

1 ☐ **THE FREEDOM OF A CHRISTIAN 1520**

Session #9

Training the Body for Freedom

Paragraphs #75-77

2 ☐ **HOW TO DISCIPLINE THE BODY (PARAGRAPH #75)**

- "...all individuals can easily figure out for themselves the 'measure or discretion' (as people call it) to which they ought to discipline their bodies."
- "Wanting to be justified and saved through works without faith is simply monstrous foolishness and ignorance of the Christian life and faith!"

3 ☐ **AN EXCELLENT ANALOGY (PARAGRAPH #76)**

- 1 • This paragraph begins a list of analogies Luther uses to illustrate his point.
 - First analogy is Adam in the garden—God placed the man in paradise "so that he might work and take care of it."
 - Adam was created to be "righteous, upright, and without sin."
- 2 • But Adam was to work— "the Lord gave him a job, namely, that he care for and watch over paradise. These were truly the freest works, done neither to make [a person] acceptable to anyone (except to divine favor) nor to obtain righteousness, which Adam already had fully and which would have been inborn in all of us."

4 ☐ **FAITH PUTS A PERSON BACK IN PARADISE**

- "It is the same way with works of believing individuals, who through their faith are once again put back in paradise and recreated from scratch."
- "For them these works arise from the same freedom [as Adam's]...."

5 ☐ **SUMMARY...**

- 1 • We are learning more and more from science how closely connected our bodies and minds are. In fact, the ancient idea that the world is made of two different kinds of stuff, one material and the other spiritual or mental, is now rejected by most scientists and theologians.
- 2 • Luther knew nothing about neuroscience or modern biology, but he had personal knowledge of how the mind and body are connected. In fact, he believed that an important part of one's faith life was disciplining the body.
 - An undisciplined body is easy prey for the compulsions of sin.

6 ☐ **SUMMARY (CONT)...**

- 1 • Luther describes the body as the site of a never-ending tug of war between the spirit and the flesh.
 - Spirit and flesh are not different parts of the human person; rather they can be seen as different "orientations" of the whole person.
- 2 • Being in "the flesh" means being oriented toward one's self and concerned only about one's own interests.
 - Being in "the spirit" means orienting our whole being toward love of God and neighbor.

7 ☐ **SUMMARY (CONT)...**

- 1 • But even after one is transformed by the power of faith, old habits die hard. So, we tend to go back to our original, sinful posture.
 - Therefore, even though we are saved by faith alone and without the works of the law, Luther

believed that we still need the commands of the law and spiritual disciplines to help align our whole selves with the Spirit.

- 2 • Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, A Lutheran ethicist, beautifully summarizes all this with a story in her book "Resisting Structural Evil" that she borrows from Native American/American Indian folklore.

8 ☐ **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Why did Luther think that taking good care of the body is important? How is taking good care of the body connected to serving the neighbor? What do you think about that connection?
2. How can we take good care of our bodies? In what ways can we discipline (or train) our bodies so that we are better able to serve God and our neighbors?
3. What would it mean in our contexts to take seriously Luther's idea that "at times when the body is healthy and fit, we can work and save money and thereby can protect and support those who are in need. In this way, the stronger members may serve the weaker?" How does that compare with the values of our society and communities?

9 ☐ **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONT)**

4. What does Luther mean when he says that the body must be "purified from its evil 'passions and desires'"? What makes a desire or passion evil or good?
5. Why is it dangerous to divide the human being into body and soul? How has that dualism been used to justify injustices and unhealthy practices?
6. How can we "feed" the right wolf?

10 ☐ **HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK...**

- Session #10: Righteous Like a Truck
- Read paragraphs 78-91 in "The Freedom of a Christian"