**Freedom in the Word of Christ**

 Based on [John 8:31-36](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn8.31-36) and [Romans 3:19-28](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Ro3.19-28)

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Reformation Day (Observed)

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The Gospel Reading the festival of the Reformation teaches us three things directly from the mouth of Jesus our Lord. (1) First, His true disciples are those who abide or “remain” in his Word. (2) **Second, those who do not abide in His Word are blind to their own bondage to sin.** (3) And lastly, those who abide in His Word are truly free, free from sin, and free to serve God with a pure and certain heart. **This is because He is the Son of God; and when the Son of God sets you free, freedom is a certainty.** Uncertainty is bondage to sin; True freedom is found only in the Word of Christ.

(1) True disciples are those who abide, remain, dwell in Christ’s Word. **Christ’s Word is His teaching; and it is how he tells his Church to make disciples.**

Abiding in the Word of Christ, “remaining in it”, is believing all his teachings. It is not simply believing He died for your sins. **The devil believes that Jesus died for your sins.** Even the demons believe and shudder (James 2:19). That God so loved the world that he sent his only-begotten son as a propitiation, a sacrifice of atonement, by His blood is the greatest news the world has ever known. It **is an eternal gospel, that the forgiveness of sins was won for everybody, and is to be proclaimed to every nation and tribe and language and people** (Rev. 14:6)**.** But this propitiation, this sacrificial blood of Jesus, was shed *so that you and all people might receive it by faith* (Rom 3:25). Jesus died for all, but His death will not set you free without faith in Him as Lord.

The only type of faith that is able to receive the forgiveness of sins, is the type of faith that abides in all of Jesus Word…*all* of it. This is important, because there is a false teaching in some of the churches even today called “Gospel Reductionism.” It teaches you only have to believe one teaching of Jesus, the teaching that He saves you. More prominent today is “Law/Gospel reductionism”, that you only need to believe that your sins deserve death and hell; but that Jesus forgives them. Everything else he taught, you can take it or leave it.

The attempt to teach a “lowest common denominator” Christianity is always some form of reductionism and is to be condemned. **Jesus is Lord of all; and every Word He speaks, He speaks with authority.** What kind of a faith would say, “I believe Jesus when he forgives me, but I don’t believe Him when He says I shouldn’t get a divorce?” It is no faith at all. If you don’t believe Jesus has the authority to command obedience and condemn sin, you won’t truly believe he has the authority to forgive it.

This is the law of faith: to believe that Jesus is Lord of all and has all authority in heaven and on earth. **How can you really believe Jesus has the authority to forgive your sins if you can’t believe he’s right about divorce or creation or Noah’s flood? You can’t, and I feel sorry for you.** But you don’t need the Word of the Gospel, you need the Word of the Law, Jesus’ commands. Because the Law is true. And just like any other invasive surgery to remove diseased parts, the law hurts. The law of confronts and it kills anything in you that would presume to stand without Christ. For instance, it kills ***your*** works of the Law, which apart from faith in Christ are your sin.

(2) Those who do not abide in Jesus Word are in slaves to sin, and they don’t even realize it. **Apart from faith in Christ, all your works are filthy rags and all your intentions are pure evil.** Perhaps you know someone who feeds the poor; who is always eager to lend a helping hand, who raises obedient kids without having to raise his voice. **Who is a pillar of the community and who sacrifices his time, treasures and talents for the good of it.** If he does all this he will be praised among men. But if without faith in Jesus Christ, he is condemned among God.

In a human way you might think, “**But he’s such a nice and helpful man who wouldn’t hurt a fly. He is not a slave to sin, he has never been a slave to anyone-he’s a pillar of strength and a model of self-control and discipline.**” But hear this….if Christ isn’t his Lord and Teacher, then sin is his master. Jesus is Lord, and every work done in any other name is blasphemy. **It is using a good work which is God’s province alone, in order to testify against Him.** If Satan came to earth, ended world hunger and convinced the nations to put down their arms and destroy all their nukes, would you thank him? Would you say, “He really is a nice guy, I don’t know why the bible has such awful things to say about him. Why doesn’t God do what he’s done for the world?” Do not be deceived. Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Don’t be fooled by sight; live by faith in Jesus’ Word.

