

## **Theme: Real Reformation**

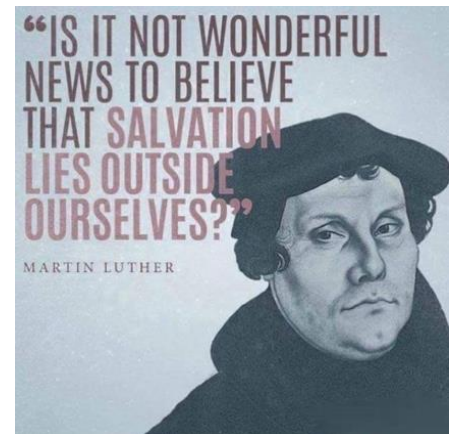
- 1. ABIDE in Jesus' Words**
- 2. KNOW the Truth**
- 3. BE FREE**

### **John 8:31-36**

<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. <sup>32</sup> "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." <sup>33</sup> They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How *can* you say, 'You will be made free?'" <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. <sup>35</sup> "And a slave does not abide in the house forever, *but* a son abides forever. <sup>36</sup> "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

In case you haven't noticed it yet, we are celebrating the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation today. Technically, Reformation Day is this Tuesday, October 31<sup>st</sup>, a day that is probably better known as Halloween. Why did we pick that day? And why did we pick this year as the year we chose to celebrate 500 years of the Reformation? Well, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1517 was the day Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses (or "sentences") to the church door in Wittenberg. In these "theses" Luther wrote against the false teaching and false practice of the church's selling of "indulgences;" pieces of paper sold by the church which the people thought gave them forgiveness of sins. This act on that day put into motion the events that have come to be known as "The Reformation."

But is that really the day the Reformation began? No. In fact, it couldn't have been! Before the Reformation began a **Real Reformation** had to take place. Not on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1517 when Luther nailed those 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg, but when God Himself "reformed," or *changed*, Martin Luther's heart through the power of His saving Gospel message. Changed his heart from a dead, lost heart that tried to earn its own salvation through obedience and good works, to a living, beating, joyful heart of faith that knew and believed that Jesus had paid for all of his sins. A heart that knew Jesus' righteousness was what made him righteous in God's sight. After comprehending this Gospel message for the first time, Luther Himself said, "Now I felt as though I had been born again, and believed that I had entered Paradise through widely opened doors!" It was this Gospel of Christ, "**the power of God to salvation**" (**Romans 1:16**), that gave Luther peace and joy. It was this powerful Gospel message that moved and strengthened him to take a stand on the Word of God in the face of incredible odds. It was this Gospel that moved and strengthened him to work, teach, preach, and write tirelessly for the sake of the souls of his fellow man.



Do you ever wonder why you and I aren't more like that, more like Martin Luther? Perhaps, we too need a **Real Reformation**? But how? The same way the Lord worked a **Real Reformation** in Martin Luther's heart! Jesus outlines this procedure in our sermon text, "**If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free**" (**John 8:31-32**).

First of all, Jesus tells us to **1. ABIDE in His Word**. Notice, He doesn't say "Look at My Word every once in a while," or "Go to church and hear my Word at least once a month, and make sure you're there for Christmas and Easter." No! He says "**ABIDE in My Word!**" This word means to *live* or  *dwell* in the Word of Christ. That, He says, is the true mark of one of His disciples, or followers: "**If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed**" (**John 8:31**).

Does this describe our use of God's Word? Do we always "**abide**" in it? No, we must admit, not like we should! We tend to think we're bending over backwards for God if we sleepily read through a few

passages each night or each morning, and come to church AND Bible Study on a Sunday! Maybe, our attitude is even more casual towards God's Word than that?! Can you imagine if Luther had this same attitude towards God's Word that we often have? Imagine if he decided, "Well, I don't really need to go to church every Sunday in order to be a Christian," or what if he thought, "We really don't need to hold to everything in Scripture"? Well, there would have been no Reformation! In the same way, how can we expect to experience our own Real Reformation if we are only "dwelling" in God's Word as little as possible? Just enough to keep our consciences appeased, or just enough to make us feel pretty certain that we're still Christians.

Luther dove into the Words of Jesus headfirst and he "lived" in it. He was said to have spent the first few hours of each day in prayer and meditation on the Word of God! A few hours, not each week, or each month, but each day! Imagine the powerful Reformation God's Spirit could work in our hearts if we all would invest that much time and prayer into our most precious treasure of God's Word each day!

When Luther dove into the Scriptures he found exactly what Jesus promised in our text: **2. You shall KNOW the Truth.** In the Scriptures, Luther found Jesus, the Savior Himself, the "**Word made flesh**" (John 1:14), the One who is "**the way, the truth, and the life**" (John 14:6). The **TRUTH** that Luther learned through the Scriptures—the truth that we learn through the Scriptures—is the **TRUTH** about our salvation. We learn that Jesus is God sent from God to save us from sin. We learn that we have forgiveness through Jesus' innocent death on the cross. We learn that Jesus leads us to our heavenly Father. These **TRUTHS** truly make us **3. FREE!**

Now, this is one of the most misunderstood and misused passages in the Bible: "**And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free**" (John 8:32). Some of the Jews who heard Jesus speak these words did not understand them either. They answered Him in v. 33 of our text, "**We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, 'You will be made free'?**" (John 8:33). They thought Jesus was speaking of freedom from slavery or *physical* bondage. Is that what Jesus was speaking of?

How about this: There is a scene in one of my favorite movies, *The Shawshank Redemption*, where the main character, Andy, a prisoner serving out a life-sentence, is asked by the warden what is his favorite passage from the Bible that he had given him. Andy quoted this one: "**The truth shall make you free!**" He, of course, was thinking of physical freedom from the walls of prison. Is that what Jesus was speaking of?

No, the freedom Christ gives us through the **TRUTH** of His word is much greater than being freed from physical slavery, even greater than being freed from a life-sentence in prison. Jesus explains in the closing verses of our sermon text that He is speaking of spiritual freedom, freedom from sin, **Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed"** (John 8:34-36). Freedom from sin means full forgiveness, life and salvation eternally in Jesus. That was how Luther was set **FREE!** That is how we are set **FREE** and the gates of Paradise are opened wide for us as well.

Today we are celebrating the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation, but today and everyday can be the day we celebrate our own Real Reformation! The same Word of God that reformed and transformed Luther's heart can reform and transform our hearts and minds as well. God has promised great things for us, and has promised to do great things through us in His Word. **ABIDE** in it! In His Word God has told us the **TRUTH** of our salvation in Jesus Christ. **KNOW** it! This saving truth gives us true freedom: freedom from sin, freedom from death and hell, and freedom to serve God joyfully with a loving and thankful heart for all He has done for us. Be **FREE!** "**Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed!**" (John 8:36). May the Lord make this day, and every day, a Real Reformation for each one of us! Amen.