**Nobody’s In Slavery Today?**

**John 8:31-36**

Reformation Day

10.31.2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Are you in slavery? Most would say that they are not. Our thoughts in regard to slavery revolve around someone being forced to do some sort of labor for another, as their possession, usually being treated poorly and certainly not paid.

With this definition, you would declare that you are not in slavery. Of course, maybe you would say you are a slave – you are not happy with your job. You are woefully underpaid, and your boss is beyond a jerk. But to be fair, it may not be the best of circumstances, but it also is not slavery.

For our purposes today we will closely examine slavery as mentioned by Christ, and defined by Him, in our text. This slavery is a condition of submission to or domination by some influence, habit, or behavior. How does this work out?

Alcoholics slaves to drink. Others are slaves to different drugs. Still others are in slavery to pornography. Some claim these are illnesses, but they are indeed Some are slaves to their belly, satisfying their cravings with food.

So, are you in slavery?

Before you answer that question, I want you to remember our text from John’s Gospel. Remember what a slave is according to Jesus, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”

Considering the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, how many of you are slaves? I am sure that your first response is that you are not a slave, just like the Jews in our text responded to Jesus. And, of course you are not!

None of you are!

You can all stop sinning, whenever you desire. Right?

Then do so!

I wish I had a quarter for every conversation I had that went as follows. Someone has become despondent, afraid for their eternal well-being. Why? Because as much as they have tried to stop a sinful behavior, they fall into the same trap, again and again. It goes something like this, “Pastor, I confess my sin and ask God for forgiveness. I know God forgives it, but then I fall into the same sin again maybe not the next day, but it doesn’t take long. If I cannot change, I’m going to hell. But try as I might, I cannot help it! It is like I am enslaved to this behavior.”

One in particular sticks out. What was the grievous sin this individual thought was dooming them? What terrible iniquity vexed their conscience? Was it murder? Adultery? Grand theft auto? Struggling with misuse of alcohol or drugs? Hatred, an unwillingness to forgive someone who sinned against them? Were they loose of tongue, ruining the reputation of others?

These are all sins worthy of concern, and some which we fall into easily.

Actually, this individual was enslaved to a sin which most of us would might think of as rather silly. And yet, this individual was absolutely correct to understand this as a grievous sin, as great as murder or adultery.

Confined to a nursing home, unable to do all that she had done, she seemed to find almost everything as something to complain about. Dinner came and the veggies were too cold – but the meat and coffee were too hot. The toast needed more butter. The eggs were too runny. The milk glass was always too small. Every meal was a reason to complain and gripe, if not out loud, at least in her heart. Oftentimes, hating those who had planned, prepared, or served her meal.

She rightly saw all her complaining as a sin against the goodness of God to supply everything needed. It was a complaint against those God had provided to care for her. Digging deeper, she was actually frustrated with her inability to do for herself. She took out that frustration on anybody and everything else – sometimes even as dissatisfaction with God.

Are you willing to admit your slavery to sin? I don’t know what particular sin vexes you, but you are enslaved to it, even as I am enslaved to mine. You know the one? You are as unimaginative as I am – you have not come up with a new sin in years! You fall into the same sin – again, and again, and again. You know it is sin! You ask God’s forgiveness and strength to stop doing it. But then you find yourself doing it again.

Is it God’s name that you use in profanity without even thinking about it? You cannot say that “F” word on TV, but everyone says, “Oh my God!” Has it become you habit as well, you are enslaved to breaking the second commandment?

Or maybe you just cannot help yourself, you hear something new about your neighbors and you just have to pass it on. You never lie though! You only pass along the stuff you know is true. Have you ever paused to think about whether it will hurt someone else or not? You never tell lies! And doesn’t everybody deserve to hear the truth of what is going on? So you excuse your sin by claiming that you are only telling the truth. You are enslaved to violation of the 8th Commandment – yet you are just like the Jews in the text – you have never been a slave to anyone.

To what pet sin are enslaved? You do it without thinking about it.

Luther was just like my dear friend at the nursing home. He acknowledged his slavery to sin. He conceded whole-heartedly his woeful existence. He could not break free of sin. But he was sure that he must. As a good Papist, he felt responsible for breaking free from his bondage to sin. And, if he could not break free, hell’s eternal torment awaited him. Luther used strip and then physically beat himself – often into unconsciousness. He was trying to punish his body for his sins so that he would not have to be punished for eternity by God.

Jesus spoke to Luther, to my dear friend, to the Jews, to me, and to you. He speaks to us all in our slavery, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

There is true freedom from slavery, it comes from outside. Freedom needs to be granted to those enslaved.

We have all tried to break the bondage of our slavery to sin. Some have denied it, as did the Jews in our text, but that was just a lie. Some have tried to do better, like my dear friend at the nursing home. Some tried to beat their sins out of themselves, like Luther did. Nothing changed in any of those attempts. The slavery to sin continued.

Christ, the very Son of God came to set men free from sin. Never enslaved to sin. He overcame every temptation that the devil, the world, and even His friends set before Him. He broke all the chains of bondage and sets the captives free with the shedding of His precious blood. The ransom price demanded of slavery to sin He paid in full. The Lamb of God shed His blood unto death upon the cross. It is the price necessary to break the chains of slavery, for He takes away the sins of the world.

The very Son of God was never enslaved. Sin held no dominion over Him. The Son of God has all the rights and privileges of inheritance as the beloved Son of the Father. Christ gives to you His rights and privileges. Christ calls you by name and gives to you His name. He frees you from your slavery and makes you a member of the family. He writes your emancipation proclamation in His own precious blood, declaring you freed from bondage to sin.

It is Christ who freed my dear friend at the nursing home. Addressing her sin, Christ’s words in our text speak to her. The Son sets you free, and you are free indeed. He has purchased your forgiveness, and He proclaims and gives to you the same.

Dear friends in Christ, when you view your slavery rightly, you realize that there is nothing you can do. However, even as there is nothing you can do, the Son has set you free. As the Son has set you free, you are indeed free. Free from sin and death.

On this Reformation Day, we remember our freedom from the slavery the papacy tried to reimpose. Christ’s command to His disciple to forgive sins had been turned into slavery by the time of Luther. You could not have the very forgiveness Christ had purchased with His innocent suffering and death, you had to purchase it or earn it. It was held like a carrot on a stick – you could get it, but only if you did enough penance first to earn it. What a horrendous and vile return to slavery.

Christ command was that forgiveness was to be delivered freely, spoken into the ears of the repentant. In the upper room on that evening of His resurrection He instructs His servants saying, “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you… Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.” (John 20:21-23)

There are some who remain in the slavery of sin and death however.

Those who do not desire to hear this Word of Christ remain enslaved.

Those who do not believe this Word of Christ remain enslaved.

Those who think it is up to them to free themselves from their, remain enslaved.

Dearly beloved of God, Christ is your salvation! Christ is your freedom from your bondage to sin. Hear the words of freedom He speaks to you, proclaiming your emancipation from slavery, Your sins are forgiven!

Come to the banquet table, the place of honor, the head table. The Son Himself serves you a meal that sets you free, His own body and blood for you to eat and drink for the forgiveness of sins.

You are again freed from your slavery to sin. You are freed by Christ to live as God’s children, now and forevermore. Amen.