



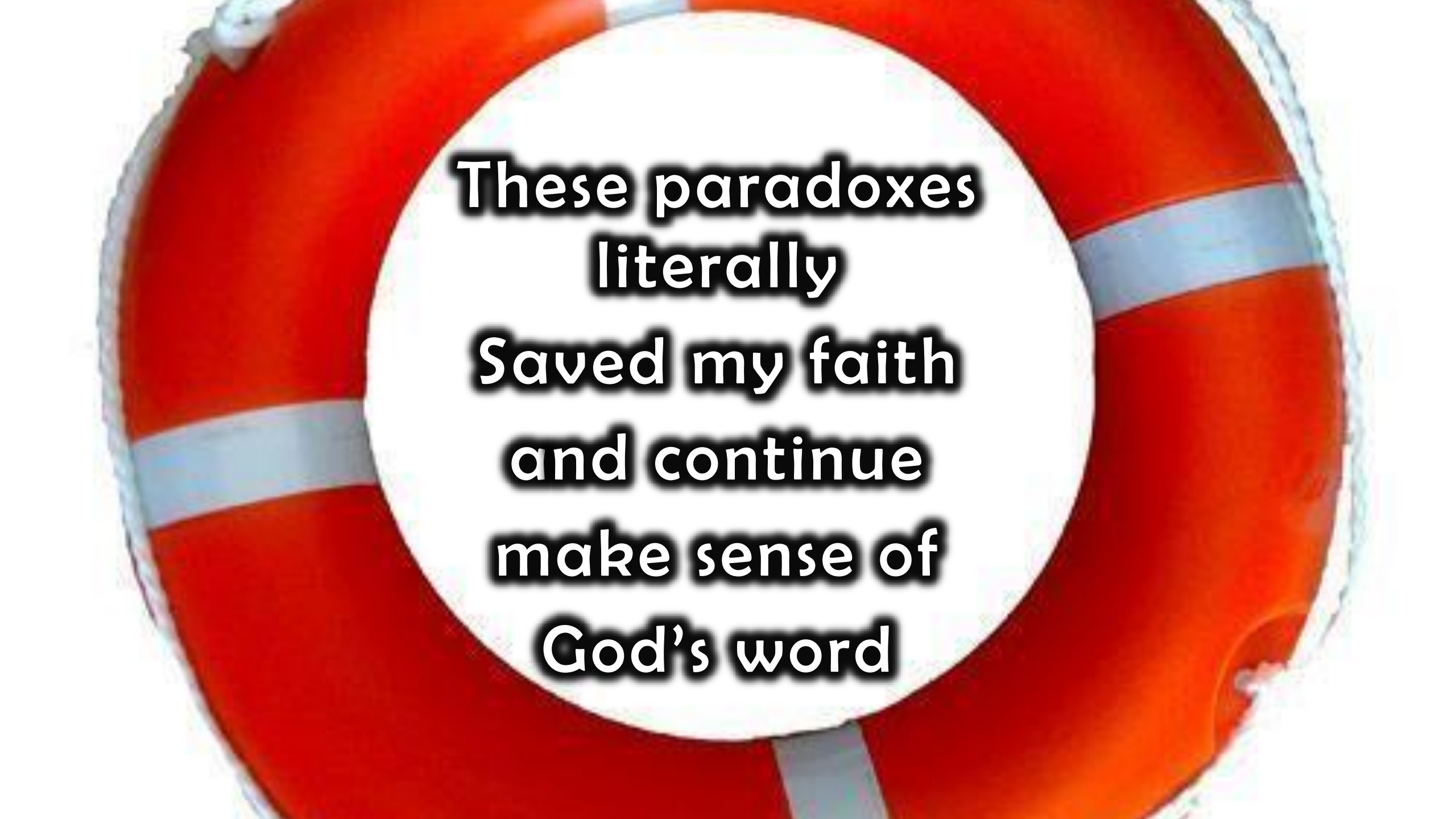
# Lutheran Paradoxes

Living in & with the  
Tension

**par·a·dox**

**/'perə,däks/ noun**

**a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be well founded or true.**



**These paradoxes  
literally  
Saved my faith  
and continue  
make sense of  
God's word**

# PARADOXES

- Law / Gospel
- Our Righteousness / Alien Righteousness
- Sinner / Saint
- Slave / Free
- Finite / Infinite
- Left Hand / Right Hand Kingdoms
- Institution / Mission

Here we must point out  
that the entire Scripture  
of God is divided into two  
parts: commandments  
and promises.

