

1  **THE FREEDOM OF A CHRISTIAN 1520**

Session #6  
The Power of Faith  
Paragraphs #39-51

2  **SESSION 6: THE POWER OF FAITH**

- From early in life, words of those around us (parents, teachers, caregivers, etc.) not only teach us, but form us.
- So too, the living Word of God, communicated to us through the reading of Scripture, the proclaiming of the gospel and the administering of the sacraments, and mediated through different kinds of icons and art, has the power to transform us from the inside out.

3  **THE THREE POWERS OF FAITH**

- To Luther, there are three powers of faith, which he will expand on in paragraphs 39-51:
  1. Allows a believer to be “swallowed up by the promises of God.”
  2. Honors the one in whom it trusts with the most reverent and highest regard.
  3. It unites the believer with Christ.

4  **THE FIRST POWER OF FAITH (PARAGRAPHS 39 & 40)**

- 1 • “Now since these promises of God are holy, true, righteous, peaceful and filled with total goodness, what happens is this: The soul that adheres to them with a firm faith is not simply united with them but fully swallowed up by them so that it not only shares in them but also is saturated and intoxicated by their every power.”
  - 2 • “From these arguments it is easy to understand the source of faith’s singular ability and why any good work—or all of them put together—cannot equal it at all.”
- “Just as heated iron glows like fire because of its union with fire, so it is clear that a Christian needs faith for everything and will have no need of works to be justified.”

5  **THE SECOND POWER OF FAITH (PARAGRAPH 41)**

- “Faith functions also in the following way: It honors the one in whom it trusts with the most reverent and highest regard possible for this reason: Faith holds the one in whom it trusts to be truthful and deserving.”

6  **THE SECOND POWER OF FAITH: THE HIGHEST HONOR (PARAGRAPH 42)**

- “For no honor is equal to attributing truthfulness and righteousness to someone, which is how we honor the one in whom we trust.”
- “Could we ascribe to anyone anything greater than truthfulness, righteousness, and absolutely perfect goodness?”

7  **THE SECOND POWER OF FAITH: THE HIGHEST CONTEMPT (PARAGRAPH 43)**

- 1 • “Conversely, the greatest contempt is to suspect or to accuse someone publicly of being, in our opinion, a liar and wicked, which we do when we do not trust a person.”
- 2 • “Nothing can show God greater respect!”
- 2 • “This is the highest worship of God: To bestow on God truthfulness and righteousness and whatever else ought to be ascribed to the One in whom a person trusts.”

8  **THE SECOND POWER OF FAITH: PERFECT OBEDIENCE (PARAGRAPH 44)**

- “Is not such a soul completely obedient to God in all things by this faith?”
- “However, not works but faith alone offers this obedience.”

9  **THE SECOND POWER OF FAITH: REBELLION (PARAGRAPH 45)**

- “Conversely, what greater rebellion against God, godlessness, and contempt of God is there than not to believe the One who promises?”
- “Or to put it another way, is this not to ascribe truthfulness to oneself and falsehood and vanity to God?”

10  **THE SECOND POWER OF FAITH: GOD HONORS THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM (PARAGRAPH 46)**

- “But when God sees that we ascribe truthfulness to him and by our heart’s faith honor him as is his due, then in return God honors us, ascribing to us truthfulness and righteousness on account of this faith.”
- “For faith results in truthfulness and righteousness, giving to God his own.”

11  **THE THIRD BENEFIT OF FAITH: UNION WITH THE BRIDEGROOM (PARAGRAPH #47)**

- ...“it unites the soul with Christ, like a bride with a bridegroom.”
- “By this ‘mystery’ (as Paul teaches), Christ and the soul are made one flesh.”
- “Accordingly, the faithful soul can both assume as its own whatever Christ has and glory in it, and whatever is the soul’s Christ claims for himself as his own.”

12  **THE THIRD BENEFIT OF FAITH: CONSIDER THESE INVALUABLE THINGS! (PARAGRAPH #48)**

- “For if he [Christ] is the groom, then he should simultaneously both accept the things belonging to the bride (us) and impart to the bride those things that are his.”

13  **THE THIRD BENEFIT OF FAITH: LOVE’S DUEL IN CHRIST (PARAGRAPH #49)**

- 1 • “This is truly the most delightful drama, involving not only communion but also a saving war, victory, salvation and redemption.”
- “...takes as his own the sins, death and hell of the bride on account of the wedding ring of faith, and when he regards them as if they were his own and as if he himself had sinned– (cont)
- 2 • “...suffering, dying, and descending into hell—then, as he conquers them all and as sin, death, and hell cannot devour him, they are devoured by him in an astounding duel.”

14  **THE THIRD BENEFIT OF FAITH: THE WEDDING RING OF FAITH FOR THE BRIDE OF CHRIST (PARAGRAPH #50)**

- “So it happens that the faithful soul, through the wedding ring of its faith in Christ her bridegroom, is free from all sins, secure against death, protected from hell, and given the eternal righteousness, life and salvation of her bridegroom, Christ.”

15  **THE THIRD BENEFIT OF FAITH: THE MAJESTY OF THE WEDDING GARMENTS (PARAGRAPH #51)**

- 1 • “Here, this rich, upstanding bridegroom, Christ, marries this poor, disloyal little prostitute, redeems her from all her evil and adorns her with all his goodness.”
- 2 • “And with confidence she...can say, ‘Sure, I have sinned, but my Christ, in whom I trust, has not sinned. All that is his is mine and all that is mine is his.’”

16  **SUMMARY**

- 1 • Effects of the word of God on us can be compared to the effects of fire on iron. (soul fully swallowed up by faith)
- Word leads to trust in God which is the highest honor we can give to God, and which we express

in worship.

- 2 • But there is more! What the word of God promises us in the gospel is nothing less than full communion with Christ, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Triune God—a communion so intimate that Luther compares it to a marriage where two people become one flesh.
  - “Happy exchange”
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17  **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Have you ever felt enthralled by a story from Holy Scripture? If so, what was the story? What do you remember about the experience?
2. Reflect on a time, perhaps from your childhood, when you were promised something you really wanted but had to wait for it. What was the experience like?
3. Which of the promises of the gospel are you looking forward to the most?

18  **HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK...**

- Session 7: The Power of Freedom
- Read paragraphs 52-69 of “The Freedom of a Christian”