

Reformation Sunday  
October 25th, 2020

“Abide in Jesus’ Word” (John 8:31-32)  
By Rev. Ed Weber

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

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,  
Today’s text is from our Gospel reading, John 8:31-32.

**“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”**

Here ends our text.

What is the mark of a disciple of Jesus? It is a person who abides or remains in Jesus’ word. To abide is to continually believe in Jesus’ word by the power of the Holy Spirit. And by abiding in His word, Jesus’ truth that He is the Savior of the world, makes a person free!

Jesus’ gives His truth under two main teachings in the Bible – law and Gospel. The truth of the law enslaves a man in his sin, but the truth of the Gospel frees a man from sin. For the Gospel points the world to Jesus and says, “Your salvation has been accomplished”. Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.

**“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Acts 16:31**

When Martin Luther discovered the truth of the Gospel, he was personally made free, and he set out to uncover this hidden truth for all people. The Reformation of the church was the rediscovery of the Gospel truth. Thanks be to God!

But the Reformation is not just a past historical event sometimes depicted by Luther nailing the 95 thesis to the church door in Wittenburg in 1517. Yes, that day beautifully announced to the world that there is a Gospel! There is a Gospel that has been hidden and needs to be rediscovered by all. It began the Reformation that continues to our day!

For this rediscovering of Jesus' Gospel truth frees sinners from the shackles of sin in our day. We are gathered together this day in God's house because we have known the power of the Gospel by the Holy Spirit who has freed us from our sins. The enslaved in sin continue to be freed by the Gospel whenever the Holy Spirit through His word, gives faith and salvation in Jesus. Only through Jesus' word can a man be freed.

If you've followed this present election or past elections, you may have heard of something called fact checkers. Just the existence of fact checkers makes everyone aware that not everything that comes out of a candidate's mouth is always truthful. After every debate the fact checkers research the candidates' statements and rate them with a number of pinocchios, depending on how severe the exaggeration or untruths were.

Some are pretty hard to weasel out of like if a candidate says he will eliminate fossil fuel and then says, no, "I'm for fracking". Did one candidate call the other a xenophobe? Well, even if one denies it, the recorded video is the ultimate fact checker.

Politicians are known to hold their finger up to the wind and change their word depending on which way the public's sentiment is blowing. Some candidates try their best to actually keep their word about promises that are made pre-election. "Promises made -promises kept" is one slogan that is being promoted in this election.

Man's word, even with his best efforts, will never be kept perfectly. The platform of a political party changes all the time. Who actually reads it or knows what's in it? Are the politicians expected to stick to their platform 100% anyways? But, most importantly no humanly devised platform of beliefs can give a sinner eternal freedom.

But, Jesus' platform, the Bible, never changes. His word never changes. It is eternal.

Psalm 119:60 says:

**"The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever."**

And again, 1 Peter 1:23-25 tells us:

**“having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, 24 because ‘All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But, the word of the Lord endures forever.’”**

I. God’s word of truth of the law cannot free a man

The enduring word of the Lord again is divided up into two main teachings, the Law and the Gospel. The law says that **“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** Romans 3:23

The law paints a hopeless picture for man. Man’s glory is like the flower or grass that withers and falls away. Man does not have the capacity to save himself or others. No amount of indulgences or good works or prayers can free a sinner from his enslavement.

God’s word tells us the result of disobeying the law in Romans 6:20-21

**“For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.”**

All men are born slaves of sin and righteousness is something absolutely foreign. The law’s verdict is that the end of a slave of sin is death – eternal death.

Jesus says this in our Gospel reading to the Pharisees in John 8:23-24.

**““You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”**

There is no gray area. If one doesn’t believe in Jesus, one remains in sin and will die in one’s sins. The law is harsh and unforgiving. It doesn’t say that if you are a pretty good person most of the time then you will not die in your sins. No, there is only one way to be rescued from the slavery of sin and it’s not by keeping the law. For God’s word tells us in James 2:10,

**“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”**

As enduring as the word of God’s law is, there is a much more glorious teaching, God’s Gospel. For as the law binds sin, the Gospel loosens and forgives sin. As the law enslaves, the Gospel frees. The law shows man his sin, and the Gospel shows man his Savior.