MARTIN LUTHER

Law/Gospel



Therefore a person can with confidence boast in Christ and say: "Mine are Christ's living, doing, and speaking, his suffering and dying, mine as much as if I had lived, done, spoken, suffered, and died as he did." LW 31.297

MARTIN LUTHER

1<sup>st</sup> Kind of  
Righteousness

A black and white portrait of Martin Luther, showing him from the chest up. He is wearing a dark, textured cap and a dark, heavy robe with a fur collar. He has a serious expression and is looking slightly to the right of the viewer.

The second kind of righteousness is our proper righteousness, not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness. This is that manner of life spent profitably in good works. LW 31.299

MARTIN LUTHER

2<sup>nd</sup> Kind of  
Righteousness

A black and white portrait of Martin Luther, showing him from the chest up. He is wearing a dark, textured cap and a heavy, fur-lined garment. He has a serious expression and is looking slightly to the right of the viewer.

Simul  
Justus et  
Peccator



To make the way smoother for the unlearned—for only them do I serve—I shall set down the following two propositions concerning the freedom and the bondage of the spirit: A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all. These two theses seem to contradict each other. If, however, they should be found to fit together they would serve our purpose beautifully. LW 31:344

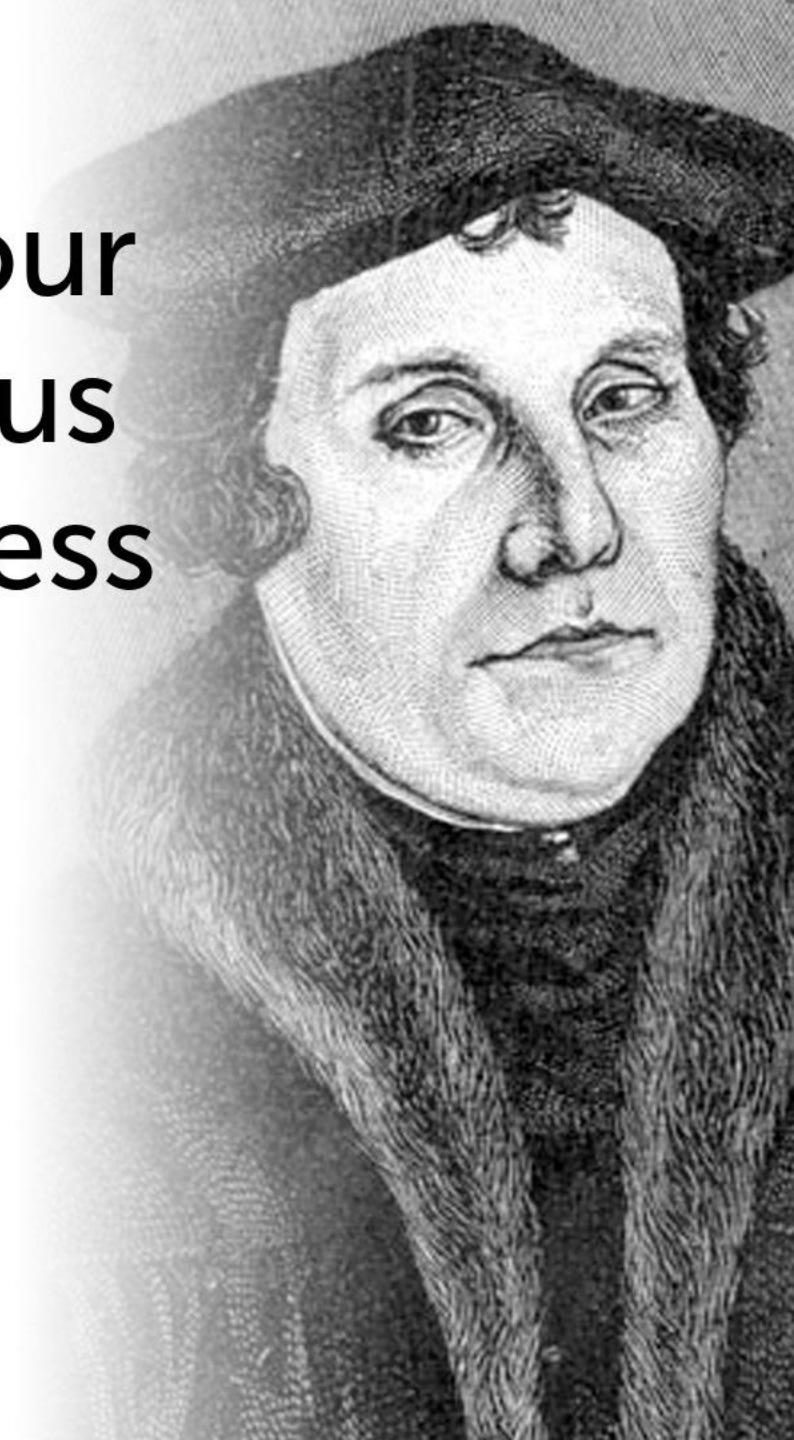
MARTIN LUTHER

Free/Servant

A black and white portrait of Martin Luther, showing him from the chest up. He is wearing a dark, textured cap and a heavy, fur-lined garment. He has a serious expression and is looking slightly to the right of the viewer.

