship), the ability to “know the truth,” and ultimately freedom. But

what they hear is condemnation. “What do you mean?” they snap at Jesus. “Are you implying we’re not free? Check our pedigree. We’re children of Abraham!” And then, to make matters worse, “We’ve never been slaves to anyone,” which, by the way, is a very selective reading and memory of the history of Israel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 4)

*have never been slaves.* An amazing disregard of their Roman overlords. (CSB)

That the promise of freedom in Jesus’ Word would be heard by the Jews as condemnation can only be viewed as testimony to the power of their (and our) sinful self-deception. Sin blinds. It compels us to create a false world for ourselves in which we are self-justified, self-glorified, and self-righteous. For the Jews, their status as children of Israel provided an alleged freedom. What might it be for us, we wonder. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 4)

The Jews’ pride in descending from Abraham makes them blind. Really, never enslaved? Jewish history indicates otherwise: slavery in Egypt to begin, then in Babylon, and currently under Rome, to name just a few. And what about being captive to sin and guilt? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

This shuts out the notion that these Jews refer to political liberty, which also would contradict most flagrantly the facts of history, the domination of the Jews by the Babylonians, the Persians, the Seleucidae, and the Romans. Lenski)

They say, as it were: “Your words disgrace and humiliate us. You say that he who believes in You is to be free. As a matter of fact, we are not slaves; we are masters of the world. We have never been serfs and servants. We are Abraham’s seed, and to him the words were addressed (Gen. 22:18): ‘By your descendants shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.’ ” This promise filled the Jews with conceit. “Abraham,” they say, “is called a lord over the whole world; and since we are his seed, we shall, ere long, rule in the entire world. And You say that we must first be made free by You. Do You regard us as bondsmen?” Thus you see how the Jews are given to carnal thoughts. Christ says: “You shall be kings and lords. You shall be free, not only beyond but also here. But you shall be beggar kings and beggar princes; for the world will have honor, money, goods, and power. Yet you, too, shall reign—to be sure, not over the body, goods, and fields but over consciences, informing them that they must either obey the Word or die. Their hearts will either comply with your message or go to the devil.” The Jews here interpret these words carnally. (Luther)

Thought presently subject to Rome and the Herodians, these proud leaders asserted their independence by appealing to the heritage of Abraham, a free man. (TLSB)

That is the wonderful liberty of the Christian of which Luther wrote in such powerful words. But the Jews thought the Lord spoke of the liberty of the body from the tyranny of an earthly despot. They resented the inference as though they had ever been in bondage: Children of Abraham we are, and to no man have we ever been in bondage, in slavery. They forgot, for the moment, that they were subject to the Romans; they forgot also that their fathers had been in the power of the Egyptian, Babylonian, Syrian, and Roman conquerors. Since Abraham had received the promise of a descendant that should rule all nations, the Jews proudly called themselves children of kings. They resented even the idea as though they needed to be emancipated, to be set free. This answer of the Jews shows that they had quickly extinguished the small flame of faith which had been kindled in their hearts. Their Jewish pride would not accept such a statement from Jesus. The pride of the human heart has driven many a person away from the church to which he professed allegiance, because he resented the plain talk of the Bible regarding the depravity of the human heart. (Kretzmann)

Jewish texts could say that the Torah brings freedom from worldly cares or from the slavery in the coming world (Genesis Rabbah 92.1; Numbers Rabbah 10:8). The Mishnah (R. Akiba) says: “Even the poorest in Israel are looked upon as freemen who have lost their possessions, for they are the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Adolf von Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes* [Stuttgart: Calwer, 1975], 212; used by permission). The Jews understand the identity of Israel in terms of their sonship to the patriarchs. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**8:34-35** Even when a slave does not wear handcuffs, he is still captive when sin rules his life. As such, he is not fully part of the family. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**8:34** *truly, truly I say to you* – Jesus once again stressed the solemn truth of His message – amen, amen. (PBC)

*amēn amēn legō humin*, “I tell you the truth.” This marks what follows as a solemn truth, ignored at one’s own peril. *pas ho poiōn tēn hamartian*, “everyone who sins.” This points to a continuing state, “the one practicing sin.” This is significant: Jesus does not *argue* our bondage under sin; he simply *assumes* it. Our problem is not merely individual sins (plural), but sin (singular), the power, the slave owner that controls us. To this bondage our sins (plural) bear witness. Each of us is “sold as a slave to sin” (Rom 7:14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

Amen, Amen – KJV – The double “amen” is the seal of truth for what Jesus says (compare on the term 1:51); “I say to you” is the voice of authority based on absolute knowledge and truth. (Lenski)

Jesus moves to the heart of the matter: “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.” Has anyone ever stopped sinning? No? Then we are slaves of sin. By saying “Truly, truly,” Jesus sets this off as an inescapable fact no one can avoid. It’s not just them, but us as well. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

*a slave to sin*. Because the sinner cannot break free by his own strength. (CSB)

Jesus defines the reality of slavery and freedom in terms of spiritual status (condition). To be a slave is to have a lord who governs and directs. Those who sin have sin as their lord. Here it is not so much a question of sinful acts as it is of the condition of will and heart, which is sinful and therefore sins. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

The man so characterized, who dies what is sin, obeys the dictates of sin, cannot break away from them – he is beyond question a slave to sin the spiritual soul-slavery of the worst kind. This is true of men everywhere, at all times. The effect of sinning is as certain as the mathematical law that two and two make four. (Lenski)

Since the fall, all people are sinners and enslaved to sin, bond to self-centeredness, doomed to death, and blind to their slavery. (TLSB)

This was proven by what Jesus says in verse 37 “you are ready to kill me.”

