

Text— John 8:21-36

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Today is the 4th Sunday after Easter, and yet we should continue to bear in mind at all times the purpose and meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection— the fact that Jesus Christ is He, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification, " as Romans 4:25 relates. Yes, we must never forget that we are all sinners who would be forever lost and damned if not for the atoning work of our Lord and Savior, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," declares Romans 6:23. Thus, Jesus Christ is the only Way to God and heaven, for He rightly states in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Hence, a living faith in Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior and Lord is vital if one would have everlasting life.

Accordingly, our Scripture selection effectively emphasizes the need to:

"BELIEVE ON JESUS"

With that as our theme may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) What it means to believe on Jesus and why it is vital to do so
- 2) How to persist in believing on Jesus
- 3) Why it is necessary to persist in believing on Jesus

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Verse 21, ----- (John 8:21)

Prior to our Scripture selection we learn that the Jewish high-churchmen – Pharisees – stubbornly rejected Jesus Christ when He said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest

record of thyself; thy record is not true." (John 8:12-13) Nevertheless, Jesus did not give up on the Pharisees; Jesus truly desired that they would repent of their sins and believe on Him, for the opening verse of our text relates, *Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.*

Realize that when Jesus said the foregoing words to the Pharisees He was then soon to die for the sins of the world, triumphantly rise from the dead after three days in the grave, and visibly ascend into heaven forty days later. Thus, the Pharisees would no longer have the opportunity to see Jesus visibly among them and hear His holy Word from His own blessed lips. The chance for those Jews who were hardened in unbelief to repent was about to pass as they would grow even more stubborn when they would demand Jesus' crucifixion despite their knowledge that He is sinless, and then they would subsequently deny His bodily resurrection and bribe Roman soldiers to lie about it. Oh, Jesus knew it was all then about to happen, which is why He warned the unbelieving Jews, *saying, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.*

Jesus was going to visibly return to heaven, but the unbelieving Jews would never get to heaven since they would die in their sins because of their rejection of the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. My friends, it's vital to believe on Jesus because He is the ONLY SAVIOR from sin and never-ending death in hell, for Acts 4:12 plainly informs us, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Indeed, Jesus Christ is, as John the Baptist declared, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) However, unbelief rejects Jesus Christ and leaves the unbeliever in his or her sins.

Verses 22-24, ----- (John 8:22-24)

Consider how low the Jews' thoughts were

concerning Christ, for after Jesus told them of His upcoming departure and the fact that they in their hardened unbelief would die in their sins, *Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.* Seriously, the Christ-hating Jews asked if the holy Jesus would commit the sin of suicide! Suicide is self-murder, and God's holy Law clearly commands, "Thou shalt not kill." (Exodus 20:13) Accordingly, Jesus would never do such a thing since He is the sinless only begotten Son of God, for in Hebrews 4:15 we read that He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Consequently, when those unbelieving Jews accusingly and blasphemously questioned if Jesus would commit suicide, He plainly and truthfully *said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*

Observe that to believe on Jesus does NOT simply mean to believe that a man named Jesus of Nazareth once walked upon earth, for the unbelieving Jews had such a historic knowledge of Jesus as they knew He walked upon earth; and yet, those Jews were UNBELIEVERS because they did NOT believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God, the great I AM, the promised Messiah foretold of old. Likewise today, there are many people who believe that a man known as Jesus of Nazareth walked upon this earth over 2000 years ago; some of those people even acknowledge that Jesus was a leader among men, a person who attempted to help others; but, such historic knowledge is not saving faith!

My friends, to believe on Jesus means to believe that He IS the promised Messiah, the Christ of God, the Savior foretold of old, the great I AM, "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," as John 1:14 reports. To believe on Jesus is to know, trust, and confide in Him as one's personal Savior and Lord, the God/man who has kept God's holy Law perfectly for all people and has paid for all the

sins of all people with His holy and precious blood which He shed while nailed to the accursed tree of the cross.

Take it to heart that Jesus was not being unkind to the unbelieving Jews when He told them, *Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.* Jesus was attempting to show those unbelievers that they were headed for hell if they did not sincerely repent of their sins and believe on Him, which is why He told them straight out, *I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*

The unbelieving Jews were in fact "from beneath" since they were children of the devil rather than children of God, for later in John 8:44 we read that Jesus told them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." The unbelieving Jews were "of this world" – they were earthly-minded – since all their thoughts, hopes, and dreams were centered on this world and the things of this world, not unlike most folks today.

On the other hand, Jesus is indeed "from above" and "not of this world" because He is in fact the eternal only begotten Son of God, conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary in time, for Galatians 4:4-5 reports, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." And, concerning the man Jesus Christ on earth 2 Peter 1:17 adds, "he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Thankfully, Jesus was sent into the world by His heavenly Father to redeem the world, for 1 John 4:9-10 informs us, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world,

that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Therefore, one who fails to believe on Jesus as one’s personal Savior and Lord will die in one’s sins, for John 3:36 plainly states, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Hence, it is truly vital to believe on Jesus.

