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| **Free to Keep His Commandments**  *Promise: Christ freed us from the tyranny of the devil to serve Him* Pastor Timothy A. Duesenberg Acts 10:34-48; Psalm 98; 1 John 5:1-8; John 15:9-17 (Sixth Sunday of Easter), 5/5/24)  *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.* – Jn 15:10  **Lead In –** We have a lot of false notions about freedom in general, and also more specifically freedom in Christ. True freedom is not doing whatever we want to do. It’s not declaring, “Nobody tells me what to do, I do as I please.” According to God’s Word that notion is anything BUT freedom. Jesus calls it being in bondage to sin. And sin leads to death and takes us to the realm of darkness and the dominion of Satan. We need to remember, not only can we not free ourselves from sin, death, and the devil, but on our own we freely choose to sin and then dare to call this freedom…   1. **We Did Not Choose Our Lord And Savior…**    1. Jesus reminds them that they did not choose him…    2. God takes the initiative in our salvation…    3. This is well captured in explanation to 3rd Art of Creed… 2. **Obedience, Loving, Bearing Fruit – Not Bad Words!**    1. We are more reluctant than Scripture to speak this…    2. In the mystery of salvation, a relationship given birth…    3. Relationships are reciprocal. Not programmed robots… 3. **Because There Is Effort Doesn’t Mean It’s To Our Merit**    1. Paul could say “work out your own salvation…”    2. A false and a true notion of cooperation…    3. When a father tells his children what they are to do…   **Final Word –** So, let’s return to the notion of freedom again. Christianity insists that God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. He delivers us from the kingdom of darkness. He bestows new birth on us and adopts us into His family. This provides freedom to flourish. It is like a student provided with a piano and an excellent piano teacher. And with disciplined practice the freedom to play the piano well will come. Just so as baptized believers we now have the chance to practice keeping His commandments, practice loving as He loved us, and to bear fruit for Him. We will flourish if we do so. For it is God who is at work in and through us…  **Jn 8:34** Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.  **Ep** **2:4-5** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.  **Jn 6:44** No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.  **Luther in Expl to 3rd Article:** I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. *(it continues on to describe how He does this through His Church)*  **Ga 3:26-27** For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. | **John 15:9-17 ESV**  *Abiding in Christ the Vine*  9As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.  12“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. 14You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. 16You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 17These things I command you, so that you will love one another.  **What a Friend We Have In Jesus!** Yes, but don’t get too presumptuous about this, the Apostles sure didn’t! They preferred titles like Lord, Master, Christ (Messiah), and King. Nonetheless…  **1Jn 4:19** We love because he first loved us.  **Mt 23:37** “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”  **Ph 2:12** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,…  **Ph 2:13** … for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.  **1Pe 2:24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.  **1Pe 3:18** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.  **2Co 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.  **Ph 3:13-14** Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. |