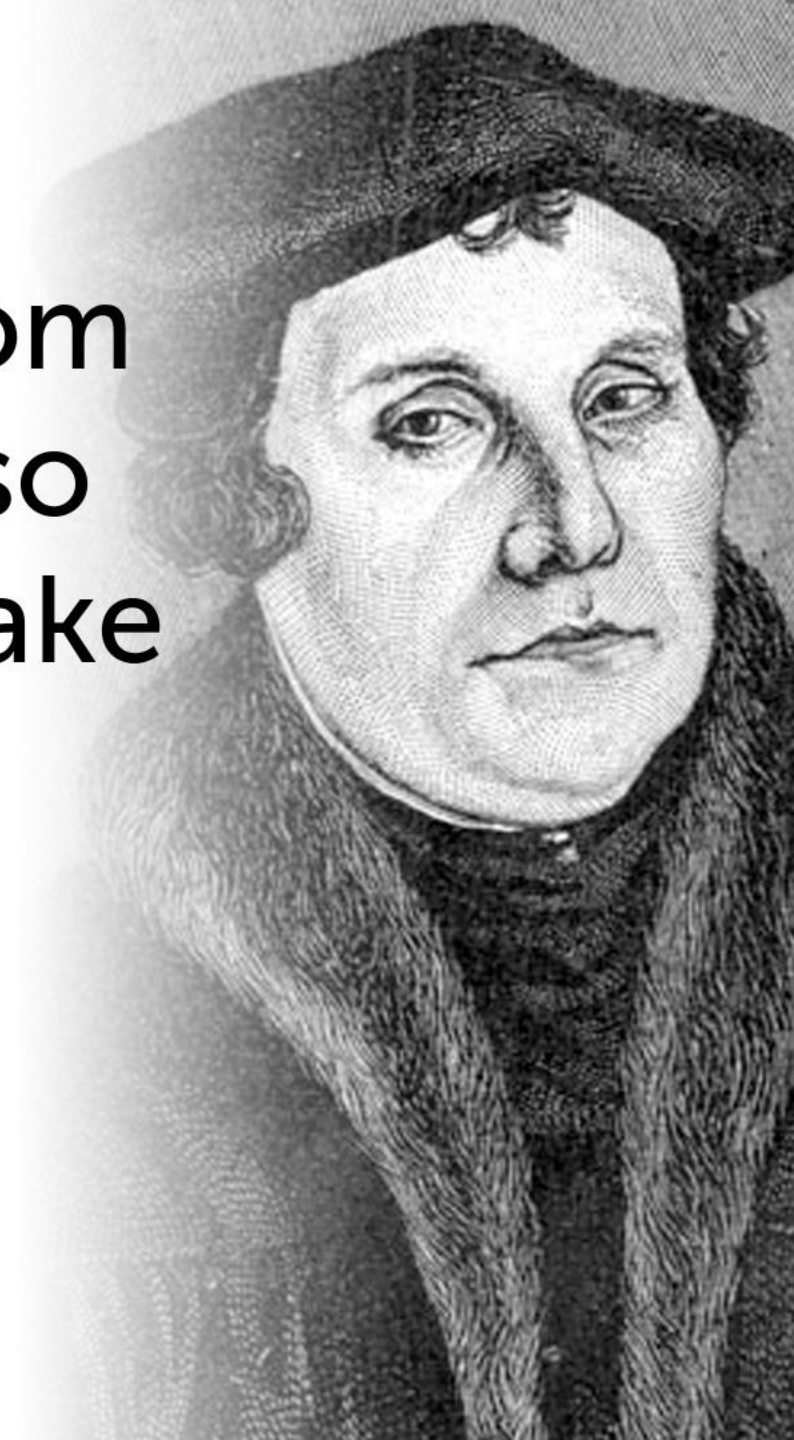
This is that Christian liberty, our faith, which does not induce us to live in idleness or wickedness but makes the law and works unnecessary for any person's righteousness and salvation.

