

It's Still All About Jesus!

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Freedom; Slavery; Christ / John 8:31–38

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Stuck

Martin Luther was stuck. He was ensnared. He was in bondage. He was a slave. He was looking for freedom. He was looking for a way out. He tried everything. He tried to do it on his own. He tried beating himself. He tried doing good works. He tried pilgrimages. Nothing was working. The harder he tried, the more enslaved he got. He was being driven deeper into despair and depression. Luther was stuck. He was a slave.

So are the offspring of Abraham. They are stuck. Sure they tell Jesus, “We have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’” They don’t really realize what they are in bondage too. They thought they since they are children of Abraham they weren’t slaves. Seemingly though they had forgotten their history...the children of Abraham were enslaved. They were enslaved to the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and now in their current state they are under Roman oppression. They weren’t free by any means.

In our text though, Jesus isn’t talking about the history of their slavery. Jesus is talking about a different type of bondage. Jesus is talking about the bondage of sin. Jesus now goes to challenge them, challenge their way of thinking. He says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain the house forever; the son remains forever.”

Let's go back to see the words that initially were said that got the so-called believers to challenge Jesus. "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Jesus is saying here, "It's all about me."

Slaves

What? How can be set free if I am already free? The Children of Israel, the Jews have been told that they were free. Maybe they were - unless you count the Romans. They were thinking and believing that they are God's Chosen...so they aren't enslaved anymore. What does Jesus tell them? They are enslaved. Slave to sin. Luther discovered that too. Luther discovered he was a slave to sin. Whether it be the Jews or Luther. We have similarities to them. You see, you and I, buy into the fact that we live in "freedom." Like the Jews we think of it is a political freedom. Free from the oppression of dictators. Freedom to vote, freedom to speak, freedom to assemble and worship our God.

You aren't really free through. You are slaves as well. You are slaves. Slaves to sin. Maybe you are also enslaved to some sort of sinful addiction. Maybe you are enslaved to the pursuit of wealth, more friends, or whatever might seem to give you peace.

When you and I engage in sinful activity...whether it be sins of the mind, sins of the voice, or sins of the body, Jesus tells us, you are a slave to sin. Yes, yes you are. You are indeed a slave. Who is your slave master? What do you wish that you were truly free from? Your slave master is the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh. You wish that you free from self-doubt. You wish that you were free from those sinful addictions - whether it's alcohol, work (yes, work can be an addiction) or anything. You wish that you were free from the pains and traumas of the body and mind.

Many times we look to all the wrong places to find freedom. Luther was doing this. He was looking at this own self-talk. So do we. Luther was listening to the world...and so do we. You and I, along with Luther and the Jews are good at thinking we are free...but yet, like Luther, he was in despair the harder he tried on his own.

As he was looking for freedom in all the wrong places. The Holy Spirit grabbed his heart and pointed him to the right place.

It's all about Jesus.

Martin Luther began seeing the errors of the ways of the world...and the church. He wasn't finding any comfort from the church of the day. In fact, they were pointing him and everyone else away from the truth. They were teaching lies. So Luther, being a learned man and also a monk, began to study the scriptures. That's when he found it. He found the truth...and the truth set him free. He found the truth of the Scriptures. He found that the truth is all about Jesus Christ. The truth that he found is the eternal gospel as Revelation tells us. It's an eternal gospel that points to the fact that we are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Martin Luther discovered for the first time what it means to be free. He found freedom in Christ alone. The truth of Jesus Christ set him free. He found the truth of Scripture. He found that grace is free. He found that grace is freeing. He found it in Romans, he found it in the Gospels, he found it in Ephesians...

English Standard Version Chapter 2

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Dear friends in Christ, family of God, fellow Saints redeemed by Christ the Crucified! Your salvation is a free gift. The truth of salvation frees you.

The son remains in the house forever. Therefore if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. And yes, dear friends...dear fellow redeemed, the Son does set you free. He sets you free by the cross and the empty tomb.

He sets you free because freedom is all about Jesus Christ.

Did you notice that Jesus says, the truth will set you free and then he closes the text by saying, "the Son sets you free." It's true, the Son is the truth. Jesus said it Himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me." Jesus is himself the truth that gives true freedom.

As you can see, and as Luther discovered. True freedom, really life-giving freedom is found in Christ and His Word. True disciples are not born free, true disciples are born in slavery. They become free as God claims them as His own through the life-giving Word combined with water in Holy Baptism.

There is even more truth, more hope, that gives you true freedom. It's the truth that in Christ Jesus you have the forgiveness of sins. It's in Christ Jesus that you are freed from the bondage of the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh. You continue to receive forgiveness in Christ Jesus when I as your called and ordained servant give to you the forgiveness of your sins. You continue to receive forgiveness in Christ Jesus when you receive His very body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins.

You are freed because the message for you is that it is all about Jesus. Luther even writes about this in the Small Catechism when he says, "He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His Holy, precious blood and his innocent suffering and death."

Dear fellow redeemed, Jesus Christ has purchased you from your slave master. He has set you free. The truth is this...your sins are forgiven through His death and resurrection. The truth is this...Jesus Christ sets you free. The truth is this, still 500 years later... "It's still all about Jesus." Reformation 500 is still all about Jesus. True freedom much as was when Jesus told the Jews what it is and when Luther rediscovered it and today is the same. True freedom comes to through Jesus Christ and it is still about Jesus!

In Jesus Name. Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.