In a very solemn manner, Jesus here proceeds to explain His statement regarding slavery or bondage. Every doer of sin is a slave of sin. He that commits a sin thereby places himself in its power, is bound and held captive absolutely. And therefore these Jews are servants, slaves, in the spiritual sense. (Kretzmann)

**8:35-36** A slave can never be sure of present or future status. Only the Son, Jesus Christ, can bring genuine freedom and make us children of God through faith. (TLSB)

Their claimed place in the family of Abraham (and thus, of God) now comes into question. A slave is property and has no rights and no permanent place in the household, nor has he any power to change his status. He is a slave. A son, on the other hand, has permanent status within the family and full rights of sonship. With this analogy, Jesus contrasts their *real* status with the one they *imagine* for themselves. The analogy, however, is pregnant, pointing beyond a son, *any* son, to *the* Son who will set them free from this bondage to sin. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

The slave will not continue (remain! abide!) in the master's house forever, but "the son remains forever." Only the son can change our status. "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." This is our most basic need: to be set free from slavery to sin, from sin's power to destroy us and separate us from God. For the believer, sin, though present, is constantly forgiven. In Jesus, we are no longer under sin's dominion, but Jesus' lordship. We are sons who live in the house forever. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

**8:35** *slave does not remain in he house forever* – doolos. A slave didn't even earn wages. He was the property of his master and was completely bound to his master's will. Since the slave received no wages, all he had to look forward to after a hard day's work was rest under the shade tree or in a shelter and even that wasn't a certainty. There were no guarantees for him to depend on.

Although slaves were regarded as members of a household, they were not necessarily permanent, for they could be sold or otherwise separated from the household. Sons, on the other hand, were the permanent recipients of the father's inheritance. They stood to receive the inheritance because of their filial relationship with the father. One's status determined one's destiny. "The Son," v 36, must refer primarily to Christ and not generally to any son. Elsewhere in John's Gospel, the term *son* refers only to Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

But such a slave has no part and right in the house, he has only duties to perform; he is not his own master and cannot speak of freedom. The servants of sin may now be outward members of the Kingdom, of the Church, but they will in the end be obliged to leave, they will be thrust out from the place where they have usurped the rights of children. (Kretzmann)

Slaves become part of a household and even experience benefits from the household. But their connection is tentative. They remain slaves and can be sent away because they have no lasting claims there. (PBC)

*son remains forever* – A son is a son forever. He belongs in the household and the household belongs to him. He is family. (PBC)

**8:36** *Son sets you free* – It is only the Son of God that is able to bring freedom, emancipation from sin and its service. He has earned freedom from sin for all men by paying the price, the redemption for their sin, His holy blood. That is the only true freedom, which the Son has thus earned and is offering to the whole world, which He wants also these Jews to accept. (Kretzmann)

Jesus cuts through the self-deception by observing that their actions and status are connected: “everyone who sins is a slave to sin” (v 34). Sin is not an occasional “oops.” It is the ongoing manifestation of our mortal (as in *mortis*, i.e., death-bound) state. Hence the classical term “original sin,” the sin of our origins, our roots. “Slaves come and go,” Jesus tells them, “but the child has a home forever. So when the Son makes you free, you’re really free!” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 4)

And that’s what it’s all about: that we become truly free (see v 32). What seemed to begin as a cordial conversation—Was Jesus not talking to those who “believed”?—has become a shockingly sharp exchange (8:37; compare 7:19–25). Behind it all is the Jews’ rejection of the reality that Jesus comes directly from the heavenly Father (8:38). How stern, then, is his charge against those who have made this a debate with him (8:42, 44). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

Note that the believing Jews were already set free, needing only to be fully established in their liberty. We are ourselves turned into sons adopted into the household of God, children of the Father, joint heirs with Christ. (Lenski)

“As Christ says, [baptized people] have been made free again. Therefore, they are able not only to hear the Word, but also to agree with it and accept it, although in great weakness.” (FC SD II 67) (TLSB)

Jesus is here implicitly referring to his own Sonship with the Father as the basis of his authority to free from sin. Freedom from sin does not come from one’s natural attachments, but from the Son, who is himself the free gift of the Father’s love for the world (cf. Jn 3:16). Important is the idea that it is the Son who frees. He is the instrument of the Father’s grace and love. The Father works only in and through the Son. Important, too, is the implicit allusion to Baptism, through which we are made to be sons of God in him who is the Son of the Father. In the Son, the Father of the Son becomes and is also our Father. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)