

245. The Power of Baptism.

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. 1 Cor. 6, 11.

Art and science have made earthly life more enjoyable and comfortable; but no human art and invention can wash away sin. Money and wealth buy almost anything on earth; but all the money of the world is insufficient to settle our account with God. No human contrivance can quiet the voice of conscience and give a peaceful heart; no earthly remedy can heal the wounds of the soul and overcome death and every woe. In all these things human efforts have failed.

But there is a wonderful power which does achieve all these things. Baptism is such a gracious water of life. It heals the wounds of mankind, cleanses its stains, and removes its woe.

"How can water do such great things?" Common water can never take away the filth of the soul. "It is not the water indeed that does them, but *the word of God which is in and with the water.*" With the word of God it is "a gracious water of life and "washing of regeneration in the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul says, Titus, chapter third: '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.'" In short, how is it that by the water of Baptism forgiveness and eternal life are obtained? Answer: "The word of God which is in and with the water conveys these great things into Baptism, . . . and faith appropriates them unto itself." For example, the water of the Jordan had no power in itself to cleanse from leprosy, but when Naaman, the leper, washed himself in the Jordan seven times, he was cleansed of his leprosy. Why? Because the Word of God imparted that power to the water. Again, without any weapons of war, and with only three hundred men, Gideon conquered the mighty host of the Midianites. Why? Because of the command of God. *All depends on the word, the command and promise, of God.* So the power of this Sacrament is not the water, but the word of God connected therewith. In this word the omnipotent and faithful Triune God is present.

Prayer.

Almighty God, faithful Father, we praise Thee that of Thy mercy Thou hast made Baptism a washing of regeneration and dost communicate to us therein treasures beyond human wisdom to devise or human power to give. Teach us to understand that it is not the water indeed that does the great things, but Thy word, which is in and with the water, and in which Thou Thyself art present with Thy divine grace and power, which is able to call forth life out of death, to kindle faith, by which we put on Christ. Let us ever thank Thee for Thy adorable grace. Amen.

The eye of sense alone is dim
And nothing sees but water;
Faith sees Christ Jesus and in Him
The Lamb ordained for slaughter;
It sees the cleansing fountain, red
With the dear blood of Jesus
Which from the sins inherited
From fallen Adam frees us
And from our own misdoings.

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