MARTIN LUTHER



From this anyone can clearly see how a Christian is free from all things and over all things so that he needs no works to make him righteous and save him, since faith alone abundantly confers all these things.

MARTIN LUTHER



**Now lets  
work  
with the  
Finite-  
Infinite  
Paradox!**

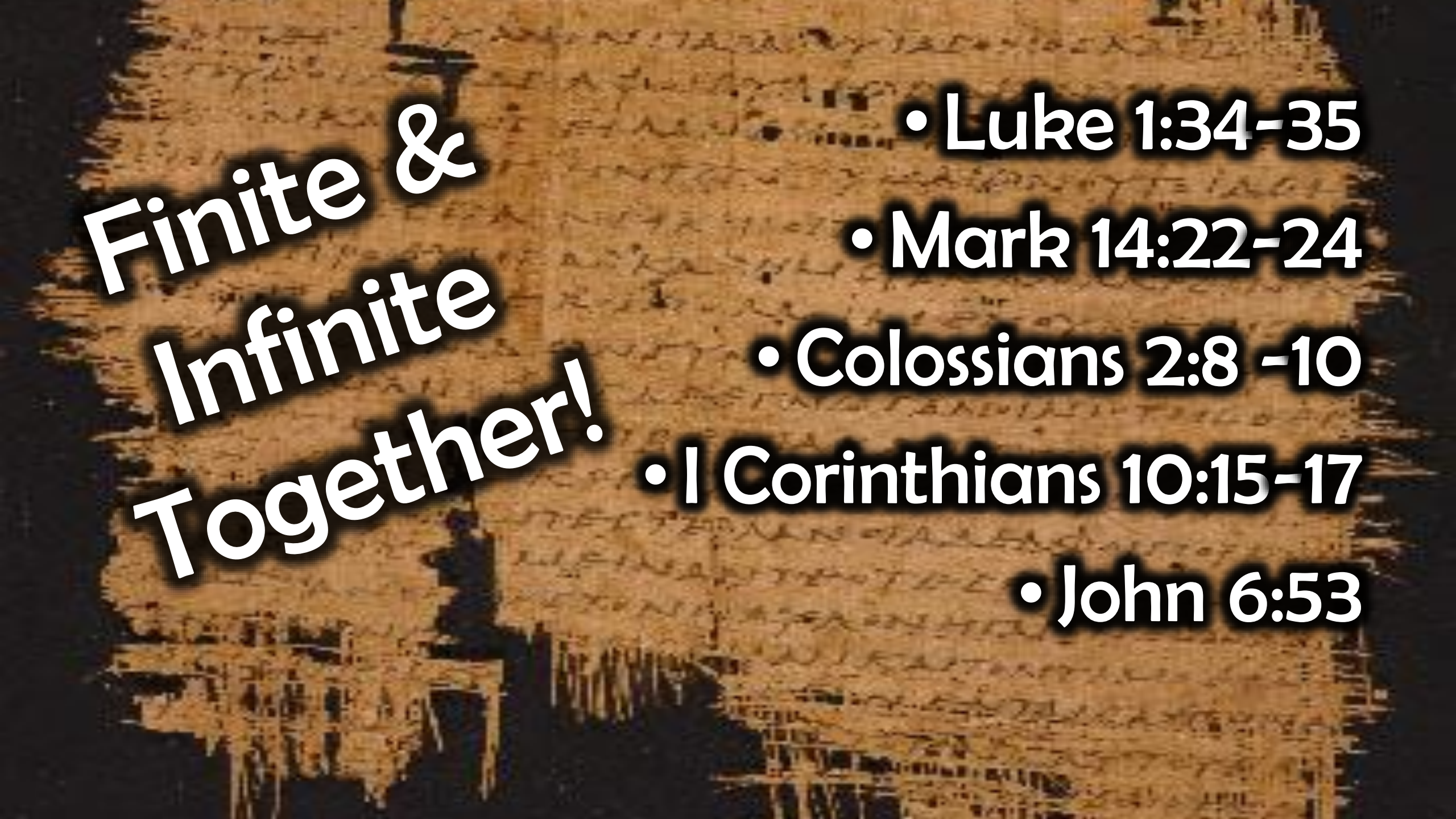




TODAY

Finite  
And  
Infinite





# Finite & Infinite Together!

- Luke 1:34-35
- Mark 14:22-24
- Colossians 2:8 -10
- I Corinthians 10:15-17
- John 6:53

And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.

**Luke 1:34–35**





And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."

**Mark 14:22-24**



I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

**1 Corinthians 10:15-17**



When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, "Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe."

