

1  **THE FREEDOM OF A CHRISTIAN 1520**

Session #5  
The Power of Sin  
Paragraphs #31-38

2  **WHAT MUST BE BELIEVED (PARAGRAPH 31)**

- "Therefore, when you begin to believe, you discover at the same time that everything in you is completely blameworthy, damnable sins..."
- "By this knowledge you will realize that you need Christ, who suffered and rose again for you..."

3  **A HUMAN BEING IS JUSTIFIED BY NO EXTERNAL WORK (PARAGRAPH #32)**

- "Because this faith can only rule the inner person...it is clear that the inner person cannot be justified, freed, or saved by any external work or activity at all..."
- "...primary concern of every Christian...strengthen faith alone...grow in knowledge not of works but of Christ Jesus..."
- John 6:28

4  **FAITH IS AN INCOMPARABLE TREASURE (PARAGRAPH #33)**

- "Therefore, true faith in Christ is an incomparable treasure that includes with it complete salvation and protection from all evil..."
- "It is as if to say, 'Faith, which is a compact and complete fulfillment of the law, will fill believers with such righteousness that they will need nothing else for righteousness.'"

5  **SCRIPTURE CONTAINS COMMANDS AND PROMISES (PARAGRAPH #34)**

- "You may be asking, however, how it comes about that faith alone justifies and how it confers so many great treasures without works, given that so many works, ceremonies, and laws are prescribed in the Scriptures."
- Entire Scriptures divided into two parts: commands and promises.

6  **ALL COMMANDS ARE EQUALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR US (PARAGRAPH #35)**

- Contradicting Jerome in debates with Augustine.
- Luther uses the example of the commandment "You shall not covet" to show that it is impossible for us to keep and how "individuals are forced to despair of themselves and to seek help elsewhere from someone else."

7  **THE LAW MUST BE SATISFIED (PARAGRAPH #36)**

- Once made aware of our powerlessness to satisfy a law that demands to be satisfied, we "are then humbled and reduced to nothing" in our own eyes.
- Now, we are ready to look to the second part of Scripture—God's promises, which announce God's glory!

8  **WE FULFILL EVERYTHING THROUGH FAITH (PARAGRAPH #37)**

- "For what is impossible for you to fulfill using all the works of the law, which though great in number are useless, you will fulfill easily and quickly through faith."
- "Because God the Father has made all things depend on faith..."
- "God's promises give what the law demands..."

9  **GOD ALONE COMMANDS AND FULFILLS (PARAGRAPH #38)**

- Augustine's prayer: "Give what you command, and command what you will."

- "God alone commands, and God alone fulfills."
- "Therefore, the promises of God pertain to and, indeed, are the *new* testament."

#### 10 **SUMMARY**

- 1 • Luther was convinced that human nature has been so distorted by sin that humans can never be truly good or righteous on their own.
  - There is a difference between individual sins, in the plural, and Sin, in the singular
  - Sin alienates us from God, the source and goal of our existence which leaves us with an abysmal emptiness in our souls, a spiritual hunger nothing else can satisfy.
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- 2 • We try to fill the emptiness with the wrong things but end up hungrier than before.
  - Rather than let that restlessness of the heart lead us to God, we use it to turn away from God.
  - Sin also has a collective, social dimension.
  - Word of God addresses the soul with two distinct kinds of words: commands (also known as "law") and promises (also known as "gospel").
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#### 11 **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How do you see the influence of sin in the world today? In your own life? In the communities and country where you live? In nature?
2. How can we listen to those directly affected by structural sin?
3. How are you affected by structural sin? How do you benefit from sinful systems or unjust social structures (from the present or the past) What would it mean to confess and repent from structural sin?
4. Where have you heard or seen God's words of "law" being addressed to the world today? What is that word? Who are the prophets of today?
5. Where have you heard or seen God's words of promise (or "gospel") recently? What are those words? Do you believe them? How can we respond? How will you respond?

#### 12 **FOR NEXT WEEK**

- Session 6: The Power of Faith
- Read paragraphs 39 – 51 from "The Freedom of a Christian"