



## “The Emperor’s New Clothes”

**John 8:44-59**

by **Pastor Tim Dodson**  
of **JF Believers Church**  
in **Menomonie, Wisconsin**  
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John 8:44-59 *"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth,*

*because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. 45 "But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. 46 "Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? 47 "He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." 48 Then the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" 49 Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. 50 "And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges. 51 "Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death." 52 Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.' 53 "Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?" 54 Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. 55 "Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. 56 "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." 57 Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." 59 Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

Once upon a time there was an Emperor who loved clothes! In fact all it was all the Emperor ever wanted... lots of new clothes! One day, two strangers arrived at the Emperor's palace and told him *"We can make you the most beautiful clothes in all the world and everyone will want clothes like yours."* *"Ah, this is what I've always wished for"* thought the Emperor, *"to wear the most beautiful clothes in all the world."*

For weeks and weeks the strangers worked on the clothes and one day the king demanded to see them! When the strangers showed them to him, the Emperor looked all around the room. But he couldn't see the new clothes! *"Where are these new clothes?"* demanded the Emperor! *"But they are right here, Your Majesty,"* said the first stranger. *"These clothes are so special and rare that only the smartest and most special people can see them. They are too fine to be seen by stupid and ignorant people; that is the magic of these amazing new clothes!"* *"Oh of course, of course"* said the Emperor quickly (not wanting to appear stupid or ignorant). *"They are beautiful; this is just what I've always wanted!"* The day of the big parade came and the two strangers presented the Emperor with his new clothes. *"Everyone will admire you, Your Majesty. The new clothes look most wonderful,"* said the strangers.

By this time the word had got out that these new clothes were so special that they could only be seen by smart and special people and, not wanting to appear stupid or ignorant, all the Emperor's friends said...*"How beautiful! What colors! What style! Your new clothes are magnificent, Your Majesty!"* The Emperor was very pleased that everyone was admiring his new clothes, even if he couldn't see them himself! Suddenly, a little voice from the crowd shouted out...*"...but he's got nothing on! The Emperor's is naked!"* The Emperor blushed and went red. They were right... He wasn't wearing any clothes at all, and *everybody* knew it, but only one small boy was honest enough to say it!"

**The author George Orwell** once said *“In a time of deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”* Jesus understood that before Orwell did. He was indeed a revolutionary, and His truth would turn the world upside down and many men into His enemies. Jesus, when speaking of Himself, once claimed not only to be a “truth teller” but literally the *embodiment* of the truth. John 14:6 says *“I am the way, (I am) **the truth**, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”* How can it be then that so many confessed believers will ‘go to blows’ to both reject truth and those who attempt to profess it? Is it, as Jesus herein is stating, they reject His words because they in truth reject *Him*?

Jesus, back in verse 32, had made the statement to the Pharisees that the *“truth will make them free.”* That phrase has been handed down through the ages from the church pew to the world at large. Having been quoted thousands of times, those words of Christ have sadly lost their impact and been relegated to the level of a fortune cookie, and quotes on T-shirts. And yet, if received on its face failure, such would render volumes of understanding as to why so many who wear the mantle of faith are yet depressed, anxious, troubled, unsettled, unhappy, and without the freedom that Jesus has so described as *‘the light of life.’* (vs 12)

Jesus had been clearly hard on these religious leaders in this chapter 8 of John. How gentle and gracious He could be when speaking to a lost sinner who was naive to their state of being and blind to their sin. And yet he could be like a heavy weight boxer when it came to those who have been taught the truth and still have their spiritual fingers in their ears. The fact he would deal with them in this manner only reflects what He says elsewhere in scripture is the very nature, character, and practice of God the Father.

Luke 12:47 – 48 (NLT) says that *“...a servant who knows what the master wants, but isn’t prepared and doesn’t carry out those instructions, will be severely punished. But someone who does not know, and then does something wrong, will be punished only lightly. When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.”* Jesus described in Matthew 25 the servant who failed to invest what the Master had given him, but instead buried it out of fear and self-interest, as a “wicked and unprofitable servant.” He went on to say in judgment *“cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness, (where) there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

And in John 12:48 He says *“He who rejects Me, **and does not receive My words**, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”* The fact is, each of us holds personal responsibility for his or her actions and are...according to scripture, judged according to those actions. While all of us have some knowledge of God...Romans 1:20-23 makes that clear, God tells us herein (and elsewhere for that matter) that He judges according to the individual's level of knowledge, understanding, and position. Leon Morris comments (*The Gospel According to John* [Eerdmans], p. 468), *“Jesus’ hearers may act as though they are supreme and dispense justice. Actually they are men under judgment.”*

The ‘audience’ that day were some of the most religious individuals on the planet at the time. They **knew** what was what in the realm of God. They had truth, both written and historical, and yet they were still blind because despite what they could *see*, they could not *accept*. They wanted to **possess** the truth, just not adhere to its ramifications. And therein lies the plague that still holds so much of the church today in its death grip! We too, want to hear it, read it, speak it, *wave it around on a placard*...we just don’t want to **DO** it! The emperor is naked. And if we are so daring to step back and acknowledge truth as truth, we innately realize that such an affirmation will demand a response. Because truly Christ **IS** truth, and He demands a response!

There is no mistaking what Jesus is saying to these guys! The bottom line was that they are not true children of God, and He was calling them out. We must note that with Christ, throughout the gospels, a simple verbal affirmation of belief was never enough to gain entrance into the kingdom of God. Religious acts and position didn't matter. Not here, and not the *hereafter*. And sadly, our modern greater church today has disregarded that overt position of Christ in lieu of the universal church policy. Jesus says His way is narrow and few shall find it. The religious world today says His way is broad and pretty much everyone is *in* unless you are a serial killer or a communist dictator.