Verses 25-27, -----. (John 8:25-27)

Throughout Jesus’ public ministry He had preached and taught the people who He is, but the unbelieving Jews continued in their unbelief because they rejected Jesus’ Word. Jesus never changed His message of truth, for Jesus spoke the words His heavenly Father desired Him to speak. We learn in John 5:17-18 that at an earlier time Jesus told the unbelieving Jews, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.” Nevertheless, at the time the events recorded in our text took place we see that the hard-hearted Jews did not understand when Jesus said, *I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.* Unfortunately, the unbelieving Jews *understood not that he spake to them of the Father*, for they knew neither God the Father or God the Son.

Verses 28-30, -----. (John 8:28-30)

Jesus was fully aware that He would soon be lifted up on the cross of Calvary, and at that time the people would know that He is indeed the promised Messiah who always works in full concert with God the Father who sent Him, for Jesus said *unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those*

things that please him.

Realize that Jesus spoke the Gospel, the good news that He is the Savior foretold of old, the Messiah who would suffer as described in Psalm 22:14-18, where we read, “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.” Yes, Jesus is the Messiah foretold of old, the Savior about whom Isaiah 53:4-6 reports: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Jesus did all that was necessary to save the world in full accord with His heavenly Father’s will.

Jesus’ words about His then upcoming death by crucifixion had a positive impact on some of the unbelieving Jews, for our text informs us that *As he spake these words, many believed on him.* Take it to heart that genuine faith in Jesus Christ is always a gracious gift of God that results from His Holy Spirit working through His Word, for we learn from Romans 1:16-17 and 10:17 that “the gospel of Christ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Hence, to believe on Jesus is to have God-given faith in Him as one’s personal Savior and Lord; and, such faith is vital since Mark 16:16 plainly states, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but

he that believeth not shall be damned.”

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As we continue to ponder our text, let us see how to persist in believing on Jesus.

Verses 31 & 32, -----. (John 8:31-32)

If a human being does not regularly feed his or her body with nourishing food, it will starve and die. Likewise, if a believer in Christ does not regularly feed his or her soul with the food of God’s Word, his or her faith in Jesus will starve and die. Accordingly, Jesus says to all believers as He once said to the Jews who had come to faith in Him, *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* Jesus is TRUTH personified, the only Way to God and heaven, the only Savior who frees us from sin and its punishment of never-ending death in hell.

Therefore, take it to heart that to persist in believing on Jesus one needs to continue in Jesus’ Word, which is, as 1 Thessalonians 2:13 reports, “the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” Indeed, the Gospel of Christ through which we were given faith in Jesus can keep us in that faith and grow us in the same, while God’s Law continues to show us our sin and the need for the Savior, and provides us with the proper information to guide us in holy living in thanks to God. Yes, it’s as we learn in 2 Timothy 3:15-17, “the holy scriptures... are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” Hence, let us persist in believing on Jesus by making regular use of the Holy Bible, meditating upon it day and night.

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As we continue to ponder our text to its

conclusion, let us see why it is necessary to persist in believing on Jesus.

Verse 33, -----. (John 8:33)

Unfortunately, although many of the Jews who heard Jesus’ words came to believe on Him, some did not, for they *answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?*

Oh, notice the sinful pride the unbelieving Jews had in their bloodline— they thought their family heritage and their works as part of that family provided them with necessary freedom that would save them. Sadly, many people today think the same way— they believe their membership in a particular congregation or church-body coupled with their works will provide them with freedom and thereby save them. Yes, like the unbelieving Jews of old, many folks just do not realize they are under the bondage of sin and are headed for hell if they do not repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

Verses 34-36, -----. (John 8:34-36)

Observe that Jesus said in answer to the Jews, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.* Thus, the unbelieving Jews were not free, but by their deliberate and wilful sinning they were servants, yea slaves, of sin. Oh, it’s true that even Christians still sin; but, Christians fall into sin because of the weakness of their sinful flesh. On the other hand, unbelievers sin willingly as that is their desire since they are servants of sin rather than servants of the only Savior from sin, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think about the fact that Jesus says, *the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.* The point is: the servant of sin does not abide in the house that is God’s Church forever even if he or she has an external connection with the visible church on earth; however, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, abides forever, as Ruler of the invisible Church of God, the Holy Christian Church

of which He is the Head. Therefore, it is necessary to persist in believing on Jesus because He is the only Savior, the only Deliverer from never-ending doom. Accordingly, our text concludes with Jesus saying, *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

Thus, it is necessary to persist in believing on Jesus because He alone provides us with real freedom—freedom from serving sin. It's as we read in Galatians 3:26-27 followed by 2 Corinthians 5:17, "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." And so, Romans 8:1-4 relates, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Accordingly, fellow Christians, let us be grateful to Jesus for the freedom He has provided us.

Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord; and, let us go forward striving to live a holy life, thereby showing we believe on Jesus. Amen.

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