

1 **THE FREEDOM OF A CHRISTIAN 1520**

Session #7
The Power of Freedom
Paragraphs #52-69

2 **WHY ASCRIBE THESE THINGS ONLY TO FAITH? (PARAGRAPH #52)**

- This section summarizes Luther's argument regarding the three powers of faith (last week)
- "...you may once again understand why the fulfillment of the law and justification without any works by faith alone may only be ascribed to faith."

3 **TRUE WORSHIP OF GOD (PARAGRAPH #53)**

- "For even if you were nothing but good works from the soles of your feet to the top of your head, you would still not be righteous, worship God, or fulfill the first commandment, since God cannot be worshiped unless the glory of truth and of complete goodness is ascribed to him, as truly must be due him."

4 **FAITH DOES WORKS (PARAGRAPH #54)**

- Title refers to the 2nd power of faith.
- "Now works, being inanimate, cannot glorify God, although they can be done to God's glory if faith is present."
- "...we are not asking about the kinds of works that are to be done but about the person who does them, who glorifies God and who produces works."

5 **THE PREROGATIVES OF THE FIRSTBORN (PARAGRAPH #55)**

- Luther is here presenting a new argument—using the OT notion of consecration of firstborns leading to the power given to priesthood and kingship.
- Luther, following the longstanding practice of the church, views these historical facts in the OT as types or figures, pointing to Christ.

6 **WHAT CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND PRIESTHOOD CONSIST IN (PAR #56)**

- "For his 'kingdom is not from this world.'" (John 18:36)
- "He rules over and consecrates heavenly and spiritual things, such as righteousness, truth, wisdom, peace, and salvation."
- "Similarly, his priesthood does not consist in the external pomp of robes and gestures..."

7 **THE PRIESTLY OFFICE (PARAGRAPH #57)**

- Author of Hebrews speaks of the priesthood of the order of Melchizedek (Genesis 14 and Psalm 110)
- Two functions: pray and intercede for us and teach us "inwardly in the spirit by the living instruction of his Spirit."

8 **HOW FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO BE UNDERSTOOD AS PRIESTS AND KINGS (#58)**

- "Now, just as Christ by his birthright possessed these two ranks, so he imparts them to and shares them with every believer legally in accord with the marriage described above, where whatever are the bridegroom's belong to the bride."
- "The nature of these two ranks is as follows."

9 **THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM**

- "First, what pertains to kingship is this: through faith every Christian is exalted over all things and,

by virtue of spiritual power, is absolutely lord of all things.”

- Paul: “All things are yours, whether...life or death or the present or the future...and you belong to Christ.” (1 Cor 3:21b-23)

10 **NOTE! (PARAGRAPHS ##60-61)**

- “Now, this does not establish that Christians possess and exercise some sort of secular power over everything—ecclesiastical leaders far and wide are possessed by such madness—for this is something that belongs to kings, princes, and human beings on earth.”
- “Look here! This is the immeasurable power and freedom of Christians.”

11 **WE ARE PRIESTS FOREVER
(PARAGRAPH #62)**

- “Not only are we the freest kings of all, but we are also priests forever. This is more excellent by far than kingship, because through the priesthood we are worthy to appear before God, to pray for others, and to teach one another the things that are of God.”

12 **ONLY EVIL COMES TO NONBELIEVERS (PARAGRAPH #63)**

- “But nothing serves persons who do not believe, nor does anything ‘work together for good.’ Instead, such individuals are slaves of all things and give themselves over to evil, because they use everything wickedly for their own advantage and not to the glory of God.”

13 **THE FREEDOM OF CHRISTIANS (PARAGRAPH #64)**

- This begins the conclusion to the first major theme, which Luther picks up again after the digression on priesthood and then applies it to preaching.
- “Now, if someone were so foolish as to presume to be made righteous, free, saved and Christian through any good work, then such one would immediately lose faith along with all other good things.”

14 **[A DIGRESSION ON THE MEANING OF PRIESTHOOD] (PARAGRAPHS #65, 66)**

- This subtitle was not in any 16th century text. These two paragraphs form a digression from Luther’s main argument, in order to discuss the proper meaning of “priest.”
- “At this point you may ask, ‘If all people in the church are priests, by what name do we distinguish those we now call priests from the laity?’”

15 **WHAT THE MINISTRY OF CHURCHMEN HAS BECOME (PARAGRAPH #66)**

- “...has...turned into such a display of power and a terrible tyranny that no national or worldly power can be compared to it.”
- “As a result of this perversity, the knowledge of Christian grace faith, freedom, and Christ has perished entirely, only to be replaced by an intolerable captivity to human works and laws.”

16 **HOW CHRIST MUST BE PREACHED (PARAGRAPH #67)**

- Luther lists all the problems of the preaching of his day.
- “This kind of thing is simply childish and womanish nonsense.”
- “Preaching, however, ought to serve this goal: that faith in Christ is promoted. Then he is not simply ‘Christ’ but ‘Christ for you and me’....”

17 **THE FRUIT OF THE BEST PREACHING (PARAGRAPHS ##68, 69)**

- Luther moves from what preaching is to its effects.
- “What person’s heart upon hearing these things would not rejoice from its very core and upon accepting such consolation would not melt in love with Christ—something completely

unattainable with laws and works?"

18 **SUMMARY**

- 1 • Adam and Eve, like the dog in Aesop's fable, were tricked by the devil into believing that eating the fruit would make them like God; they had forgotten that God already made them in God's image.
 - Tragic story of humanity: we refuse to trust the promises of Christ and so fall away from our relationship with God.
- 2 • When we believe (trust) everything changes! Nothing can frustrate God's plans for us and then we are truly free.
 - This kind of faith makes us into priests and royalty
 - The royalty and power that the believer has received by faith should not be confused with secular power.

19 **SUMMARY (CONT) (FROM STUDY GUIDE)**

"The power that comes from faith is not the power to rule over others. In a sense, it is the power to rule over ourselves. The power of faith allows us to not be defeated by fear, guilt or any other adversity, even death. Firmly rooted in the promises of God, it allows the believer to withstand any storm that comes their way and to emerge on the other side of the experience stronger and more resilient. The power of faith is the boldness to believe that God loves us all as loving parents love their children. Therefore, we can come into God's presence in prayer to share with God the needs of our neighbors. And we can dedicate ourselves to working for the well-being of others because we are convinced that our well-being and eternal destiny have already been taken care of by God in Christ."

20 **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What does it mean that faith gives us the power to be "kings" (royalty) and priests? What are appropriate ways of using that power?
2. Have you ever experienced (or known someone who has) the kind of power Luther talks about? What was it like, or what were they like?
3. According to Luther's explanation, what is the difference between being a priest (which all baptized Christians are) and being a pastor (which only a few Christians are)? What responsibilities and privileges do Christians have as priests? What is your understanding of "rostered leaders" in the ELCA?

21 **HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK...**

- Unit 1 was Background (Sessions 1-3)
- Unit 2 was Facing God (Sessions 4-7)
- Next week we begin Unit 3 called Facing Our Neighbors
- Session 8: Misunderstandings, Misuses and Abuses
- Read paragraphs 70-74 in "The Freedom of a Christian"