

Introduction

1. Jesus said, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free"
 2. And like the crowd before Jesus the day He spoke these words over 2,000 years ago, we too might be sitting in our pew thinking, "Free... what is this to me? I am not a slave to anyone! I live in a free country. I can come and go as I please. Is it really necessary for me to sit through this sermon, since I am not a slave to anyone?"
- I. **Though we may think we are slaves to no one – at least we can say we've heard of stories of people BEING slaves – and it doesn't sound very good**
- A. A part of our American culture has been depicted in the movie "Roots"
 - a. In 1977, many American homes were watching this Mini-series, with the lead character, Kunta Kinte
 - b. It reminded us of the horrible past of our nation – the slavery of people from Africa, mistreated, overworked, abused in American life
 - c. This was a people group, created by God, stripped of all rights and privileges, they were the legal property of another, they were bought and sold, and they were forced to obey their master
 - B. Or we think of the Old Testament, when our own ancestors of faith were bound into slavery in Egypt
 - a. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were forced into hard labor – making mud bricks and building large cities at the end of their task-master's whip
 - b. For 400 years – Egypt held the Israelites in bondage → these Israelites had no control of their lives, they longed to go back to their homeland, their children were murdered and thrown into river, and they had no rights of their own
 - C. Throughout the years – history proves some very dark days when overlords forced human beings into slavery, stripped of all dignity, no ability to make decisions for themselves, and treated with such abuse and hate
 - a. There is Nero around 100 AD – stripping Christians of their freedom, feeding them to lions, and selling tickets for everyone to see
 - b. There was Hitler, enslaving Jews in concentration camps, used for medical experiments, and disposed of in hot ovens
 - c. Has God ever meant for the highest of his creation, mankind (men, women, and children) to be enslaved like animals, bought and sold like property, and mistreated and killed on a whim?

- D. And perhaps it would be tempting to sit in our pews and say, “Pastor, thanks for the history lesson, but this is church → what does this have to do with our lives?”
- E. Let me bring this a little closer to home – let me share with you how, even within the church, with its great earthly abuses of its power – how people have been put in spiritual slavery
- a. It is almost becoming a tradition at Martin Luther School that I teach the unit on the man, Martin Luther and the Reformation of the Church
 - b. Each year when I teach this unit – even “I” am astounded at the abuses of the church in Luther’s day
 - c. This Friday is October 31, and come Friday, it will be 491 years ago when Martin Luther nailed a very astounding piece of paper to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany
 - d. On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed the 95 Thesis to the church door – listed items he felt need to be debated in the church, because of, what he thought, were abuses in the church
 - e. These abuses literally enslaved the souls of people, and kept them from the freedom of knowing the TRUTH in Jesus Christ
 - f. The Roman Church was sending out men like Johann Tetzel, who was selling pieces of paper with the pope’s signature, telling the people that through the purchase of these “indulgences” – God would FREE them of SOME of their sins
 - g. Johann Tetzel would go from German town to town, putting on these little plays of people suffering in purgatory, a place made up by the Roman Church in order to deceive the people into buying these indulgences – that they could purchase their relatives out of purgatory and FREE them from this suffering purging of their sins, in their fear, this German Christians bought these pieces of paper with no power behind them
 - h. In the meaning to the Second Commandment, Luther says, “you shall not LIE or DECEIVE by His name” – specifically the CHURCH, in the name of God, enslaving people’s souls by LYING to them, thinking they could do something to FREE THEMSELVES from the slavery of sin and death!
 - i. And every year I teach this unit, my 5th and 6th graders ask questions like, “why were these church leaders lying to the people? Why were the people falling for this?”
 - j. First of all – the church leaders were lying, because primarily they were trying to raise funds for St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, and Pope Leo X was in full support of this deception
 - k. Secondly – the people fell for this – because even today, when people pretend “Sin” is no big deal – yet in the depths of our thoughts and hearts and souls – IT REALLY IS!
 - l. God has created us to be spiritual beings – and in our souls, though many try to deny it, reject it, and ignore it → we know we are answerable for our sins, and we are all looking for a way out of being ENSLAVED in our rotten sinful condition and behavior

- F. Black slavery, Israelite slavery, Slavery under tyrant rulers, or even life back in the 1500's when Rome was enslaving souls through purgatory and indulgences, "STILL PASTOR, what does this have to do with us?"
- a. Jesus says it best: "Any one who sins is a slave to sin"
 - b. More awful than any earthly slavery → is the condition every single soul, in the bondage of sin and eternal damnation
 - c. Look how sin enslaves us...
 - i. We are at a business lunch, and we begin talking about someone, it feels good, it makes us feel elevated, we grow into the habit of gossiping more, putting others down → and we are enslaved in sin
 - ii. We are downloading music for our Ipod, we like classic rock, but we hear a Guns and Roses song we like, it talks about thumbing our nose at authority, and soon we are downloading Eminem, Black Sabbath, and Puff Daddy → and we begin to think like the music we are listening to, it becomes us → we have become enslaved in sin
 - iii. We get into an argument with our wife, our tongue is quick and cruel, we find that outshouting her gives us our way, and then pushing her against the wall, and then beating her up → and we become enslaved in sin
 - iv. You can take any commandment you want, we've been there, done that, know it, and tried it
 1. Sin is sin – and it entangles us like some wild vine that intentionally wraps around our souls, and suffocates us
 2. And all sin, all sin, leads only to one place → hell!
 3. The reality of our sin is that it enslaves us to eternal hell, and just like the old song "Hotel California" – we can get in, but we can never get out

