

## INTRODUCTION 引言

Today is Independence Day. Two-hundred-and-forty-five years ago this country was born. On July 4, 1776, the U.S. Congress declared that 13 American colonies were united to form a new nation, and it became independent and free. Today, people celebrate this national holiday with firework, barbeque and hotdog eating contest. Some of our church members enjoy their freedom from work with vacation. The Constitution empowers us various forms of freedom. We can freely share our opinions. We can go on the street to protest about any issue that concerns us. We gather here every Sunday to worship God without any fear that the police will come in to arrest us. Those and other expressions of freedom are protected by the law. In our passage today, Jesus tells us the true freedom everyone should seek after. It is the freedom to live as God's children. If you paid attention to the reading earlier, you would notice that John uses some contrasting concepts. He used the same style to write his three letters in the New Testament too. In this passage, we see truth versus lies, free versus slavery, Father of truth versus father of lies, believe versus reject, and so on. Jesus engaged in a debate with some Jews. He used some opposing ideas to expose a blind-spot in His listeners to lead them to the truth.

## EXPLANATION 解釋

### 1. Bondage in Sins 被罪所束縛

Using John's logic, we will look at two conflicting notions. First, we will consider bondage in sins. The key verses in this passage are **31 and 32**: 31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Jesus' audience were some Jews who believed in Him. Jesus pointed out later that they were not true believers because they did not accept the truth. It is like some people who believe in UFO. But that belief does not affect their lives unless they are abducted by aliens! Jesus states that true believers should also be His disciples. They know the truth and hold onto it. The same word "hold" is translated as "remain" in chapter 15 of John. In that passage, Jesus describes a healthy relationship between Him and His believers is like the connection between grapevine and branches. True believers must obey Jesus' teaching. The outcome is being set free. The Jews were ticked off when they heard the word "free." It implied that they were now held in bondage. The Jews protested that they had never been slaves of anyone. They must have forgotten that their ancestors were slaves in Egypt and Babylon. Now they were under the Roman Empire. In **verse**

34, Jesus clarified the kind of enslavement they were in: Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.” They were slaves of a spiritual power, not an earthly kingdom. Jesus’ listeners might agree that they were occasional sinners. Perhaps they accidentally overlooked certain laws, or they intentionally told lies or offended others. But to label them as slaves to sins would be offensive. It is like those who sip a small glass of red wine for the health benefits will not call themselves alcoholics. Young people who play computer games every day would not consider that as an addiction either. The Jews thought they could choose to sin or not to sin. Jesus explained that they did not have that freedom. The problem could be traced back to their ancestor. The Jews proudly claimed that they were descendants of Abraham. To Jesus, what matters the most is not a biological lineage, but a spiritual relationship. Jesus says in **verses 39 and 40**: 39 ... “If you were Abraham’s children.” said Jesus, “then you would do the things Abraham did. 40 As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things.” Those Jews did not follow Abraham’s example to trust God. Back then Abraham packed everything and left when God called him to leave his home country. God made a covenant with Abraham and promised to bless him with many descendants and a land. Abraham believed in God, even though he had yet to have any son and he was still a traveler. The Jews rejected Jesus’ message so much that they planned to get rid of Him. Jesus argues in **verses 43 and 44** that they mixed up their ancestor: 43 “Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. 44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” The Jews must be furious by now. Jesus pointed out that the devil, instead of Abraham, was their true father. Jesus’ teaching was like a foreign language to them that they did not understand. Worse still, they inherited the same murder and lying genes from the devil. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, sin entered into the world. Before long, their son Cain killed his brother Abel out of jealousy. Today, our world is full of conflict between people and nations. While people may not take others’ lives, they kill each other in their mind. Jesus once redefined murder by saying that those who hate others are like killing people. In our society, some people reject the truth. They try to silence the truth by intimidation. They bully people into submission. We need to ask God for wisdom and courage to stand up for the truth. We also need gentleness when we engage in a discussion. Our true enemy is the father of lies who holds people in bondage. Besides murder, another common sin is lying. Satan lied to Adam and Eve, and so they ate the forbidden fruit. He continues to use the same tactic since then. What are the lies that mislead people today? The non-believing world sees Christians as arrogant and outright wrong to believe that the Bible is the absolute truth. People encourage you to choose your own destiny. It is like going to a Wal-Mart. There has to be something that fits your needs.