**John 6:60-64**



But filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”

**Acts 7:55-56**



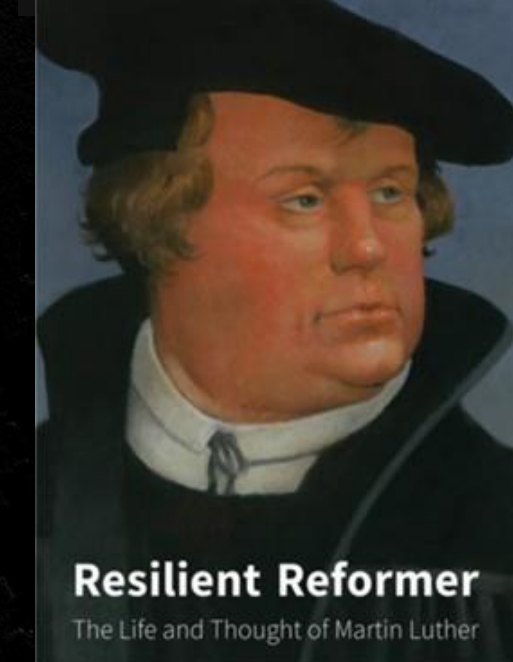
Your right hand, O LORD,  
glorious in power—your  
right hand, O LORD,  
shattered the enemy.

Exodus 15:6



This was an application of Aristotle's principles of physics. Luther did not teach, as many have concluded, that therefore Christ was not really present in the bread and wine....

**TIMOTHY F. LULL; DEREK R. NELSON**



**Resilient Reformer**  
The Life and Thought of Martin Luther

In some ways, Luther was a radical. In other ways, he was very much a conservative. His views on sacraments were an example of the latter. Luther understood the church in Rome to have strayed far from the apostolic witness on the sacraments, and thus he sought to restore and conserve what he thought was proper clarity—but also mystery—regarding them. Soon he was debating this issue on many fronts. In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* of 1520, Luther criticized the doctrine of transubstantiation, which taught that the form of the elements of communion stayed the same (it looked and tasted like bread and wine before and after the Mass) but their substance changed from bread and wine to body and blood.

**TIMOTHY F. LULL; DEREK R. NELSON**



This was an application of Aristotle's principles of physics. Luther did not teach, as many have concluded, that therefore Christ was not really present in the bread and wine. In fact, Luther absolutely thought that Christ was present "in, with, and under" the forms of bread and wine. The relevant issue for Luther was, rather, the interpretation of the Bible. When Paul writes, "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16, KJV), he seems to teach that there is bread broken at communion. Not "something that merely looks like bread," but rather bread. If one was forced to use the categories of Aristotle, then one might speak of "consubstantiation" because both bread and the body of Christ are present for the faithful. But why try to force Christians to believe one particular way of explaining the presence, as the Fourth Lateran Council did with transubstantiation? Better to say that the bread is there, and Christ is there, and to approach the altar rail in awe and wonder.

TIMOTHY F. LULL; DEREK R. NELSON





The church has the responsibility to teach rightly and ought to use reason to assist the faith. But it must not let reason trump faith. In this vein, Luther is glad to quip, "The Philosopher was smart, but the Holy Spirit knows even more than Aristotle." Few future debates about the presence of Christ in the Eucharist would come on the Roman front, however. Luther said, "I would rather drink sheer blood with the Pope than mere wine with the Fanatics." p.288

**TIMOTHY F. LULL; DEREK R. NELSON**



Lutheran and Reformed theologians engaged in a centuries-long controversy on the Lord's Supper, pitching two Latin phrases against each other. The Reformed insisted on the proposition that "the finite cannot contain the infinite"—*finitum non capax infiniti*. The Lutheran maxim was the opposite, "the finite is capable of the infinite"—*finitum capax infiniti*, the proof being that it happened in the incarnation: the Word became flesh; God became man. Likewise, in the Lord's Supper the bread and the wine, finite though they be, convey the whole Christ, the one person in both his divine and human natures. The controversy was laden with concepts from medieval scholastic metaphysics, sometimes to the extent that it seemed that the theologians forgot what was at stake. What was at stake is the assurance that Christ descends to meet us bodily at the earthly level of our sinfulness.

**CARL E. BRAATEN**

CHRISTIAN  
DOGMATICS

Volume One

Carl E. Braaten  
Robert W. Jenson  
*Editors*



We do not need to ascend to heaven to meet Christ spiritually at the level of God's holiness in heaven. We are not able to rise above the level of our earth-bound finitude. On account of the incarnation God showed that he is able to meet us deep in human flesh. Salvation is not something we need to reach for beyond space and time. Luther said in effect, "Do not listen to those who say, 'The flesh is good for nothing.' Rather say, 'God without flesh is good for nothing.' " We believe that God meets us in our down-to-earth condition, so there is no need for us to go elsewhere.

