

“Abide in My Word, Abide in Truth” – Pr Jim Sprengle

Reformation Day – October 25, 2026

- I. **John 8:31-32** – “If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples, ³²and you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free.”
- II. **The Reformation was about getting back to God’s Word**, because without the Word, we cannot know the Truth.
 - a. The Truth Jesus is talking about is found in Him and His Word... because He is the One who tells us, ‘I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.’”
 - i. Sometimes it can be hard to understand how all this works, but Jesus often claimed to be things that were much bigger than any normal human could claim...
 - ii. “I am the door... I am the life... I am the bread of life... I am the light... I am the resurrection and the life... and Jesus even says, ‘before Abraham was, I am.’”
 1. All of this is to say that Jesus claimed to be and was God in the flesh, or the Son of God born into our world.
 2. And in our world of many truths... it is good to know the highest... purest... absolute truth.
 - b. Isn’t it strange how truth has become more about someone’s personal opinion or perspective than about what is actually true?
 - i. Maybe it’s out of respect, or because we don’t want to hurt someone’s feelings, but we hear people express their opinions, and even when we know they’re completely wrong, we just shrug our shoulders and say, “Well, that’s their truth... Who am I to tell them otherwise?”
 - ii. But that’s the problem, isn’t it? If everyone gets to decide what is true for themselves, then truth really doesn’t mean much of anything anymore... and when it comes to God, we don’t get to decide what’s true... God tells us what’s true in His Word.
 - c. As Jesus was teaching in the temple, He was interacting with both believers and unbelievers.
 - i. Jesus tells them that being His follower or disciple is about remaining in His word... and when you do that, you will know the Truth... or Jesus Christ... and He, the Truth, will set you free.
- III. **Over 500 years ago, the Word of God set Martin Luther free.**
 - a. During the time of the Medieval Church, the church leaders had spent hundreds of years coming up with an elaborate system for people to be saved and go to heaven.
 - b. Each week you hear that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and rose again to call you forgiven... and as you trust and have faith in Him you are saved... but that was not being taught by the Roman Catholic Church.

- i. First of all, the church taught about an interim place where the spirits of the dead in Christ went before heaven... called purgatory.
 - 1. Purgatory was understood as a place of purification where people would undergo punishment for sins that had already been forgiven, so they could finally enter heaven.
- ii. Secondly, they interpreted the word, “repent” as “do penance.”
 - 1. Penance was something a priest prescribed to someone who confessed their sins, in order to deal with the temporal punishment that supposedly remained... so, he might tell them to pray certain prayers... or fast or deny themselves of pleasures... or make a pilgrimage to a holy site.
 - 2. They teach that even though God has forgiven your sins, there is still punishment for those sins that must be dealt with, either in this life or in purgatory.
- c. In this difficult situation, Martin Luther would go to the priest to confess his sins, carry out all the penance he was assigned... and even try to do more... but he still came to the conclusion that God was angry with him, and he had no assurance of being saved.
 - i. Then came the sale of indulgences... certificates that supposedly offered relief from the temporal punishment of sin, including punishment in purgatory.
 - ii. People were being encouraged to purchase indulgences that promised relief from the punishment of purgatory... even for loved ones who had already died.
 - iii. Pastor Luther could not find anything remotely Scriptural in these indulgences, and he struggled with the people in his own care buying them and feeling that they were purchasing forgiveness.
- d. So, the night before All Saints’ Day, or All Hallows Eve, October 31, 1517, Reverend Doctor Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany.
 - i. The timing was to start an academic debate on All Hallows Eve, because the next day, All Saints’ Day, was when many people would come to the Castle Church to venerate its collection of relics and seek indulgences.
 - ii. For many in the Roman Catholic Church, the day after All Saints’ Day, called All Souls’ Day, is a time to pray for loved ones who have died... especially those believed to still be in purgatory, waiting to enter the glory of heaven
 - iii. As the 95 Theses questioned several Roman Catholic practices, they were written in Latin to keep them within the universities and scholars... but someone translated them into ordinary German, and with the help of the printing press, they spread like wildfire.

- e. The Reformation grew out of Luther's search for the Truth in God's Word... and when he came to understand what Christ had done for him, he was finally set free.
 - i. Through his continuing study of God's Word in the original languages, Luther came to understand something that had completely turned his thinking around... that the righteousness of God was not something Luther had to attain... but what God gives us by grace through faith.

IV. **The Reformation brought us back to** some simple principles that remain.

- a. The three solas... Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone)... Sola Gratia (Grace alone)... and Sola Fide (Faith alone) were at the core of trying to bring the Roman Church into alignment with the Truth.
 - i. Scripture alone, because God's Word is our source of faith and life, and the final authority for everything we believe and teach.
 - ii. Grace alone, because salvation is never earned, but God's gift.
 - iii. Faith alone, because we receive that gift of salvation by trusting in Jesus Christ and what He has already done for us.
 - iv. And, above all, these things are Christ-centered... because Scripture alone reveals Christ... grace alone gives us salvation in Christ... and faith alone receives what Christ has won for us.
- b. The sure and certain belief that our sins are paid for and there is nothing left to do... the assurance that our salvation is the inheritance provided by a gracious Father through His Son... and the confidence that God's promises in Scripture are true... are absolute freedom for the troubled soul.
 - i. Can you imagine what it's like to constantly wonder if you are really going to heaven without doing a bunch of amends and suffering... and even then have no assurance that you are saved?
 - ii. This was the story of Pastor Martin Luther, who spent much of his early life trying to do everything the Roman Church had given him to do... which only caused utter despair... because none of us can ever do enough to get right with God.
- c. Only Jesus Christ and the Word give us the freedom and assurance that allow us to live in the Truth... in Jesus Christ and His Word...
 - i. Nowhere else will you be reminded again and again of God's love for you... and the drastic measures He took to make you His own.
 - ii. As Jesus died on that cross, every sin you have ever committed and will commit was cast upon Him... He died for it all... and in the greatest exchange of all time, He looks at you in His promise and says here is My grace... here is the forgiveness of your sins... you are not guilty... I forgive you.
- d. I am forever grateful for the men of the Reformation who released us from the bondage of a faith that required my own work and effort to be saved.

- i. The Word of God is our trusted source where we can remain in Christ... and this is why I commend it to you for reading every single day.
- ii. The Word, or Scripture alone, is the source of our faith and life, the final authority for everything we believe and teach... and we can never spend enough time allowing it to engage us and bring us to ever greater heights in knowing Christ as our Savior.
- iii. Remain in the Word... remain in Christ the Truth... and your lives will always be in the confidence and assurance of being set free. Amen.