

# **ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE**

## **Topical Bulletin, March 2019**

Last month's topical bulletin addressed the term "means of grace" and we learned that the term rightly conveys the fact that God employs certain external, visible means through which the Holy Ghost works faith in Christ in the heart of a sinner, preserves and strengthens that faith, and thus accomplishes the sinner's salvation since the individual sinner's God-given and God-sustained faith in Christ personally appropriates the forgiveness of sins which Jesus Christ has secured for the whole world. We also saw from Holy Scripture that the Gospel of Christ is the preeminent means of grace, and that Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper as instituted and commanded by Christ are also "means of grace" because God's Word – God's gracious promise of forgiveness of sins – is attached to visible elements in those ordinances.

Therefore, in connection with the term "means of grace" which we considered last month, the questions to be answered in this month's topical bulletin are: ***What is meant by the term "sacrament"? What Biblically qualifies as a sacrament and why?***

The term "sacrament" is not found in the Holy Bible but comes from the Latin *sacramentum*, an oath, which comes from *sacer*, sacred. Sacred means holy; and, oath means solemn promise. Therefore, by the term "sacrament" we mean a sacred act – a holy act – instituted by God Himself; in which there are certain visible means connected with God's Word, God's solemn Gospel promise; and, by which God offers, gives, and seals unto us the forgiveness of sins which Christ has earned for us by His redemptive work.

**Accordingly, Biblically there are only two Sacraments: Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper.**

The following summary information regarding Holy Baptism is from Luther's Small Catechism (Triglot, pages 551 and 553). Subsequently, passages from the Holy Bible are cited which prove Luther's questions and answers concerning Holy Baptism are indeed Scriptural truth.

### **The Sacrament of Holy Baptism**

*As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.*

#### **First.**

*What is Baptism?* Baptism is not simple water only, but it is the water comprehended in God's command and connected with God's Word.

*Which is that word of God?* Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Matthew: *Go ye into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

#### **Secondly.**

*What does Baptism give or profit?* It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

*Which are such words and promises of God?* Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Mark: *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

### **Thirdly.**

*How can water do such great things?* It is not the water indeed that does them, but the word of God which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts such word of God in the water. For without the word of God the water is simple water and no baptism. But with the word of God it is a baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul says, Titus, chapter three: *By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying.*

### **Fourthly.**

*What does such baptizing with water signify?* It signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise; who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written? St. Paul says Romans, chapter 6: *We are buried with Christ by Baptism into death, that, like as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

### Scripture proof passages with comments:

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even unto the end of the world.* Amen.” (Matthew 28:18-20 KJV)

*Comment: Observe that the Lord Jesus Christ has the authority and the right to command, and so He commands all nations – people of every race, gender, and age – to be baptized into the name of the Triune God. Note well that infants are NOT excluded from Baptism since they are certainly included in the phrase “all nations”.*

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:5-6 KJV)

*Comment: Jesus makes the necessity of Holy Baptism quite clear; birth by water and the Spirit – the Holy Ghost working in and through the waters of Holy Baptism – is necessary because every naturally conceived and born human being is sinful, flesh born of flesh, for we must all in honesty confess as did David in Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Indeed, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8 KJV)*

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*” (Acts 2:38-39 KJV)

*Comment: Notice again the necessity of Holy Baptism for all people, even for children. And, note well that Baptism is “for the remission of sins” and is not simply a ceremony for show.*

“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16 KJV)

*Comment: Observe that Holy Baptism is a means by which sins are washed away, for the name of the Lord is called upon as it is He who actually does the cleansing of the sinner.*

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:26-27 KJV)

*Comment: Notice that Holy Baptism as instituted and commanded by Christ works faith in Christ in the heart of the baptized individual since God the Holy Ghost works through His Word attached to the waters of Holy Baptism, for 1 Corinthians 6:11 reports: “but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”*

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (Mark 16:16 KJV)

*Comment: The necessity of Holy Baptism if one would be saved is evident, although Baptism is not an absolute necessity when for some reason it cannot be obtained, for only unbelief damns. Nevertheless, if one despises Holy Baptism and/or minimizes its importance, such is evidence of unbelief since one with genuine faith in Jesus Christ will not desire to disobey any of His commands, including Christ’s command to be baptized.*

“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 3:21 KJV)