**CARL E. BRAATEN**

CHRISTIAN  
DOGMATICS

Volume One

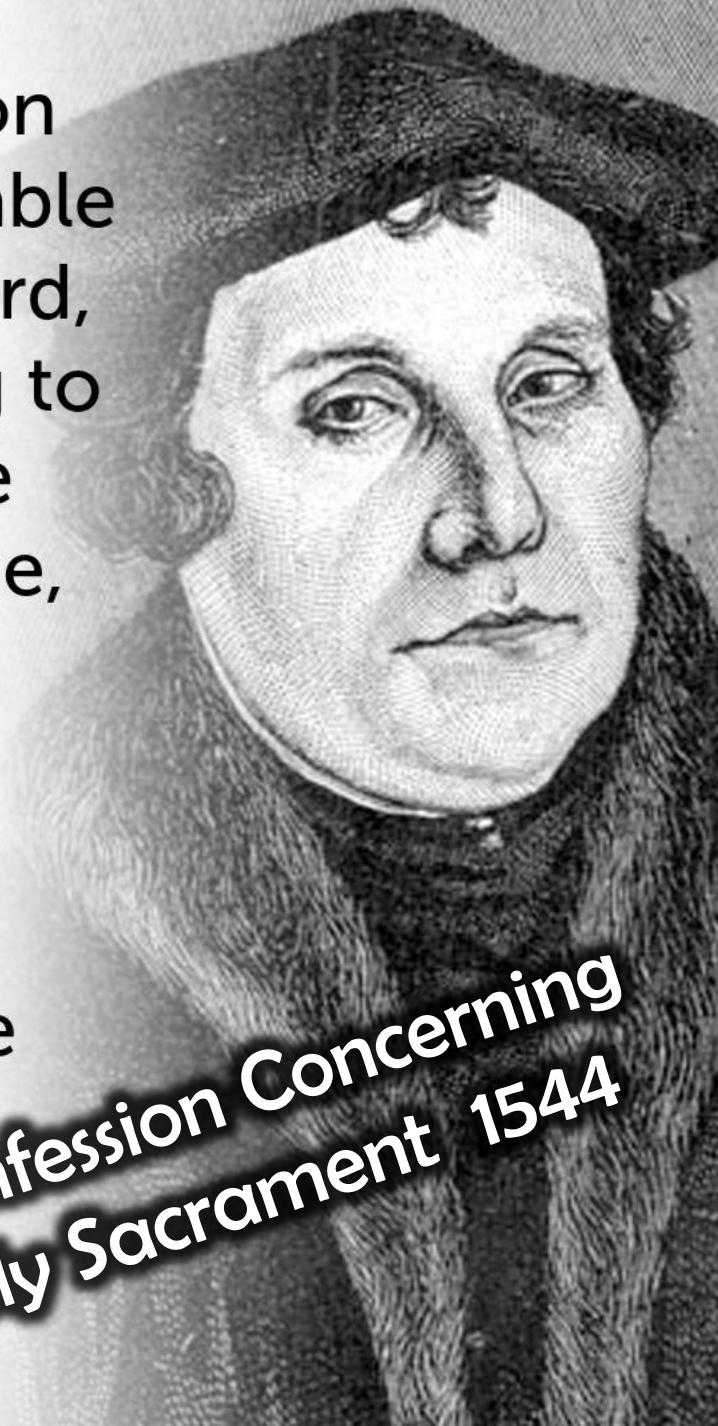
Carl E. Braaten  
Robert W. Jenson  
*Editors*



I do not first want to seek counsel from my reason as to how it is conceivable or possible that I am able to receive his body and blood orally, and afterward, as a judge over God, explain his words according to my inclination. No, I do not want to rave thus. He has said it; I shall adhere to that. If he misleads me, then I am being misled for my salvation. He has never lied yet and he cannot lie. However, the fanatics are manifest liars, recognized as such by me and by themselves. They also have to lie continually because they rely on their ideas more than on the word of God.

