

The actress Gina Carano recently won a settlement against the Disney Corporation for wrongful termination. I think that she got a lot of money. I am glad she did. They fired her for her conservative political views. After her victory she posted this past Thursday on her social media, "... and the truth shall set you free."
I am sad that she did that.

It is a quotation from John 8 that has nothing to do with her situation.

The truth is that this is one of the most misused sayings of Jesus in the whole Bible.

You hear it in politics, in sports, in court battles, in interpersonal conflicts.

I have heard husbands use it in disputes with their wives.

I have heard employees use it in disputes with their bosses.

Often people use it to mean that something they perceive as true will give them some kind of freedom.

It does not mean that.

It has a context, and in its context, this statement by Jesus means something extremely important.

Realize this: In the Bible the word “truth” almost always means a specific truth.

Many things are true, but “the truth” as the Bible speaks of it is a particular reference to what God says.

In particular “the truth” is the truth spoken by God in the Bible about Jesus rescuing us from sin, death, and hell.

The truth is gospel truth. In the New testament “the truth” refers to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is saying that if you believe that truth, “the truth,” you will be set free from bondage to sin.

And you must trust Jesus in this, in what He says about this...

because...

Only Jesus can rescue you from lies and teach you the truth.

In John 8, Jesus is continuing His teaching that began in chapter 7 in the Temple at the Feast of Booths.

Jesus has been declaring that his teaching is not His own, but comes from His Father in Heaven.

He has also been pointing out that some of them want to kill Him, which they deny.

Jesus has told them that He has come from heaven and is returning to heaven.

He calls Himself “the light of the world,” and claims to be rescuing people from darkness.

He is warning them that if they do not believe in Him, they will die in their sin.

And He is predicting His death. **John 8:28-30**

I. The word of Jesus Christ will set you free.

John 8:31-32

It is essential for Christians, who are necessarily followers of Jesus Christ, to clearly understand verse 31.

One might say that Jesus is saying here what it means to be a Christian, a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

You cannot be a Christian without doing what Jesus here says.

And, note what this verse says about who He is speaking to, “Jews who had believed Him.”

Jesus is speaking to believers, people who are beginning to trust in Him.

He says, “If you continue (abide) in My Word you are truly disciples of mine.”

Are you hearing Him?

Do you realize what He is saying?

If you are a Christian, a saved person, a follower of Jesus, you must continue, live, in His Word.

After all the word “disciple” means learner. A disciple learns or he or she is not a disciple.

A disciple of Jesus learns from Jesus, by listening, reading, studying, living in His Word, the Bible.

Early in my Christian growth I learned the navigator hand illustration:

read, hear, study, memorize... meditate.

So that you will know the Bible, its story, the books in it, how to understand it, and the message of it.

And it takes effort.

You’ve got to work at it. It does not just happen.

And then you must be learning to obey it, to live it out. **John 14:15-21**

If you do this, you will be a disciple of Jesus, and (vs. 32) “you will know the truth.”

Jesus here is speaking of the absolute truth that comes from God.

He is not speaking of modern politics, gossip about the neighbors, telling a friend that he has a problem.

Jesus is speaking of gospel truth.

If you live, continue, in Jesus' words, the Bible, you will know the most important truth there is to know.

Now you might say, "Pastor John, I know the gospel. I know the truth."

But if you think like that, as if you have no more to learn in it, you are ignorant of it.

Yes, on the one hand, this gospel truth is simple and straightforward. **1 Corinthians 15:1-5**

On the other hand, the most brilliant and diligent theologian can never understand the depths of it.

If you know this truth, it will set you free.

If you do not know the teaching of the Bible, you might wonder at this claim by Jesus.

What can He mean? After all, we are Americans, free.

We are human beings with free will. We are not slaves. Is this not true?

Well, the Jews there thought similarly.

We need to be set free? Really?

If you know the Bible and are living in it, you already know where the conversation is going.

II. Without Jesus you are a slave to sin.

John 8:33-38

Even without any theological understanding, the response by the Jews here is filled with uncomfortable irony.

Consider their statement that precedes their question in verse 33.

"We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone."

Can they be this stupid? Don't they know their own history?

Abraham's descendants were slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years.

In the book of Judges, they were slaves of the Philistines, the Moabites, the Canaanites, the Midianites,

The Philistines again, then the Ammonites, and the Philistines a third time.

Later they were conquered by the Assyrians, then the Babylonians, then the Greeks.

And in the day when Jesus is speaking with these Jews in John 8, they are slaves to the Roman Empire.

For most of their history, the people of Israel have been slaves.

What are these guys thinking?

But Jesus does not take the opportunity to give these guys a history lesson.

He gets right to the most critical issue, the slavery that is most serious for every person.

If these guys knew their Bibles, they would know what is coming.

Say whatever you want about human free will... just look at verse 34.

If you sin, you are a slave to sin.

This has been true of every human being in the past 6,000 years.

You might imagine that you are free, but, in fact, you cannot choose to do what you really want to do.

If you could know the truth perfectly you would see that you do not want to sin.

You would see that what you really want to do is to know God, obey God, and live forever.

But the Bible teaches us that without Christ you are unable to do that.

You are not free. You are a slave to sin.

