

## ***“Sons that Endure”***

Jesus is speaking to the Jews “who had BELIEVED in Him.” Through the hearing of His Word, the Holy Spirit has created faith in them – but when Jesus speaks of them being “set free” – they rebel, they have a headstrong reaction.

“If you ABIDE in my word” – but will these believers remain? Will they continue to believe, and know the truth, and live as free men – or will they reject His truth and return to the slavery of unbelief?

The truth has consequences. The truth is that “everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.” Faith in this truth leads to being set free. Rejection of this truth (by false belief or unbelief) – means you remain a slave. And as Jesus says – “The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.”

We readily confess that we are SINNERS. Everyone’s a sinner, right? No one’s perfect. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” – and we’re not going there – we confess that we have sinned in thought, word and deed. We poor sinners confess all our sins and iniquities ....

... but the TRUTH is that we are SLAVES!!! To confess that we are sinners is to confess that we are slaves – and we bristle at that. We react quite strongly, like the hearers of Jesus in our text. “You can’t tell me who I am! I might be a sinner, but I’m not a slave!” “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone!”

Never been enslaved ... really? [P] Remember, “the son remains [in the Father’s house] forever.”

The JEWS who believed were enslaved by their “Abrahamic privilege” – trusting that their lineage made them to be God’s chosen people, His sons – guaranteeing His favor – making them free. So enslaved were they by this false belief in Abraham that they soon will take up stones in order to stone Jesus to death.

A couple of Sundays ago we heard about the interaction of Jesus and the RICH YOUNG RULER, who was enslaved by his many possessions. He seeks eternal life – but ends up walking away from Jesus, his eternal life. He does not abide in Jesus' word – he does not hold to the truth – he is a slave who does not remain in the house forever.

Throughout His ministry Jesus deals with the PHARISEES – sinners like us – whose default position, whose false belief is that we have to do something to gain God's favor. Like a hamster on a wheel we spend our whole life trying hard but getting nowhere.

Day after day, enslaved with the burden of trying to boost our credit score with God – but never being sure, never certain of His love and forgiveness, never knowing whether we will remain in the Father's house forever – we fear the day when we will be cast off.

That's no way to live – burdened, uncertain, whipped by guilt and shame – living in doubt, and fear, and eventually apathy or despair. That's no way to live, enslaved.

Are you enslaved? Be careful – no kneejerk reactions. Consider your response – better yet, consider Jesus' words – “everyone who commits sin IS a slave to sin.”

What ENSLAVES you? What do you “fear, love, and trust” more than God, more than Christ's truth? Is it your children, or grandchildren? Is their favor more important than God's favor? Is it your friends, or others – fearing what they think about you?

FEAR is a great diagnostic tool. When you find yourself anxious or unsettled – ask yourself – “What do I fear?” When you can't sleep, your stomach churns – “What am I afraid of?” Whatever causes the fear – cripples you, enslaves you – so that you live as if THAT is in charge of your life – as if God is not real, can't do a thing about it, doesn't care.

“The truth will set you free” – that's Jesus' promise – that's the truth. Jesus IS the truth. “Truly, truly” He says to you. “TRUTH, TRUTH,” He says! What is true? “Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.” I am by nature sinful, and therefore, a slave to sin.

Why are you so afraid to confess that you are a slave? Is it because it strips you of any power to make yourself to be a free man? The truth is that God alone can set the sinner free – and HE DOES – the woman caught in adultery, Peter who denies Him, even Pharisees, and sinners like US.

Or maybe the fear has to do with God's grace – that He forgives sinners who don't deserve it – afraid that they'll just keep on sinning, that they'll abuse God's grace. Well, they WILL! You will! And yet, for Jesus' sake, God forgives you – literally, "looses" you from the bondage of your sin.

Now, it's true that we are not set free so that we can cheat on our wife – lie to our parents – hate black people – or even to willingly go on sinning. That's nothing more than returning to your slavery – taking the shackles from which you were loosed, wrapping yourself up in them, and closing the lock.

No, you are set free – by God's grace (undeservedly) – so that you may live in faith towards God, and in love for one another. So that you may live as a free man, and a free woman.

Dearly beloved, Christ forgives all your sin – and sets you free. You are truly free – to love others without keeping score – to simply see their need and to serve them. Will you wonder if your love is done from freedom, or not? Yes.

Even our love, our good deeds, are tainted by sin – but you are free to repent of all sins – free to trust that God's absolution looses you from all guilt and shame – all because that forgiveness depends solely on Christ and His blood shed for you. "It is finished" He says with His dying breath. You are forgiven. You are free.

You are free to live, and die – not afraid of the judgment on the Last Day – but eagerly looking forward to His return – when He will take you to the heavenly home He has prepared for you in the Father's house.

Until that day, to remedy your slavery, He proclaims His judgment to you today. You are forgiven. I have washed you in Holy Baptism and declare you to be my son. I give you my Word, that you may abide in my truth. And my crucified and resurrected Body and Blood I give into your mouth so that you may know the truth – that you are FREE – and eternal life is yours, in my name. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.