

Baptism has a daily use in a Christian's life

Baptism serves to assure us daily that God has given us the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. When our sins trouble us, when the devil accuses us, when doubts assail us, Baptism comforts us. It assures us that God has given to us as our own the forgiveness Jesus has won for all. It assures us that Christ has clothed us in His righteousness. It assures us that heaven is ours. As Luther wrote in the Large Catechism:

Thus, we must regard baptism and put it to use in such a way that we may draw strength and comfort from it when our sins or conscience oppress us and say: "But I am baptized! And if I have been baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body." No greater jewel, therefore, can adorn our body and soul than baptism, for through it we become completely holy and blessed, which no other kind of life and no work on earth can acquire. (LC Fourth Part: 44, 46)

Baptism also daily serves as an incentive and source of power for sanctified living. Paul tells us in Romans 6 that through Baptism we died to sin and were made alive in Christ. As Luther put it in his Small Catechism:

Fourth: What does baptizing with water mean?

Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Luther expands on this in his Large Catechism:

Thus a Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, begun once and continuing ever after. For we must keep at it without ceasing, always purging whatever pertains to the old Adam, so that whatever belongs to the new creature may come forth.

Here you see that baptism, both by its power and by its signification, comprehends also the third sacrament, formerly called penance, which is really nothing else than baptism. What is repentance but an earnest attack on the old creature and an entering into a new life? If you live in repentance, therefore, you are walking in baptism, which not only announces this new life but also produces, begins, and exercises it. In baptism we are given the grace, Spirit, and strength to suppress the old creature so that the new may come forth and grow strong. (LC Fourth Part:65,74-76)

Those who view Baptism simply as an act of the past by which we turned our lives over to Christ miss out on the many blessings Baptism gives to us every day. Those who relegate Baptism to a single act in the past rob themselves of the comfort of the gospel and a source of strength for sanctified living. Baptism is of daily benefit. As Luther observed:

Therefore let all Christians regard their baptism as the daily garment that they are to wear all the time. Every day they should be found in faith and with its fruits, suppressing the old creature and growing up in the new... As we have once obtained forgiveness of sins in baptism, so forgiveness remains day by day as long as we live, that is, as long as we carry the old creature around our necks. (LC Fourth Part:84-86)