**MARTIN LUTHER**

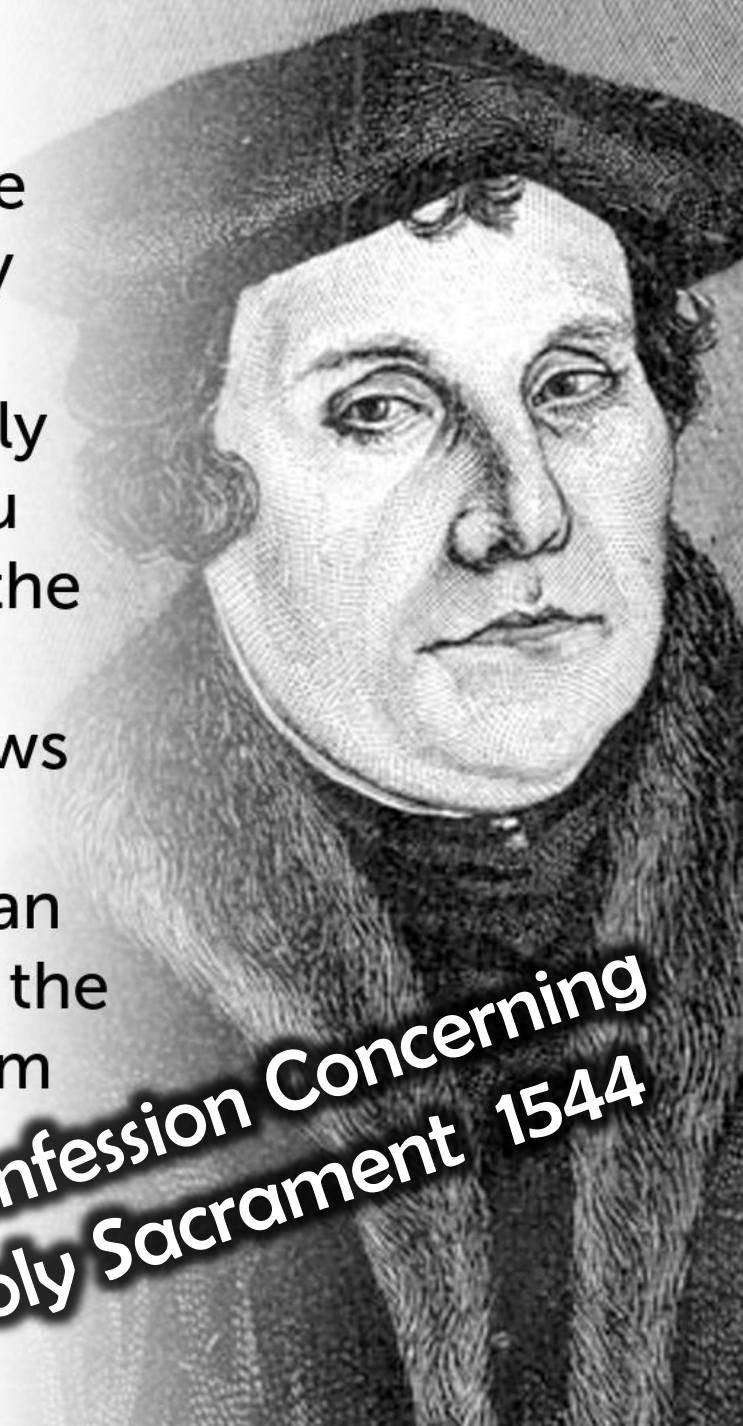
**Brief Confession Concerning  
the Holy Sacrament 1544**