*Comment: Observe that Holy Baptism is NOT a mere outward cleansing of the flesh; rather, Holy Baptism is an inward cleansing of sin which supplies one with a good conscience in knowing one’s sins are freely and fully forgiven for Jesus’ sake.*

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:5-7 KJV)

*Comment: Notice that Holy Baptism is NOT a work man does for God, but is rather a work God does in man, for Holy Baptism is “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,” a gracious work of God who indeed mercifully grants eternal life to the baptized individual— the very forgiveness of sins and eternal life which Jesus Christ has earned for the whole world.*

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,” (Ephesians 5:25-26 KJV)

*Comment: Note well that the Lord Jesus Christ cleanses His church, His people, and makes them holy by means of the waters of Holy Baptism since His Word – His Gospel Word of forgiveness – is connected to those waters.*

The following summary information regarding the Lord’s Supper (also known as Holy Communion and the Sacrament of the Altar) is from Luther’s Small Catechism (Triglot, pages 555 and 557). Subsequently, passages from the Holy Bible are cited which prove Luther’s questions and answers concerning the Lord’s Supper are indeed Scriptural truth.

## **The Sacrament of the Altar**

*As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.*

*What is the Sacrament of the Altar?* It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself.

*Where is this written?* The holy Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul, write thus: *Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and gave it to His disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Take, drink ye all of it. This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins. This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.*

*What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?* That is shown us in these words: *Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins*; namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

*How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?* It is not the eating and drinking, indeed, that does them, but the words which stand here, namely: *Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins*. Which words are, beside the bodily eating and drinking, as the chief thing in the Sacrament; and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

*Who, then, receives such Sacrament worthily?* Fasting and bodily preparation is, indeed, a fine outward training; but he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: *Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins*. But he that does not believe these words, or doubts, is unworthy and unfit; for the words *For you* require altogether believing hearts.

#### Scripture proof passages with comments:

“For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.” (Psalm 33:4 KJV)

*Comment: The Lord means exactly what He says! The Lord does NOT lie.*

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” (Matthew 26:26-28 KJV)

“And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.” (Mark 14:22-24 KJV)

“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” (Luke 22:19-20 KJV)

*Comment: The Lord does NOT lie. Therefore, when the Lord Jesus Christ took bread and said “this is my body” He meant it; and, when He took the cup of wine and said “this is my blood” He meant it! God’s Word is truth! No one has the right to change what Christ says in His testament to us. How dare any sinful human being say Jesus means “represents” rather than “is” as if Jesus did not know how to state exactly what He*

*means. Note also the great benefit to those receiving the body and blood of Christ with the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper, for such is received "for the remission of sins" being that Jesus says to His followers, His Christians, that His blood is "shed for you". What a wonderful gift and blessing!*

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Corinthians 10:16-17 KJV)

*Comment: Note the term "communion" from the Greek κοινωνία {koy-nohn-ee'-ah}, meaning "communion, joint participation" [Thayer's abridged Greek/English lexicon] which thereby indicates there is a true co-union of bread and body, and a true co-union of wine and blood, making it plainly evident that Christ's true body and blood are in, with, and under the bread and wine for Christians to eat and to drink.*

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also *he* took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." (1 Corinthians 11:23-29 KJV)

*Comment: A number of interesting points are made in the foregoing Scripture quote. 1) Jesus wants His Christians to celebrate His Holy Supper to remember Him. 2) The Lord's Supper is to be celebrated frequently until He returns in glory at the end of days. 3) Since unworthy communicants are guilty of the body and blood of Christ, the body and blood of Christ must therefore be present in the Sacrament. 4) Proper preparation by self examination is necessary if one would rightly partake of the Lord's Supper. 5) The Lord's Supper is serious business since those who eat and drink unworthily, eat and drink damnation to themselves, while those who eat and drink worthily receive the forgiveness of sins and salvation because they rightly partake of that which Christ said He has given "for you" (that being His body and blood which He gave into death for our sins).*

Let us value the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper as commanded and instituted by Jesus Christ, for we sin daily and therefore need the forgiveness of sins again and again. Let us cling to the Lord Jesus Christ in sincere faith as our personal Savior. And, let us be truly grateful to God for the ways He has provided to graciously convey to us the forgiveness of sins and salvation— His Word and Sacraments.

m.e.l.