This is the most important understanding of God’s word. For if one only teaches the 10 commandments, then there is absolutely no comfort in this. For the law shows man his failings. But, the Reformation was not brought about by the law. But Luther unveiled the hidden Gospel that the church had so woefully neglected.

II. God’s word of truth of the Gospel sets a man free

Romans 1:16-17 was pure comfort to Luther and to us.

**“16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”**

Where’s the power of salvation? In man? No, it is God’s power who saves by the Gospel. And what is the Gospel of Christ? It is the salvation found in Jesus’ death and resurrection for all people, the Jew first and also the Greek. It is His righteousness that is revealed to the one who believes in Jesus and makes a man just. It frees a man from slavery. So, Luther trusted this verse with all his heart as he began the Reformation. “The just shall live by faith”.

Faith in Jesus makes a man and woman just and gives life. It takes away all condemnation.

**“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” Romans 8:1.**

Abide in the word, walking according to the Spirit and there is no condemnation.

So now we can finish those verses that I said earlier. For I only spoke the first half of the verse, the law half. But there is a most glorious second part, a life-giving

Gospel proclamation. Hear these verses again and listen to where the law is silenced.

Romans 3:23

**“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,”**

The Gospel justifies freely by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. It is a free gift to all men who have all fallen short of the glory of God. The Gospel frees men through the redeeming work of Jesus on the cross.

And now we hear again Romans 6 – both parts, Law and Gospel.

**When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Did you hear when the law was silenced in these verses? But now...having been set free from sin...you are no longer receiving the wages of sin which is death. You are receiving the Gospel which is the gift of God of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Law is a death sentence and the gift of the Gospel is everlasting life.

This new life begins as soon as the Gospel creates faith. Then a Christian, a disciple of Jesus abides in the word of truth as slaves of God, bearing fruit to holiness with the glorious end of everlasting life.

This is what makes the Reformation so special and so important for us today. For we are living it daily as baptized believers in Christ. We have been set free from our sins once and for all. And it is our greatest joy to abide in His word of truth for our daily strength eternal hope.

We live with the confidence that though the sinful world in which we live is plagued by disease, hate, unrest, lawlessness, God’s word abides. It is unchanging. It tells us to be still for God is always in control and God is always with us. So, our Psalm for today Psalm 46 tells us.

**“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! 11 The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.”**

One can't help but quote scripture after scripture of God's precious Gospel promises on this Reformation day celebration. For, it is the Word of God alone that sets a sinner free. Sola Scriptura.

Our Gospel reading from John 8 begins with the powerful story of the adulteress who was to be stoned for not keeping the law – the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment to be specific. And yet, there stood by her a protector, a man who had taken the punishment of the law away by His own death. He who is without sin can throw the first stone. And everyone left.

Then He who truly is without sin, spoke to her. But, He didn't speak to her words of condemnation, for He who is without sin, took on all mankind's sin when He died on the cross. There was no more sin left to condemn. This is the free gift of the Gospel.

And this sinless man, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, uttered the most beautiful words of the Gospel that any sinner, you and I included, could hear. **“Neither do I do condemn you”**. And if God does not condemn, there is no higher authority. There is no need for indulgences, or venerations, or prayers for the dead. For Jesus is Lord of the living who have been freed by the Gospel now and eternally.

You are free. Now abide in My word and go and sin no more.

The Reformation is about freedom. Your freedom and mine by the power of the Gospel of which we are not ashamed. We have been freed from our slavery to sin and eternal death. And now we have been made His disciples, slaves to God, to remain in His word that sets us free! And only by the power of the Gospel, Jesus adds, “indeed”! Freed indeed! Blessed Reformation! Amen.

**“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**