

The title for today's message is: **"Beginning again"**

Jesus said: ***Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.***

Today is the day we celebrate a very special day; **"Reformation Day"**. But what is reformation day?

Reformation Day commemorates the day in 1517 when a German monk named Martin Luther (1483-1546) strode up to the church in Wittenburg and nailed his 95 'theses' to the church door. Luther's intention when posting his theses was to highlight the practice of indulgences in the Roman Catholic Church. Indulgences were pardons from sin that could be bought, meaning that those who were rich enough could buy forgiveness for all manner of sins. Luther had hoped that pinning his protestations would spark wider debate and harden public opinion against the practice. However, so many people agreed with his ideas that they quickly spread across western Europe, helped by the recent invention of the printing press, leading to the religious revolt known as the Reformation. The reformation led many Christians to break off from the Roman Catholic Church and establish new, independent churches of their own, such as the Lutheran Church. Reformation Day was first celebrated in the Germanic region in the seventeenth century and between 1949 and 1967, Reformation Day was a national holiday in East Germany. At the time of the nailing of Luther's ninety-five theses, few would have suspected that the sound of a hammer striking the castle church door in Wittenberg, Germany, would soon be heard around the world and lead ultimately to the greatest transformation of Western society since the apostles first preached the Gospel throughout the Roman empire. Martin Luther's nailing of his ninety-five theses to the church door on October 31, 1517, did in fact provoke a debate that culminated finally in what we now call the Protestant Reformation.

Allow me to ask you question; Have you ever been to a fair or maybe to Disneyland.

Where they have these people dressed up like statues and they stand perfectly still and you think it is the stature until they move and freak you out?

I remember reading an illustration about one of these characters that stood on the street corner and he would point his finger at people going by and then say “guilty”.

People would look at him, lower their head and try to sneak away. Some would say “how does he know”? Do you ever come down hard on yourself? Do you ever verbally and consciously beat yourself up over the sins, and the difficulties you have brought upon yourself.

And when we have done these things to ourselves, we should because we have done that which is wrong.

Yet sometimes when we are hard on ourselves we shouldn't be because we've done nothing wrong, yet we feel the guilt over whatever situation we are in.

The problem is that guilt has a tendency to dominate our lives and the devil loves to use it to destroy us.

Jesus said: "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin."

The apostle Paul said in Titus chapter 3 “for we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, and led astray.

Paul continued saying we were slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others.

But when the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us ...”Notice, that He said this is what we used to be.

But something caused a change in us. Jesus said; “... if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” That is the promise of Christ.

When Jesus talks about freedom, He is not talking political freedom, He is not talking about anarchy-the freedom from all the rules and regulations.

No He is talking about a spiritual freedom that can only come through Him. I'm not sure that we as Christians even fully understand what He's saying.

Only because there are so many Christians that still live lives of defeat, lives that are stressed out, lives that are overcome by worry.

Instead of lives that Jesus talked about when He said, I have come that you might have life, and have it in abundance.

I wonder if we really understand the word freedom and how it applies to Christians in the 21st century.

As one person said, "This is not the freedom to attend church or not to attend church, it is not the freedom to read the Bible or not.

Nor is it about the freedom to choose the denomination we feel most comfortable in.

Actually were talking about a freedom to live the abundant life that Jesus talks about". Jesus says, "If the Son sets you free you are free indeed;"

But what does that really mean? First, it means; Freedom from guilt. Look, there was a gentleman that was feeling extremely guilty for cheating on his tax return.

So he wrote this letter to the IRS; Gentlemen: Enclosed you will find a check for \$150.

I cheated on my income tax return last year and have not been able to sleep ever since. If I still have trouble sleeping, I will send you the rest.

Sincerely, A Tax Payer.

There is such a thing as good guilt. It is that guilt that the Holy Spirit brings upon us when we have hurt somebody, or we have maligned somebody.

Or if in our thoughts and actions we have done something wrong. The Holy Spirit sends a conviction of sin to our minds and hearts.

Reminding us to repent and to turn away from that which we know is wrong. That is the purpose of confession of our sin.

Look, sometimes guilt in the form of conviction is a good thing and we must listen to it, because it will lead us to true repentance.

But there is also false guilt, guilt that others try to place upon us to gain a desired end.

Look, we have a more difficult time with false guilt than we do with true guilt. Scripture tells us;

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ because through Christ the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”

Look one of the biggest things that Jesus has set us free from, is the guilt of sin, whether true guilt or false guilt.

Sin always has consequences in this world. Paul wrote, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

What Paul was saying is that sin will always lead us on a downward spiral unto death, BUT God's gift is eternal life.

That is there is freedom from the final consequence of sin through the work of Jesus.

My friends, when we come to Christ, when we give ourselves to Him as our Lord and Savior, we then can be certain that sin's power is broken.

We are no longer under sin's control. He is able to set us free from the downward spiral.

Yes, God gives us the power to change. He gives us freedom from the control of sin when we give ourselves completely to Him.

It is by His grace through faith that we can overcome and we can walk in the freedom of Jesus Christ.

Paul tells us, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." "You were called to be free.

So Tell the truth, "uniquely, Christians have the amazing gift of having the truth of Jesus as the ultimate certainty in our lives.

But how well do we know the truth that each of us has within us? Even though Christians have the only truth, why is it that so many believers seem confused by it?

"What is the truth? Scripture tells us that Jesus Himself is the Truth that sets us free.

He is the source of the truth--the perfect standard of what is right. Jesus frees us to be all that God wants us to be.

Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." This was one of His I am statements.

He didn't say, I have the Truth or I know the Truth but rather I am the truth." We can begin to experience a new life because of His guidance and direction in our daily lives.

Paul tells us to "walk under the control of the Spirit and we will no longer be forced to live in bondage to the desires of the flesh."

We no longer have to live angry, jealous, hateful, selfish, under guilt and condemnation or any other of the characteristics of a sinful lifestyle.

Why would a person who has accepted God's gift still live in bondage to the same old lifestyle?

Paul also wrote; "the grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lust. It teaches that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age."

Many people want the promise of heaven when they die, but they want to live like the world around them while they are still here.

They don't want to live according to the truth. Jesus was telling these people in our text that if they continued to do what He taught them.

They would really be His disciples and as a result really be free indeed. Paul says it in a little different way in 1 Corinthians "But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Yes we are free to become all that the Lord wants us to be. He can make it happen for you. But we need to turn our lives over completely to the Lord.

Are you free today? What are you being controlled by? Is it guilt? Is it the consequence of your sin? Is it a life not lived in the truth of God's word?

Jesus can take care of that, “Cast your care upon Him for He cares for you”. Do you desire a new beginning?

Speak your concern before your heavenly Father, He will listen and he will answer. He will set you free and you will be free indeed.

Amen

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.