



The Freedom of a Christian

SESSION TWO

"THEOLOGICAL and PSYCHOLOGICAL"

OLD TESTAMENT Hymn of Praise from Psalm 86:8-13

There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. All the nations you have made shall come and bow down before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.

Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

A wise elder stated:

“Faith is not really faith until it is the only thing that sustains you.”

To be held by the hand of God, and nothing but the hand of God, is a powerful, life-sustaining experience. Only then can one understand what faith is.

Paradoxes of faith:

The living word of God is both law and gospel, command and promise.

The faith life is both total freedom and total servanthood.

Christians are both sinners and saints (at the same time).

God is both completely hidden from us
yet totally revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

Humans are both spiritual beings and human beings (body and spirit).

Questions:

How might we have made the gospel, the Christian faith, “easy and cheap” in our day?

Do you believe the trials and challenges you face are a “privileged place” for you to discover what faith is all about?

Have you had such experiences that have drawn you to God, or drawn you away from your awareness of God’s presence?

What would you say is the difference between *faith* and *belief*?

Can you live with *paradoxes*—the ability to hold two true but opposite statements/beliefs in tension?



The Freedom of a Christian

SESSION TWO B

"HUMAN NATURE"

Confession:

We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves.

We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, by what we have left undone,

we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

Petition:

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Promise:

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin and made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved.

Absolution:

In the name of (+) Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

Blessing:

Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit,
that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. Amen.

Confession:

We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves.

We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, by what we have left undone,

we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

Q1: Are you “in bondage” to sin? Or are you just vulnerable to sin?

Q2: Who is the “you” we sin against by thoughts, words, deeds.

Promise:

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin and made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved.

Absolution:

In the name of (+) Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

Q3: What is the “tense” of the verbs used in these sections?

Blessing:

Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. Amen.

Q4: Why is the word “may” used here? Why might it be best left out?

We are human. Not angels.

And our problem is not that “we are only human.”

Our problem is that we both want to be “more than human” and actually act “less than human” to one another.

Luther describes sin in a number of ways:

SINS are the thoughts, words, deeds we do harm with.

SIN is the condition, the bondage we and the world are caught up in.

“Puppy sins” are things like murder, assault, theft, war, etc. Such things are symptoms of the greater issue of SIN.

Our challenge is SIN in three major ways: pride, unbelief, despair. Luther says these three are the reason for Jesus, his obedience unto death. These three are what Jesus comes to deliver us from.

PRIDE: I don't need God.

UNBELIEF: I don't believe in God.

DESPAIR: Even if there is a God, God would not want me.

Isaiah 64:6f

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name or attempts to take hold of you....do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever.

Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3

Fools say in their hearts, “There is no God.” They are corrupt. They do abominable deeds; there is no one who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven on humankind to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God. They have all gone astray, they are all alike perverse; there is no one who does good, no, not one.

Psalm 51:3-5

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are blameless when you pass judgment. Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

Romans 3:10-12, 18

There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one...**there is no fear of God before their eyes.**

(See also Romans 7:14-25, Paul's reflection on the two natures within him.)

Romans 5:6, 8, 10-12 (the gospel promise!)

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly...God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us...For if while we were enemies (of God), we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life....our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received reconciliation.