Some people figure out mystical knowledge that can lead them to their version of paradise. Or it can be a meditation practice that makes them happier or more productive. People want to feel spiritual instead of being tied to certain religions. In doing so, they become their own gods. When we share the gospel, we do not only engage in a debate of ideas. It is a spiritual battle of the souls. We must use spiritual weapons to fight. We quote the Bible as our support. God's Word is powerful. However, we can never talk people into becoming Christians. Only the Holy Spirit can convict people in their hearts. We need to pray that God will free people from the bondage of sin.

## 2. Bonding as Sons 連結作兒女

The Jews did not realize that they were held in the bondage of sin. Jesus came to set people free. He rebuilt the bond to make us the sons of God. **Verse 35** tells us the blessings that come with the relationship: "Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever." While a slave calls a house a temporary dormitory, a son calls it his home. A son (a daughter too) can also enjoy all the benefits as a family member. In a bigger household, slaves cooked, did laundry and other housework. God does not save us as individual believers. He puts us in a family called church. We address each other as brothers and sisters. We care for each other. We pray, learn and worship together. Better still, God has prepared an eternal home for His children. Children should listen to their father, especially when they still live at home. House rules tend to be restrictive to protect everyone's welfare. Kids have to finish everything on the plate because food costs money to buy and mom spends time to cook it. Kids have to be home by a certain time at night to ensure their safety. Those rules only apply to one's own children and not outsiders. However, Jesus does not want us to obey God out of compulsion. Read **verse 42**: Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me." The Jews hated Jesus because they did not believe that Jesus came from the Father to convey the truth. However, those who love Jesus will embrace His teaching and do accordingly. Jesus lays out a simple correlation in **John 15:10** – "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love." Those who love Jesus will follow His example. We will obey Biblical truth just like Jesus did. We will do whatever it takes to please a person we love. Guys will do any crazy and illogical thing for their girl-friends. Men return to their sound mind after marriage. They will stop doing those silly things. But true love must be sacrificial. Many new Christians are very zealous. They serve in the church and they tell everyone about Jesus. We need to maintain the same love for God, whether we have been a Christians for one year or ten years. It has to be a growing relationship of knowledge and actions. The Jews knew in theory that God was their Father. However, they thought God was

distant and had many demanding rules. They thought God could not wait to punish people too. They obeyed the Law out of fear and obligation. Jesus corrected their view about God. The Father draws near to us. He is full of compassion and grace. He patiently waits for us to turn back from sin. By making Jesus our Lord, we will also become children of the Heavenly Father. Jesus did not come to start a new religion. Rather, He rebuilds our bond with the Father. God loves us even before we know Jesus. The same John writes in **1 John 3:1** that: How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. John goes on to say in the following context that God's children will not keep on sinning. Instead, they will obey God. God wants us to love Him back voluntarily in reaction to His love for us. God's commands are not to kill our joy. Rather, they are like fence around a house to protect us, and a user manual to ensure proper use of a product. Becoming a Christian is more than accepting a set of doctrines. It is to come under God's protection. God's truth will set us free from the bondage of sin. Jesus does not only pay for the eternal consequence of our sin. He also gives us the freedom and the power to obey God.