II. Hopefully I have your attention – that every single one of us is a slave, a slave to sin, Satan, and eternal death

- A. And not one of us can free ourselves from this slavery
- a. You can try to buy an indulgence
 - b. You can try to do good works
 - c. You can try to deny that God, and hell, and even heaven exists
 - d. You can try to compare yourselves to others
 - e. And the same reality is still there: you and I are still a slaves to sin
- B. Jesus has words for us today that LITERALLY changes our lives, as He says, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. Truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin...However, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed"
- C. While it was true – we WERE slaves to sin, Jesus Christ has set us free!
- a. But Jesus had to come into enemy territory to free us
 - i. We were bound and entangled in our sins

- ii. We had no capacity in ourselves to escape
- iii. Jesus came to the most awful battlefield to set us free
- iv. He came and bound Himself in human flesh – God Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, bound Himself in swaddling cloths, but even more so, in our weak and frail flesh
- v. Jesus came and was baptized in the Jordan River – and there He placed Himself into the slavery of our sins; there He took all our sins upon Himself
- vi. Jesus came and bound Himself to being captured by the enemy, being whipped worse than a slave, crucified and suffered the prison-house of hell in your place and mine, and for all the world, forsaken by God on the cross, suffering Hell as our substitute
- vii. And even more – Jesus bound Himself to death, buried in the earth – locked up in death, in the kingdom of no light or life
- viii. But this same Jesus broke the bonds of sin and death; He defeated the grave, He broke out of the tomb, He smashed sin’s curse, and He rose triumphant from the dead – because He is God
- ix. All this – Jesus did to free us! This, and only this, is how we are saved!
- x. This, and only this, is how we are set free and given eternal freedom from sin and death in heaven

D. Slavery comes from sin and Satan; but FREEDOM comes from Jesus Christ!

- a. Maybe you’ve seen the movie “Braveheart” with Mel Gibson
 - i. Gibson plays a Scottish man named William Wallace
 - ii. He is fighting to the freedom of Scotland from England in the late 13th Century
 - iii. At the end of the movie, Wallace is tortured, and just before He is killed, he yells out a resounding “FREEDOM!”
- b. When Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead – this is what, in essence, He cried out
 - i. Not freedom from a country, or a political movement – but freedom from sin and death
 - ii. And every time you hear the words, “Your sins are forgiven” – the interpretation is this: FREEDOM for your soul!
- c. When Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses on the Wittenberg Castle Church door – he was crying out “FREEDOM” for the people of God
 - i. No indulgence, no purgatory, no relics, no prayers, no penance frees us from sin
 - ii. ONLY JESUS CHRIST frees us from sin: you, me, and all the world – we are free
 - iii. This is what Reformation is about; this is what the Bible is about; this is what God is about – giving freedom to His created children, setting us free from the sins that daily entangle us, and freeing us from sin’s deadly curse: eternal hell

- d. Politicians running for office declare how you can be free from taxes, free from corruption, free from big government, free from war in Iraq, and much more...
 - i. Some of these promises may be true, and some maybe not – the promises of fallen man are often broken
 - ii. But the PROMISE of Jesus is a promise NEVER BROKEN!
 - 1. The promise of Jesus is that His death and resurrection sets you free from sin and eternal death
 - 2. This promise is made over and over again in His Word, even as St. Paul writes, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal in Christ Jesus”
 - 3. Again Paul writes in Romans, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”
 - 4. This is the TRUTH, written in His Divine Word, through the WORD made flesh who came to dwell among us, Jesus Christ
 - iii. In one of his sermons, Martin Luther says to the people, “When Satan comes and accuses you of your sins...
 - 1. You say, I know I am a sinner, and I deserve eternal punishment
 - 2. But you can look Satan in the eye and say, ‘but what of it – Jesus has set me free! He has taken my punishment upon Himself. I am on the side of Christ who FREES ME”
 - 3. And as Martin Luther’s hymn states as we speak to the devil in this manner, “One little WORD (one Word of God) can fell him” –
 - 4. Our freedom in Christ is stronger than all of Satan’s accusations against us!

Conclusion

1. Slavery still goes on today – people all around the world are taken captive and made to be slaves to another
2. And slavery in sin and death is also true TODAY; this is not a old-fashioned idea, an archaic belief, a medieval myth...
3. Sin damns to hell, we are sinners, and we are slaves of eternal damnation
4. BUT – JESUS CHRIST HAS SET US FREE – and if the Son sets us free, then we are FREE INDEED!
5. Our salvation was very costly, it cost Jesus His life on the cross; but our salvation is FREE to us
6. “If you abide in my Word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free...
7. This is the Truth of God Word, according to Paul to the Roman Christians, “that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”
8. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed! Amen.