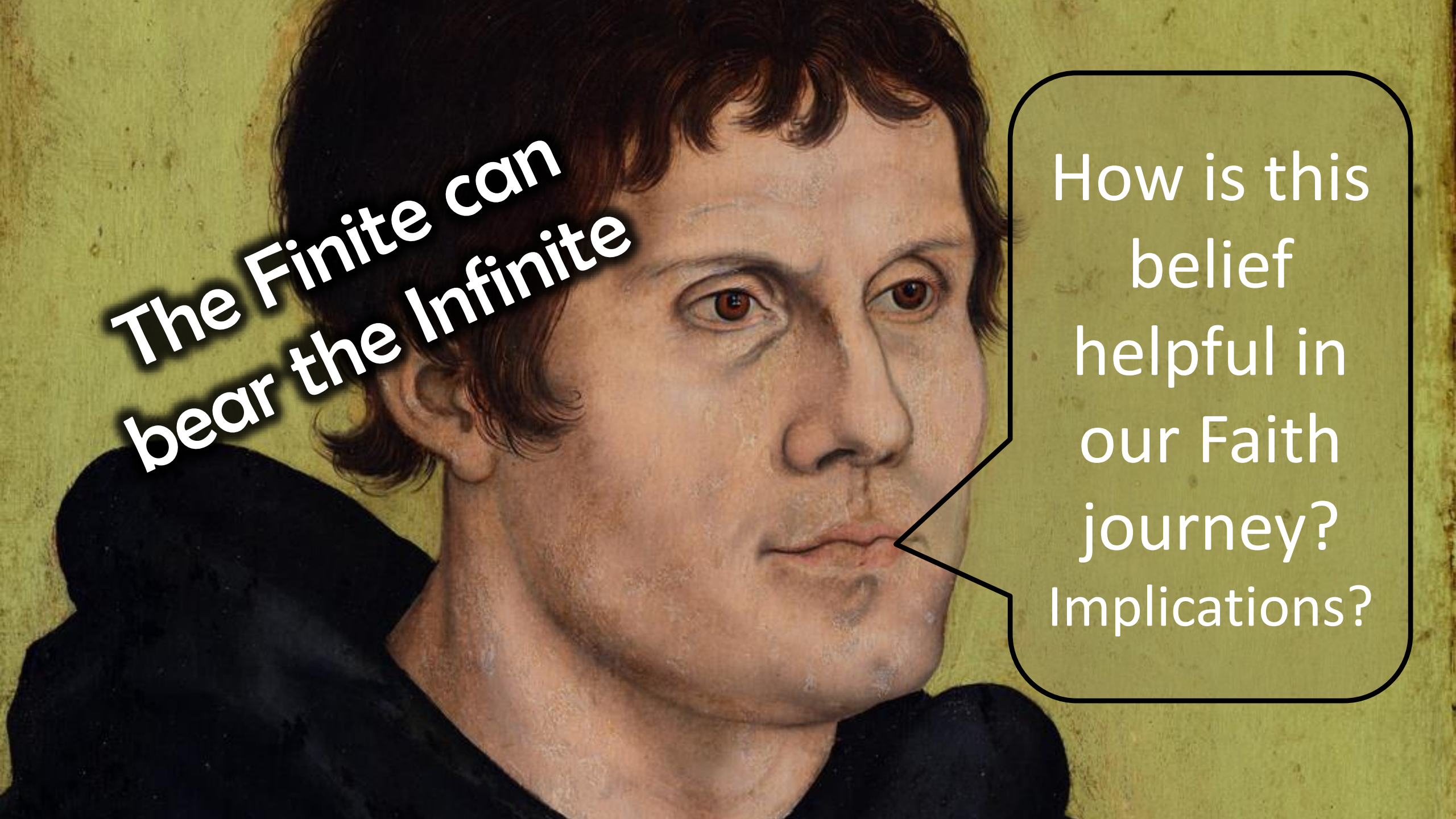


O dear man! If someone does not want to believe the article of faith concerning the Lord's Supper, how will he ever believe the article of faith concerning the humanity and divinity of Christ in one person? If you have doubts about whether you are receiving the body of Christ orally when you eat the bread from the altar, likewise, that you are receiving the blood of Christ orally when you drink the wine in the Lord's Supper, then you must surely have serious doubts (especially when the end of your life draws near) about how the infinite and incomprehensible Godhead, who is and must essentially be everywhere, can be bodily enclosed and included in the humanity and in the Virgin's body, as St. Paul says in Colossians 1 [2:9]: "In him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily." LW 38:30

**MARTIN LUTHER**

**Brief Confession Concerning  
the Holy Sacrament 1544**





**The Finite can  
bear the Infinite**

How is this  
belief  
helpful in  
our Faith  
journey?  
Implications?

# Implications of Finite/Infinite

- **Everyday Life**
- **An actual meeting place**
- **Sacramental Blessings – our faith has something to cling to...**
- **The Church – Finite bearer of the Infinite?**
- **Stewardship of the earth/creation**

We own a definite Lord, one whom we can touch. He lies in His mother's lap, and He hangs on the cross; as infinite God He became finite man. Our heart can feel assured that it possesses a true and genuine Lord in Him to whom all is subject in heaven and on earth, before whom angel and devil prostrate themselves, a Lord whom the Father loves as His only-begotten Son. When I have the assurance and conviction that He is Lord over all, over heaven and earth, over angels and all creatures; when I know that God takes delight in Him, that He places Him at His right hand, and that, consequently, this Man who was born of the Virgin Mary will also reign and rule there—then, I say, my heart has achieved a victory and can declare: "Lo, if He is favorably disposed toward me who is Lord over angels and devil, over death and life, not to mention gold, silver, barley, and grain, then I will not fear the world; then I can look to God with the assurance that no misfortune will befall me.

**MARTIN LUTHER**