## CONCLUSION 結論

Jesus gives us the true freedom to live as God's children. The Jews mixed up their father. Only by accepting the Son of God can we reconnect to our Heavenly Father. In reality, people can mix up their fathers by accident. There was a court case in Japan in 2013 where two babies were switched by the hospital staff accidentally. They ended up in very different life paths. The main character in the story was a truck driver. He was raised by a single mom in a 100-square-foot apartment. He did not know that his real father was a rich man until 60 years later! One day, those rich siblings thought their oldest brother did not look like them. Their suspicion was confirmed by a DNA test. That set off a search for their true brother. By then, the rich parents had passed away. The truck driver had mixed emotions after reuniting with his family members. He lamented how different his life would have been if the hospital did not make the mistake. His true brothers, including the mixed-up baby all attended private schools. However, the lady who raised him and two other sons relied on social welfare. But at the end, the man did not show any resentment. He understood that everyone was a victim in the incident. Today, many people do not know that there is a Heavenly Father waiting for them. He sent His Son Jesus Christ to look for them. How will you choose when you know that you can live a much better life? You can become a child of God by receiving Jesus into your heart. Admit that you are a sinner. Make Jesus your Lord. Love Him and obey Him. By God's grace, anyone can live freely as His children.

## INTRODUCTION 引言

今天是獨立日。245 年前，這個國家誕生了。1776 年 7 月 4 日，美國國會宣布 13 個美洲殖民地聯合組成一個新的國家，成為獨立並享有自由。今天，人們通過煙火、燒烤和吃熱狗比賽來慶祝國慶日。我們的一些教會成員去渡假，享受工作之餘的自由。憲法賦予我們各種形式的自由。我們可以自由地發表我們的意見。我們可以上街示威，表達我們關注的課題。我們每週日都聚集在這裡敬拜神，不用擔心警察會進來逮捕我們。這些和其他的自由都受到法律保護。在今天的經文中，耶穌告訴我們每個人都應該追求的真正自由。就是作為神兒女的自由。如果你有注意剛才的經文閱讀，你會留意到約翰使用了一些對比的概念。他在新約中的三封書信也用了同樣的寫作風格。在這段經文中，我們看到真理與謊言、自由與奴役、真理之父與謊言之父、相信與拒絕等等概念。耶穌與一些猶太人在進行辯論。祂用一些相對的觀點，揭露聽眾的盲點，引導他們認識真理。

## EXPLANATION 解釋

### 1. Bondage in Sins 被罪所束縛

運用約翰的邏輯，我們來看兩個相對的概念。首先，我們要考慮的課題是被罪所束縛。這段經文的關鍵是在 31 和 32 節：**31 耶穌對信他的猶太人說：「你們若常常遵守我的道，就真是我的門徒；32 你們必曉得真理，真理必叫你們得以自由。」**耶穌的聽眾是一些相信祂的猶太人。但是耶穌後來指出，他們其實不是真信徒，因為他們不接受真理。就像有些人相信不明飛行物一樣。那種信念不會影響他們的生活，除非他們被外星人綁架！耶穌說真正的信徒也必須是門徒。他們知道並遵守真理。「遵守」這個字在約翰福音 15 章中被翻譯為「在裡面」。在那段經文中，耶穌描述祂和信徒之間的關係，就像葡萄樹和枝子之間的聯繫。真正的信徒必須遵守耶穌的教導，結果就是得自由。猶太人一聽到「自由」這個詞便生氣。這意味著他們現在是被束縛。猶太人抗議說他們從來沒有成為任何人的奴隸。他們大概忘記了他們的祖先在埃及和巴比倫當過奴隸。現在他們被羅馬帝國統治。耶穌在第 34 節澄清他們所受的奴役：**耶穌回答說：「我實實在在的告訴你們，所有犯罪的就是罪的奴僕。」**他們是屬靈力量的奴隸，而不是地上王國的奴隸。耶穌的聽眾可能



