



“May you ever cherish and treasure this thought. Christ is made a servant of sin, yea, a bearer of sin, and the lowliest and most despised person. He destroys all sin by Himself and says: **“I came not to be served but to serve” (Matt. 20:28)**. Martin Luther writes these words as a reminder that there is no greater bondage than sin. And there is no greater Savior than the Son of God who gives Himself willingly for all. The great message of the Reformation is God's Grace teaching us we are not saved by performance of works, but by the work of salvation given freely by Christ on the cross.

October brings the celebration of the Reformation and thanksgiving and praise offered to God for the renewed focus on God's Word as the sole authority for all matters of faith and life. October 31, 1517 was probably like any other day except for an Augustinian monk who posted his 95 Theses on the Castle Church door in Wittenburg, Saxony. With this one act, Martin Luther set off something that would change history. Printers made copies and Luther's 95 Theses were sent all over Europe, making Luther's name well known.

Luther did not write his Theses to become well known but to bring discussion to the church in an effort to return to the truth of God's Word. The Roman Church wanted no discussion and for Luther to be silent. Quiet was not Luther's middle name as he kept pushing for the truth of God's Word. When Luther was put on trial by Charles V at the Diet of Worms in 1521 he was already convinced it was not wrong to teach salvation by grace alone and he would not recant. When asked to recant his writings, he replied, “I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me, Amen.” Luther's words echo St. Paul in **2 Corinthians 10:5**, **“We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”** The sacred writer makes clear every thought is taken captive in obedience to Christ as Luther boldly stated at the Diet of Worms.

God's Word is the only truth. It is what the Reformation is about. If we remember anything about the Reformation and what it continues to teach today, it is that God's Word is the only authority for our lives because it delivers Christ the Savior. We are justified by God's grace through Christ and His work on the cross and in His resurrection. God declares us justified, forgiven and made anew in what Christ has accomplished on the cross by His sacrifice. This is the central teaching

of Scripture that God gives His grace in Christ without any merit or worthiness in us. We are helpless sinners to whom God shows great mercy and love by sending His Son, Jesus, to be sin for us on the cross, pay for sin and give forgiveness, life and eternal salvation. No amount of good work we do could ever be enough to pay for our sin. Instead, Christ pays it for us and we are given the gift of faith and faith then serves God by serving our neighbor and God in thanksgiving and praise for God's forgiveness given by His grace. By grace, Luther came to understand this through the study of God's Word by the working of the Holy Spirit who works through that Word.

The Word does what it says, the Gospel being the central message of the Bible. The Word creates and maintains faith. The Word is without error and dependable for us in every way. "Just as God authorized the Old Testament prophets, giving them the words for their mouths and fulfilled their prophecies, so also Jesus authorized His apostolic witnesses to speak His Word, guided by the Holy Spirit (**Luke 10:16, 1 John 1:1-4** and other passages)" (2017 Catechism, CPH). The Catechism further states "We believe the Word of God has the power in itself to convince the reader or hearer of its authority. Because it is God's Word, it is self-authenticating. The Word does what it says." (**Isaiah 55:10-11**), (2017 Catechism, CPH, p. 47).

Our Reformation heritage is the return to God's Word in all its truth and purity. The Word is the source of salvation, delivering Christ the Savior and giving forgiveness, life and salvation through Him. We are called to never neglect the Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it because it is the crucial link for us unto life everlasting through Christ. Our prayer as Lutherans is for every confirmand never to neglect the study of the Word, but read, mark, learn and inwardly digest it because it is spiritual food for the soul. The Word brings faith and sustains faith, increases faith, even when souls are tried in the fires of temptations and the overwhelming burdens of life in this vale of tears. Make a commitment to study the Word this October and see Christ given and pointed to throughout the Sacred Scriptures. "**Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word;**" we sing and pray with the hymn writer knowing that God's Word is our great heritage as the Word alone reveals God's love to us through Christ the Savior.

A Blessed Reformation to all of you!

In Christ, Pastor Ahrendt