

In Christ Jesus, fellow recipients of God's free gift of grace

## **The Reformation Continues**

### **I. Sin still attempts to enslave us**

### **II. The Gospel alone still gives us freedom**

## **INTRODUCTION**

What exactly is the Reformation? Why do you/we still celebrate the Reformation?

Has anyone ever asked you questions like that? Have you ever asked yourself questions like that?

How exactly would you answer a question like that about what the Reformation is and why we take one of the 52 precious weekend worship opportunities we have to focus on the Reformation? Would you talk about how this is a day when we remember the work of a monk who changed the church 500 years ago? Would that be all that you would say? I would hope not! The word of God for our consideration today reminds us why that is not all that we should say, because **The Reformation Continues**. Jesus' words in our Gospel lesson remind us 1) Sin still attempts to enslave us, but 2) The Gospel alone still gives us freedom.

### **I. Sin still attempts to enslave us**

Are you a slave? That might sound like a strange question – especially in our country. But notice how Jesus speaks of this Jesus he tells us "*I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.*" We may not like to admit it, but if we think about that, how true it is.

Think about the last time that you laid awake at night with a guilty conscience. You had done something where you had sinned against God and perhaps someone else. Until that sin was repented of and forgiven, you might well say that your guilty conscience made you a slave to sin. Or perhaps it is an addiction that you struggle with. You know the addiction is wrong, you try to avoid it, but it makes you a slave to the sin involved. May the way that sin tries to enslave you is with that pet sin which the devil has found is a weakness in your spiritual armor. You know the action is sin, you attempt to fight it off, but the devil still gets you to give into temptation. You repent of the sin and ask God's help to not do it again, but the devil catches you in a weak moment and once again you find yourself enslaved to sin.

The slavery continues as we wonder – how can I be freed from my sin? Who am I that I keep giving in to my sinful flesh and the devil's temptations? But that is not all – we then start to rationalize how we can pay for that sin – what good can I do? I am not as bad as a lot of other people.

Then we turn through the pages of Holy Scripture and we see that it has been the devil's mode of working right from the beginning to try to enslave people in sin. Think of how Adam and Eve felt as they stood naked in the garden of Eden and attempted to hide from God. Their actions had enslaved them and all of humanity in sin. The apostle Paul who recorded our first two readings today from Romans 3 did not know anything except his own good works for much of his life. And then the Jailer at Philippi whom Paul preached to asked "*What do I have to do to be saved?*" He knew his sin and wanted to know how he could free himself from its slavery.

Luther and the people at his time were no different. All they knew God as was an angry judge whom they quivered in fear of. Luther wrote about how he would beat himself bloody or writhe in distress as he wondered how he would free himself from his sin.

We then begin to understand how the Reformation needs to continue still today. Our need for reformation and spiritual transformation is born out every time the devil attempts to enslave us in sin still today.

## II. The Gospel alone still gives us freedom

But that is not all our Savior tells us in our text for today. *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

No mention of our own works, who we are what we've done. No mention of anything we have to do or can do. Jesus points us back to one thing and one thing only which can undo the chains of sin – the power of God's Word. *"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

And how often haven't we seen that play out in our own lives as well? The time we had sinned against our spouse or a fellow Christian and we came to them burdened with sin and asked for their forgiveness. Those words "You are forgiven" were as if a weight had been lifted from our shoulders.

Jesus goes on to tell us *"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."* This underscores that the power of the Gospel message is still the one and only way that we can escape the slavery of sin. We have the opportunity today to also have that underscored as we receive our Savior's body and blood and hear those wonderful words "Your sins are forgiven – depart in peace".

That is how the Reformation continues still today. Every time we find the devil trying to chain us up with our sin we can race to the power of the Gospel and know that *"the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."*

### CONCLUSION

Several years ago a London art gallery had a special display with a painting entitled "Checkmate" by the German philosopher and artist – Faust. The painting portrays the Devil & Faust engaged in a game of chess and devil has Faust cornered. The explanation under the painting describes how Faust had told the devil that if he won Faust would sell his soul to the devil and hence it's name checkmate. The tour guide was unaware that in one particular group was the chess champion of Russia. As the group moved on, the chess champion paced back and forth and pondered the scene pictured in the painting. As the rest of the group was almost done touring the museum, they heard someone running through the museum yelling "It's a lie, the king still has a move"! The untrained eye could not see that Faust still had a move.

Spiritually, isn't that how the Reformation still continues today. The devil's great effort is to get each human being into a feeling of being in spiritual checkmate. But each time the power of the Gospel is unleashed, sinners are freed. That is another blessing which we praise God for as we celebrate the Reformation – that still today that Reformation continues in the heart of every believer. May that Reformation always continue! Amen.