會同意他們偶爾犯罪。也許他們不小心忽略了某些律法，或者他們故意撒謊或冒犯別人。但把他們貼上罪的奴僕的標籤是冒犯的。就像一些為了身體健康而喝一小杯紅酒的人不會稱自己為酒鬼。每天玩電腦遊戲的年輕人也不會認為那是一種癮。猶太人認為他們可以選擇犯罪或不犯罪。耶穌解釋說他們其實沒有那種自由。這個問題可以追溯到他們的祖宗。猶太人自豪地宣稱他們是亞伯拉罕的後裔。對耶穌來說，重點不是血源關係，而是屬靈的關係。耶穌在第 39 和 40 節說：39 …「你們若是亞伯拉罕的兒子，就必行亞伯拉罕所行的事。40 我將在神那裡所聽見的真理告訴了你們，現在你們卻想要殺我，這不是亞伯拉罕所行的事。」那些猶太人沒有效法亞伯拉罕信靠神。當神呼召亞伯拉罕離開他的家鄉時，他便收拾好一切離開。神與亞伯拉罕立約，應許賜給他許多子孫和土地。亞伯拉罕相信神，儘管他還沒有兒子，而且他仍然在旅行中。猶太人拒絕耶穌的信息到一個地步，他們甚至計劃除掉祂。耶穌在 43 和 44 節說他們混淆了自己的祖先：43「你們為什麼不明白我的話呢？無非是因你們不能聽我的道。44 你們是出於你們的父魔鬼，你們父的私慾你們偏要行。他從起初是殺人的，不守真理，因他心裡沒有真理。他說謊是出於自己；因他本來是說謊的，也是說謊之人的父。」猶太人現在一定極其憤怒。耶穌指出，他們真正的父親是魔鬼，而不是亞伯拉罕。耶穌的教導對他們來說就像外語，他們聽不懂。更糟糕的是，他們從魔鬼那裡繼承了同樣的謀殺和撒謊基因。當亞當和夏娃背叛神時，罪就進入了世界。不久，他們的兒子該隱因嫉妒殺死了他的兄弟亞伯。今天，我們的世界充滿了人與人並國家之間的衝突。雖然人們不一定會奪走他人的生命，但他們在腦海中會殺死對方。耶穌曾經重新定義謀殺，祂說恨惡別人就等於殺人。在我們的社會中，有些人拒絕真理。他們通過恐嚇來掩蓋真理。他們也強迫別人屈服。我們需要向神祈求智慧和勇氣來為真理站起來。當我們與別人對話時，我們也需要溫柔。我們真正的敵人是謊言之父，他束縛人的心。除了謀殺，另一個常見的罪是說謊。撒旦欺騙了亞當和夏娃，使他們吃了禁果。從此之後，他繼續使用同樣的技倆。今天誤導人們的謊言是什麼？不信的世代認為基督徒接受聖經為絕對的真理是傲慢和完全錯誤的。人們鼓勵你選擇自己的命運。這就像去沃爾瑪購物，你肯定能找到迎合你需求的東西。有些人領悟出神秘的知識，以為能把他們帶進自己想像的天堂。或者是一些冥想的練習，使人更快樂或做事更有效率。人們追求宗教的感覺，但卻不想被某些宗教所束縛。當他們這樣做之時，便成為了自己的神。當我們分享福音時，我們不僅僅是在進行思想辯論。這是一場屬靈的爭戰。我們必須使用屬靈的武器來戰鬥。我們引用聖經作為支持。神的話語是有能力的。然而，我們不