What Jesus was saying was not exactly endearing Him to these boys. I have certainly discovered personally, as Jesus was bearing out herein, that one need not be rude or overtly offending to put people off. You only have to be straight and truthful. That fact alone can cause a war or escalate an individual to violence. We are a culture that largely rejects truth in exchange for a comfortable fantasy. That's why Disneyland and Disneyworld can charge 100\$ to get in the gate, and why we elect the people we put in charge of our country. I fear that a lot of that state of mind comes from how we were raised, and certainly out of our own self-interests! Many of us were sheltered from the hard truth of life and therefore rejected it later in life when it was harder to ignore.

It's been said that if you tell the truth, it becomes a part of your past...but if you lie, it becomes a part of your future. Gaskin Jr, the motivational speaker said profoundly that "*The only people mad at you for telling the truth is those who are living a lie.*" We externally understand and agree with the need for the truth, but are much slower to accept it when the "moment of truth" finally comes. When Jesus tried to tell these guys the truth, they did more than reject it. They attacked him verbally first ...calling him names, mockingly accusing him of being born out of wedlock and suggesting he was demon possessed. When that didn't stop him, they got physical. Some people don't want to hear the truth, and will attempt to suppress it at any cost. Because, hey...if you can't win the argument, you can always attack your opponent! Today we use social media and web reviews under fake names.

Giordano Bruno, the philosopher and astronomer held the position that the earth rotated around the sun, something most people were unwilling to entertain at the time and certainly not the catholic church. Because he refused to change his position, they burned him at the stake for his "heresy." People used to also hold to the position that the earth was basically flat, despite Isaiah 40:22 essentially saying the opposite! Bruno said "*Truth does not change because it is, or is not, believed by the majority of the people.*"

This country used to paint a picture that cigarettes were somehow good for you too, but we have thoroughly rejected that premise today! Understanding why truth is so shunned at times is not hard. We all innately recognize that truth on any level has ramifications, and ramifications would therefore innately demand a response. So when we enter a situation where we are being taught or confronted by Christ as well as God the Father, we often do so with reservations. We rarely if ever put "everything on the table" as fair game. God wants us to come before Him with 'open hands' ...holding on to nothing of our own. Proverbs 3:5 calls upon us to "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.*" When we use words and phrases like "*true, except for...*" and believe the Word does not apply in my case because I am under special circumstances or am given special allowances because of who I am or how bad I want something, we are in trouble!

We read of Ezekiel's vision concerning what happens when we reject God's authority. In Ezekiel 10:18, and 11:22-23, the 'glory of the Lord' literally 'left the house.' These guys had their religion, but they didn't have God's glory. And to have religion without the Lord of glory is empty and meaningless. Whether you challenge

Jesus boldly as a blasphemer, reject His words because they are hard or uncomfortable, or even if you just ignore Him, the final result will be that He will leave you to die in your sins and face judgment.

John 10:27 says "**My** sheep hear **My** voice, and I know them, **and they follow Me.**" Psalms 5:5 "*Therefore, the proud may not stand in your presence...for you hate all who do evil.*"

Jesus doesn't just warn those who would reject his sovereignty, but says on the flip side that "*If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.*" (Vs 54) How can that be? Doesn't everyone die? I guess that depends upon your definition of death! For Jesus, speaking to Martha in John 11:25-26, says "*I am the resurrection and the life; **he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.** Do you believe this?"*

You see Christ never sees the passing from this life to the next as death. Death in the context that we see is permanent, but Jesus didn't see it that way, and went so far as to prove it with his resurrection after "dying" on the cross. When speaking of the death of Lazarus, Jesus referred to him as "sleeping" in John chapter 11, and said he needed to go and "wake him up." The Bible refers to death as "sleeping" more than 50 times! Daniel 12:2 "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

No, it appears that real "death" is a much greater thing than passing out of this body and into the next life. The Bible says that all those who have died—both righteous and wicked—will be raised to life again for judgment. It is the "next death" which follows that temporal 'sleep' that is eternal and dramatic beyond words. Jesus says, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.*" (John 11:25).

John 5:28-29 says "... *an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.*" Does that mean that if we "do good" deeds we will go to heaven? No...that simple premise would negate everything Jesus ever stood for. But it does mean that if we are indeed children of God, redeemed and reborn, we **will do good works**. Our actions and our living clearly matter! They are "fruits" of salvation, and a litmus test of our actual state.

This subject today strikes a particular nerve with me, as I have had some conversations with professed believers over the years that would border upon the ludicrous. Conversations where truth was laid upon the table of discourse complete with scripture, facts, and a map of escape. I have done everything but get out charts and graphs and a laser pointer to present the truth, and I was still resoundingly rejected. Verse 47 echoes in my head "*He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.*" And verse 45 where we hear Him say "*But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.*" And to receive those words on face failure breaks my heart, because the ramifications are deep and eternal upon people I love!

2Peter 2:10 says "*He (GOD) is especially hard on those... who despise authority.*" Such does not make me, as a pastor, the end-all of authority, but when one rejects the scriptures and the facts of the truth he or she stands in great danger of proving they are **not** His and are indeed lost still. Hard words! But Jesus in this passage is not looking at the world through "rose colored glasses." The stakes are high, but so is His love and grace. We know the way...will we follow Him? Will we be men and women of truth?

Are your hands really open today on everything? Because all the pretending in the world, does not change the fact that the "emperor **does indeed** have no clothes..."