

Reformation Day

“We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone.”

These Jews in Jesus' day sound just like 20th century Americans.

“Give me liberty or give me death,” is a creed we still live by to this day.

Lady liberty has become our cultural goddess.

Anyone or anything encroaching on our freedom becomes the devil himself.

Anyone who would presume to oppose your will must be resisted as the enemy.

Anyone who would direct your life, alter your identity is demonized and opposed.

But here’s the rub. God, your creator, claims the sole right to determine your identity and your place in life.

He opposes your sinful will and directs your actions by demanding obedience.

Therefore, we resist and throw off accountability even to God.

Witness this happening all around us: Organized religion--read Christianity--is demonized because God’s demands are seen as restrictive and limiting.

“Keep your laws off my body,” is one bumper sticker directed against God.

In a host of issues ranging from abortion to homosexuality, God’s Word and command is thrown off as some sort of oppressive yoke.

Politicians from all sides must bow to the altar of "CHOICE."

No matter whether pro-life or pro-abortion, they must spin their position as a matter of free choice or face the wrath of the electorate.

And do not think that this cultural jet-stream brings no rain to the Church.

We see denominations one-by-one fall from the truth in the name of tolerance.

It began long ago with revivalism. The ultimate CHOICE to decide for Jesus.

Then came choice in who to ordain and how to commune.

Now it is choice in who to abort and what gender to marry.

God’s Word is laid aside in order to accommodate a full exercise of freedom.

The great irony is that many of these things are defended by reformation slogans.

“The Gospel frees us to do these things," we are told.

Since you are saved by grace and not by works, we can no longer forbid anything.

In the name of so-called “reformation principles” the reformation is overthrown!

This is nothing new. Already in the very days of Luther people were found who misapplied and misunderstood the freedom of the Gospel.

“Some people think that they are free in the sense that they need no government and even that they need pay no taxes. Others interpret Christian freedom to mean that they can eat meat, refrain from confession and fasting and the like. Such wild illusions of the people the preachers should condemn! . . . Christian freedom is the forgiveness of sins through Christ by the Holy Spirit without our merit or aid.” (Visitation Articles)

Each and every time that you view God’s Word and command as restrictive and bothersome, you have bought into the lie.

You must never think that obedience to God’s law is slavery.

Nor think that obedience to God’s authorities is an enslaving curse. It is blessing.

When parents, husbands, teachers, pastors, or government officials curb your will this is a gift and a blessing from God — not to be despised.

When you seek to throw off the supposed yoke of slavery to God-ordained human authorities, you are in fact throwing off the yoke of God’s own 4th command.

And when you disown God, you are not disowning some evil and enslaving captor but you are disowning your own Father and renouncing your identity as son.

Like the prodigal son, you are leaving the loving household of your Father in heaven to serve as a menial slave to the devil.

Your will is co-opted so that you actually desire to do those things that are only for the Devil’s advantage and work your great harm.

In service to the devil, you advance his kingdom and destroy yourself.

This is real slavery and yet you rarely recognize it for what it really is.

Jesus comes today to set the record straight... To make you *"free indeed."*

He comes to bring TRUE freedom. *“If you abide in My Word, you will be My disciples. Then you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free.”*

Jesus is Lord of all and subject to no one and yet He humbled Himself to be obedient to people like Joseph and Mary, Herod and Pilate.

He became obedient to hunger and thirst, to weariness and pain.

He became obedient unto death of the cross--when it had no right over him.

Why did he do all this? Was he somehow controlled by these things?

By no means! It was because of His submission to the Father’s will and word.

He who is truly free and Lord of all submitted Himself as a servant of all mankind **without losing His freedom.**

By submitting to the commands of the Father and becoming obedient even unto death on the cross, He won freedom for you and all mankind.

True freedom. Freedom from sin. Freedom from death. Freedom from the devil.

He comes to you today give you that blood-bought freedom through His Word.

“If you abide in My Word... you will be free indeed.”

Do not throw off My commands as oppressive but welcome them as the very essence of freedom.

Do "free yourselves" from those I have given to you: parents, husbands, government officials, pastors.

Rather, in humble submission to all authorities received the gifts of Sonship.

Through them I am giving you freedom to live and play and work and love.

And today, through the very word that you are hearing, I myself give you forgiveness which frees you from sin and death and devil.

I give you a new identity — for in the Baptismal waters you are given the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

You receive the spirit of adoption by which you cry out Abba, Father and are no longer enslaved to the devil and all his words and all his ways.

I give you my own body and blood to eat and drink for the forgiveness of your sins.

Now, through Me you have a permanent place in My Father’s family with Me as your elder brother.

You know Me, the Truth, and you are truly free.

In the freedom which you receive here you are no longer bound to eternal death.

You are no longer forced to serve the devil with your every thought and breath.

You are rather freed to be the Son of God that you were born to be.

You are freed from your sins and slavery to the devil. AMEN.

P Rejoicing in the eternal Gospel of salvation and its message of life and salvation, let us pray for ourselves, for the Church in every place, and for the confession of the truth of God's Word throughout the world.

P God of grace and glory, we give You thanks for the comfort of the Gospel restored to Your Church on earth through the work of Martin Luther and other faithful pastors and leaders during the Reformation era. We praise You that by Your rich grace we have come to the sure knowledge that we stand justified before You, not by what we have done, but rather by faith in what Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord has done on our behalf. We ask that You would defend Your Church from all enemies of Your saving Word. Cause the good news of the Gospel to be proclaimed in this time to every nation and tribe and language and people on earth, and graciously preserve the fruits of the Gospel for generations to come. Lord in Your mercy,
C: hear our prayer.

P Almighty, everlasting God our heavenly Father, Your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. We thank You for opening and enlightening the minds of all worshipers and church visitors here today. As You have helped us to understand Your pure Word clearly, so also empower us by the Holy Spirit to devotedly live our lives in accordance with it. Lord in Your mercy,
C: hear our prayer.

P Lord God, we ask Your blessing upon those who maintain commerce and the financial institutions of our land. Bring to an end the efforts of those who deal dishonestly and all who seek to gain unjustly at the expense of others. Bless all those who conduct their business honestly that they may enjoy the fruits of their good reputation. Lord in Your mercy,
C: hear our prayer.

P Healer of our every ill, touch the minds, bodies and hearts of those broken by sickness and injury and all those recovering from surgery (especially _____), that they may be restored to health and life according to Your good and gracious will and as You best see fit. Let Your face shine upon him/her/them that he/she/they may be kept in Your peace as their strength and mobility improve. Lord in Your mercy,
C: hear our prayer.

P Merciful Lord, our Sun and our Shield, through His blood Your Son stands before You as our Great High Priest. By Your Spirit prepare our hearts to worthily receive the body and blood of our Savior who was sacrificed for us on the cross, believing His promise: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." Lord in Your mercy,
C: hear our prayer.

P O Lord God, our Sun and our Shield, sustain and comfort all those who mourn the death of loved ones so that they may never lose sight of Your sure promises of heaven. Set our minds on heavenly things instead of earthly things so that our souls long for Your eternal courts. Bring us by Your grace to that promised dwelling place prepared in love by You for all the saints. Lord in Your mercy,
C: hear our prayer.

P Holding fast to our confidence in Your Son and boasting in the glory of His resurrection, we entrust ourselves and all for whom we pray to Your loving care, through the Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.