可能說服人們成為基督徒。只有聖靈才能使人知罪。我們需要祈求神將人從罪的束縛中釋放出來。

## 2. Bonding as Sons 連結作兒女

猶太人沒有意識到他們被罪所束縛。耶穌來是要使人得自由。他重新使我們與神連結，成為祂的兒女。第 35 節告訴我們這種關係帶來的祝福：「**奴僕不能永遠住在家裡；兒子是永遠住在家裡。**」奴隸稱房子為臨時宿舍，而兒女則稱它為家。兒女也可以享受家庭成員的所有福利。在一個大的家庭中，奴隸會做飯、洗衣服和做其他家務。神不只拯救我們成為個別的信徒。祂也把我們放在一個叫做教會的家庭裡。我們彼此稱呼為弟兄姐妹。我們互相關心。我們一起禱告、學習和敬拜。更美的是，神為祂的兒女預備了一個永恆的家。孩子應該聽父親的話，尤其是當他還住在家裡的時候。家規往往是限制性的，以保護每個人的利益。孩子們必須把盤子裡的所有東西都吃完，因為買食物要花錢，媽媽要花時間做飯。孩子們必須在晚上的特定時間回家，以確保他們的安全。這些規則只適用於自己的孩子，而不適用於外人。然而，耶穌不希望我們出於勉強來服從神。閱讀第 42 節：**耶穌說：「倘若神是你們的父，你們就必愛我；因為我本是出於神，也是從神而來，並不是由著自己來，乃是祂差我來。」**猶太人恨耶穌，因為他們不相信耶穌是從父那裡來傳達真理的。然而，那些愛耶穌的人會接受並遵行祂的教導。耶穌在約翰福音 15:10 中表明一個簡單的關聯：**「你們若遵守我的命令，就常在我的愛裡，正如我遵守了我父的命令，常在他的愛裡。」**愛耶穌的人會效法祂的榜樣。我們會像耶穌一樣服從聖經的真理。我們會不惜一切代價取悅我們所愛的人。男士們會願意為他們的女朋友做任何瘋狂和不合邏輯的事情。但有些男士在結婚後便恢復神智。他們便停止做那些很傻的事情。但真正的愛必須是帶有犧牲的。許多剛信主的基督徒都非常熱心。他們參加教會的服事，並告訴每個人關於耶穌的事。無論我們是一年還是十年基督徒，我們都需要對神保持同樣的愛。這份關係必須配合不斷增長的知識和行動。猶太人在理論上知道神是他們的父親。然而，他們認為神是遙遠的，有許多苛刻的規定。他們認為神迫不及待懲罰犯錯的人。他們是出於恐懼和義務而遵守律法。耶穌糾正他們對神的看法。天父靠近我們。祂充滿憐憫和恩典。祂耐心地等待我們從罪中回轉。藉著接受耶穌成為我們的主，我們也自動成為天父的孩子。耶穌來不是要開創一個新的宗教。祂乃是重建我們與天父的聯繫。甚至在我們認識耶穌之前，神就已經愛我們了。同一位約翰在約翰一書 3:1 中寫道：**你看父賜給我們是何等的慈愛，使我們得稱為神的兒女；我們也真**

是他的兒女。世人所以不認識我們，是因未曾認識他。約翰在下文中繼續說，神的孩子不會繼續犯罪。相反，他們會聽從神。神希望我們甘心情願地愛祂，以回應祂對我們的愛。神的命令不是要扼殺我們的快樂。相反，它們就像房子周圍的柵欄保護我們，也像說明書，確保人們正確使用產品。成為基督徒不僅僅是接受一套教義。我們是要得到神的保護。神的真理會使我們脫離罪的束縛。耶穌不僅為我們罪的永恆後果付出代價。祂也賜給我們服從神的自由和力量。

## CONCLUSION 結論

耶穌賜給我們真正的自由，使我們可以成為神的兒女。猶太人弄混了他們的父親。只有接受神的兒子，我們才能重新與天父建立聯繫。在現實中，人們可能會出錯而混淆他們的父親。2013年在日本發生了一宗法庭案件，一家醫院的員工不小心把兩個嬰兒給錯了不同的父母。他們最終走上了截然不同的人生道路。故事的主角是一名卡車司機。他在一個 100 平方英尺的公寓裡被一位單身母親撫養長大。直到 60 年後，他才知道自己的親生父親是個有錢人！有一天，這些富裕的兄弟姐妹覺得他們的大哥長得不像他們。他們的懷疑終於被 DNA 測試證實了。於是他們便積極地去尋索真正的哥哥。那時，那一對富有的父母已經過世了。卡車司機在與家人團聚後百感交集。他感嘆，如果醫院沒有出錯，他的人生將會多麼的不一樣。他的親生兄弟，包括那位被弄混的孩子在內，都上私立學校。然而，撫養他和另外兩個兒子的那位女士卻是依靠社會福利金度日。但最終，這位男士並沒有表現出任何怨恨。他明白，每個人都是事件的受害者。今天，許多人不知道有一位天父在等著他們。祂差遣祂的兒子耶穌基督來尋找他們。當你知道自己可以过上更好的生活時，你會如何選擇？接受耶穌進入你的心，你就可以成為神的兒女。承認你是一個罪人。接受耶穌為你生命的主。愛祂並遵循祂。靠著神的恩典，任何人都可以像祂的兒女一樣自由地生活。