**BIBLE QUESTIONS: SESSION 23**

**Questions: *Are works a necessary part of salvation? Do works save? What is the RC church teaching on this? What is sacerdotalism?***

1. ***Are works a necessary part of salvation?***
	1. **The Confessional Lutheran Church has concluded that the answer to this is best answered NO.**
		1. Majorian Controversy
			1. Philip Melanchthon--contemporary and close friend of Martin Luther and author of the Augsburg Confession and its Apology--had argued that Good Works were necessary for salvation insofar as faith is always accompanied by Good Works, and no one who dies in the faith will be without Good Works.
			2. In direct contradiction to this, Georg Major argued that Good works were *harmful to salvation*, insofar as they always tempt one to put their faith in them instead of Christ.
			3. The Orthodox Lutheran Fathers, Martin Chemnitz, Jacob Andrae, and Nicholas Selnecker conclude that the phrase “Good Works are Necessary” is in accord with sound doctrine, but not “Good Works are Necessary for salvation”, which is works righteousness and thus ananthema to the sola fide principle of the reformation.
	2. In Systematic Theology, however, Good works are usually treated under “Sanctification” which is a topic of soteriology (theology of salvation).
2. ***Do works save?***
	1. Not our works. Only Jesus’ active and passive works of obedience save.
3. ***What is the RC church teaching on this?***
	1. Officially, the RC church still holds to the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) which held that anyone who believes or teaches that a man is saved by faith alone, apart from works is anathema/cursed.
4. ***What is sacerdotalism?***
	1. The view that the laity can only establish a relationship with God through priests. The RC church is properly called sacerdotalistic. Some consider CL church to be so as well, but there are marked differences. It is best to read the Lutheran Confessions “Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope” to get a full understanding of the distinction. (also, see chart on reverse side…)

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| Roman Catholic | Confessional Lutheran |
| A RC priest, in his ordination, receives special power. This power, for instance, enables him to make water holy for baptism and to change bread and wine into christ’s body and blood.  | God does not give a called and ordained pastor a special ability to administer sacraments, offer sacrifices, or forgive sins. Rather that authority is given to the church, who calls a minister to minister to them. And Scripture gives the qualifications for ministers, (e.g., male, husband of one wife, not a drunkard, apt to teach, etc.) In times of emergency, even a layperson can baptize or absolve sins. |
| His ordination is an indelible mark, meaning once a priest always a priest. | A minister ceases to have the authority to minister when he is not called to do so. We understand this to function within most synods as being “on the roster”, even if the minister is not called or serving a congregation presently. |
| The priesthood is a separate class from the laity, such that only priests can consecrate other priests. The distinction between priest and laity is very similar to that understood in the Old Testament. | Ministers are not a separate class of Christians from the laity. They are laity who have (ideally) been theologically trained and rightly called to the vocation of word and sacrament ministry. They are held to a higher standard (James 3:1), but they are not more holy, or wiser in things spiritual than other laity per se. Moreover, a congregation can rightly call a pastor without the approval of a synod or minister’s guild; a bishop is not required. |
| The hierarchy of the priesthood, (with analogy to the OT, the pope is as the chief priest and the Majesterium the Sanhedrin), is what constitutes the church. The church is located where the clergy is. They have no doctrine of the church as consisting of all Christians who share faith in Christ. | The church is wherever local believers gather to worship God according to sound doctrine (aka “The Priesthood of all Believers”). This gathering ought to contain the outward marks of the church, the public preaching of the word and pure administration of the sacraments. These require a minister, whom the congregation has the authority to rightly call. A congregation should not minister to itself (i.e. without a called minister (AC XIV)), but that doesn’t mean that there is no church without a minister. |
| The priest is approved or disciplined according to the judgment of other priests through their interpretation of scripture, sacred tradition, and the special discretion given to the priesthood. | Ministers are approved or disciplined according to Scripture and (ideally) are not subject to the subjective tribunal of other minister. (cf. Gal. 2:6, Paul did not regard the approval of the other apostles as definitive of his calling. What he did regard is “the gospel” that he originally preached as the standard by which himself, all apostles, and even angels are to be judged Gal. 1:8)  |