

Outline: “Are You a Slave or Are You Free?”

I. The Question that Defines Everything

- Opening question: *Are you a slave or are you free?*
- Historical context: Martin Luther and the Reformation
- The heart of the message: True freedom comes only through Jesus

II. The Promise of Freedom

- Jesus’ words before His ascension (Acts 1:8)
- The Holy Spirit’s coming at Pentecost — freedom to proclaim Christ
- The church’s gradual forgetting of this freedom

III. Luther’s Challenge

- The Church’s teaching: People are *mostly free* but must restrain their sinful impulses
- Luther’s teaching: Humans are *not free* — we are in bondage to sin
- “Free will, after the Fall, exists in name only”
- We might freely choose cereal or a career, but we cannot freely choose Jesus

IV. The Biblical Witness to Our Bondage

- Jesus: “Everyone who sins is a slave to sin” (John 8:34)
- Paul: “No one is righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:10)
- The ongoing inner struggle (Romans 7:21–23)

V. The Ten Commandments: Mirror or Checklist

- For the “already free,” they become a *checklist* of moral improvement
- For the “slave to sin,” they become a *mirror* revealing our need for a Savior
- “Through the law comes the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20)

VI. Preaching to Slaves or the Free

- The pastor’s task: discern the condition of the hearers
- If they think they’re free → preach the Law
- If they know they’re slaves → preach the Gospel

VII. The True Freedom of the Gospel

- Jesus’ freedom is unconditional — no strings attached
- Faith is *external*: trust in God’s promise, not our own strength
- We don’t come to church to become “better believers,” but to be *made believers again*
- “Your heart is in chains — and only Jesus can unlock it.”

VIII. Living in Daily Dependence

- Like Israel and the manna — daily dependence on God’s provision
- We come to church each week as slaves, and leave set free

IX. The Risk of Grace

- Erasmus’ fear: if people know they are truly free, they might do *anything!*
- But true freedom leads to Spirit-led, joyful obedience — not anarchy

X. The Weekly Question

- We know the answer: we are sinners, slaves to sin
- The real question: *Have we been freed again by Jesus?*
- “When the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.”

Study Guide & Reflection Questions

1. Identity: Slave or Free?

- How would you honestly answer the opening question: *Are you a slave or are you free?*
- Why is it so difficult for people to admit they are not free?
- How does our culture’s message (“follow your heart”) conflict with Scripture’s message about the heart?

2. Law and Gospel

- What does it mean that the Ten Commandments can be either a *checklist* or a *mirror*?
- Which way have you tended to view them in your own life?
- Read Romans 3:19–24. How does Paul describe the purpose of the law and the role of faith?

3. The Nature of True Freedom

- What kind of freedom does Jesus offer?
- How is this freedom different from the world’s definition of freedom?
- How does knowing that faith itself is a *gift from God* change the way you approach worship and daily life?

4. Daily Dependence

- Reflect on the Israelites gathering manna (Exodus 16). What parallels do you see between their dependence on God and your own spiritual life?
- How can the rhythm of confession and forgiveness in worship help you experience freedom again and again?

5. The Reformation Connection

- What parallels can you see between the Church of Luther's day and today's Church?
- How might Luther's question — "Are we free, or are we slaves to sin?" — still challenge us today?

6. Freedom and Mission

- If people truly believed they were *completely free* in Christ, how might that change the way they live, serve, and love others?
- What risks and opportunities come with proclaiming this kind of radical grace?

7. Personal Application

- In what areas of your life do you still live as though you were a slave to sin?
- What would it look like to walk out of worship each week "free indeed"?
- How might God be calling you to use your freedom — not for yourself, but to love and serve others?