God has the power to do every good work, and can accomplish everything without the help of men. When Jesus was betrayed and arrested at Gethsemane, Peter cut off a soldier’s ear to try and free him. And Jesus healed the ear and said, “**Do you not think I could call upon my Father in heaven, and He would send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?**” (Matt. 26:53-54). You are tempted to look at an atheist or a Mormon who does outwardly good works and think they are praiseworthy? They are an abomination in the sight of God. God does not need the help of an unbeliever.

“**God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; He utters His voice, the earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress**” (Psalms 46:1-8)

Those without faith in the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of His Word actually believe they have something to offer God, and that is what exposes their ignorance and blindness. God does not leave us in this veil of tears so he can see who, by their own efforts, is able to save the world one cause at a time. God leaves us here for a little while so that he can work faith in us and when he comes again in glory, find it there. **What good is it feeding twelve legions of starving children if they give thanks to the world or it’s prince for it and spend an eternity of starvation in Hell?** No good at all. Your unbelieving neighbor is a nice and helpful guy. It doesn’t matter. Your boasting in him is excluded, not by a law of works…but by the law of faith to which he has consigned himself to lawlessness. Repent, and call him to it too.

(3) Finally, through this law of faith you are free: because Jesus has given you His Word of truth. **By it, you are first freed *from* sin and from its power.** Sin was your master, and the more you served it, the more it demanded. Just like any addiction you sacrifice for it and the more you sacrifice the more of you it consumes. But without the gospel you have no place to turn. God is too holy and you fear He would just condemn you. So you return to the abusive relationship with sin over and over until you have no will of your own. You are in bondage…a slave. Tortured into submission you learned to serve and even love the master that is preparing you for an eternity in hell. It’s perverse…this blind slavery to sin.

But God came in with a word and said, “**I am your master, I am your Lord. Though your sins are red as scarlet, they will be white as snow. Believe me. Come to me and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and let me teach you, for unlike your former master, I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your soul. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light**” (Matt 11: 29-30)

You are freed *from sin,* but that’s not all the freedom Christ has to give you. If that’s all your freedom you would still be marooned. You have to serve somebody. Just as a heart was meant to beat, and lungs meant to breathe…man was made to serve somebody. But if Jesus were not your master, sin would call you back and you would return to the same abusive relationship, even more a slave than before. Jesus once said, “**When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, “I will return to my house from which I came’ And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.**” (Matt. 12:43-45). So it is for one who has believed in Jesus, but does not *abide* in His Word.

 You are freed ***from*** sin *and* free ***to*** worship the Lord your God with a pure heart and without fear (Luke 1:74). To abide in Jesus Word is to be freed *from* a law of works and *free* to obey the law of faith. **Does this mean now that you have faith, you can do whatever you feel is right. By no means! That is simply a return to sin.** The freedom of faith is a freedom to follow Jesus teachings even when facing the threats of sin, death and the devil--and to hold to these teachings trusting God to deliver you.

Those under the law think they actually have to get results for God or else he’s going to be angry with them. They think of God as a taskmaster, who is expecting *you* to work hard enough, be clever enough, be smart enough to help him usher in His kingdom. It’s like being a middle-manager who has to meet a quota or else his boss will fire him. And the workers under you just don’t listen. **Well you’ve gotta figure out how not to be a “boss” but a “leader.” You’ve gotta figure out how to persuade his workers to *want* to work, not just expect them to do their job *because* it’s their job.** Or you have to be so cruel and harsh that the workers don’t dare get caught not doing their job. Either way it’s up to you to get results, or the boss is going to fire you, and give your job to a younger, brighter upstart who’s got new ideas and a fresh perspective to reach the workers where they’re at.

But the law of faith says, “The **job my Lord has given me is simply to tell the workers what He says, and if they don’t listen to me, they answer to Him and when He comes He will get results**.” That is the freedom of faith. We are allowed to trust that God will get the results from His Word that He’s looking for. And all we are expected to do is to keep His Word, obey his teaching, and leave the results to Him. And if you fail, repent and ask forgiveness. That is true freedom.

Knowing the truth is freedom. Even though the truth does not keep you from suffering, it keeps you from uncertainty about God which is infinitely worse. So let’s review Jesus’ teaching today. First, Jesus true disciples are those who abide in His Word. **Second, those who do not abide in His Word are blind to their own bondage to sin.** And lastly, those who abide in His Word are truly free, free from sin, and free to serve God with a pure and certain heart. **This is because He is the Son of God; and when the Son of God sets you free, freedom is a certainty.** True freedom is found only in the Word of Christ, and it is yours by Grace through faith.