Paul tells us this in a different way in **Romans 6:20-22**.

See... without Christ, we think freedom is doing what we want when we want it.

But there are many decisions we will make (if we exercise this version of freedom) that we will regret.

We become slaves to our desires and are forced to suffer the consequences... more bondage.

But, if we are believers, disciples, we are free from the power of sin.

We have a choice, because of the truth, to not sin!

Let us consider an example, one from the Bible,

but not so vastly different from many situations today.

Samson saw a pretty girl and said to himself "I want her." (Judges 14)

You might have a similar problem with money, or things, or your own anger, or gossip, or chocolate.

What did Samson do?

He did what he wanted, he got her.

But she ruined his life, so it wasn't really what he wanted.

If Samson could have believed in Jesus and known the truth...

"There is what I want, but God says something else. I will do what God says.

And, he would have gotten what he would have chosen if he could know everything!

Freedom!

D.A. Carson, “True freedom is not the liberty to do anything we please, but the liberty to do what we ought; and it is genuine liberty because doing what we ought now pleases us.”

And, as you continue in following Jesus you will discover that what really pleases God, pleases you.

So, Jesus says in John 8:36, “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

Then Jesus points out their problem with the truth, that is related to their rejection of the truth.

Because...

III. Without Jesus you are trapped in self-deception. John 8:39-41a

In verses 37-38 Jesus has already hinted at where He is taking this discussion.

There is Jesus’ Father who Goves Jesus what He has to say.

Then there is the father that these Jewish leaders are listening to.

They respond with indignation, “Abraham is our father.” (vs. 39)

Jesus responds to their certainty with a little lesson.

If they really were Abraham’s children, they would do the most important thing that Abraham did, trust God.

Instead, they are trying to kill Jesus, though they will not admit that they are trying to do that.

Here is a critical lesson we learn from this interaction.

Sinners who do not want to repent, who are living in sin, are trapped in their own self-deception.

This is another manifestation of the human slavery to sin.

Rather than seeing our sin as our own fault and the reason for our problems, we cling to our own rightness.

Without Jesus, people will choose to believe lies rather than the truth. It is more comfortable. (vs. 45)

We are masters of self-deception.

1 John 1:8, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

Galatians 6:3, “For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”

Proverbs 21:2, “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart.”

Obadiah to arrogant Edom, “The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, “Who will bring me down to the ground?” (Obadiah 1:3)

God is going to humble them for their pride.

God will humble us as well if we reject Jesus’ words and claim our own righteousness.

But, unless God works a miracle, deceived people will continue in their self-deception.

Why? Jesus tells us.

IV. Without Jesus your father is the devil. John 8:41b-47

Listen to how Jesus attacks the claim of these Jews... that they are God’s people.

vss. 37-38 He points out the inconsistency between their racial/genetic ancestry and their behavior.

But who is “their father?”

vss. 39-41 He points out that they are not actually real descendants of Abraham in the most important sense.

But who is “their father?”

vss. 42-43 He points out that the fact that they cannot hear Him is because they are not really sons of God.

Because children are like their parents. This is a general principle, a proverb.

vss. 44-47 He makes it clear that not only are they not of God, but their father is actually the devil.

Why? Because they are acting like him, in the most important sense.

They are not obeying the words of God.

They do not want the truth because it hurts. It does sometimes.

They want Jesus to shut up or be dead.

They want to kill Him.

What do you want to do with Jesus?

Why is it that people do not hear and do what Jesus says? Jesus’ answer is clear.

These people are listening to Satan, their father.

You might say, “But, NO, I don’t listen to Satan. He is not my father. I am not a Satanist!”

Wait a minute and think on it. How is it that Satan speaks?

Well, he lies. (vs. 44) He gives you excuses. He feeds your pride.

The devil unlikely to let you know it is him.

He does not even want you to believe that he is there, or exists at all.

Many people mock the idea of Satan.

They think of him as fiction, a silly red beast with horns and a pointy tail.

People don't believe in him because they cannot see him. But Satan is a spiritual being, invisible, and real.

How do I know? I believe my Bible, because Jesus never lies.

Satan lies. He hates. He sneaks about. He wants to destroy you. He wants to eat you.

He will tell you, when you are having trouble in your marriage,

"It's your wife's fault, or your husband's."

...when you consider giving,

"You might not have enough. You have a right to your money."

...when your parents tell you something you don't like,

"They know nothing. They don't care about you."

...when wasting time on TV, video games, or movies,

"You have a right to entertainment. All the gross stuff won't hurt you."

...when sucked into your social media and wrapped up in the fake worlds of others,

"You have to keep up with these people. You need to be liked by them."

...when you are angry at someone, unforgiving, resentful,

"How dare they. You have a right to your anger."

...when you think about repenting,

"What will people think? Come on... you're a good person."

...when someone encourages you to repent,

"Who does that guy think he is, talking to me that way."

...when offered wisdom by someone who would counsel you,

"What, do you think I'm an idiot? Why should I listen to you?"

Are you going to listen to that stuff? Are you going to be a child of the devil?

Who are you going to listen to?

Jesus, in the Bible, as He speaks to you truth that comes from God?

Or yourself, which might be the devil speaking to you, deceiving you, making you a slave?

You must choose, your eternal destiny depends upon it.