

292. The Power of the Lord's Supper.

He (Jesus) gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat. Drink ye all of it. *Matt. 26,26. 27.*

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things? It is not the eating and drinking, indeed, that does them, but the words here written, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins"; which words, beside the bodily eating and drinking, are as the chief thing in the Sacrament; and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins. Here Luther, speaking of the power that does the great things in the Lord's Supper, says: It is not the eating and drinking that does it. We cannot eat and drink away the guilt of sin.

Indeed, there is Christ's command: "Take, eat, drink," but the virtue of the Sacrament is not in the act of eating and drinking; the "great things" in the Sacrament are not done by it. What, then, does these great things? The word of God is the chief thing in the Sacrament. It is by virtue of the word of God that our faith is strengthened when we receive the Holy Supper, the words of institution spoken by Christ when He ordained this Sacrament, which are repeated by us when we consecrate the bread and wine. "This do," said Christ; that was the command the Church received to celebrate His holy Supper. "This is My body and blood, given and shed for you for the remission of sins," said Christ; that was His promise that, wherever His command will be followed, He will give His body and blood and with it all His merits and benefits. He is faithful and therefore keeps His promise. The words Christ spoke are the words of the testament which He made in the night in which He was betrayed, and He confirmed them by His death and so made them unchangeable. These words are spirit and life, the power of God unto salvation. By virtue of these words He is in the midst of us, who are gathered together in His name, giving us His body to eat, His blood to drink, and all His merits to hold and possess. He Himself, with all the riches of His grace, is in this Sacrament for each and every communicant.

Prayer.

O Lord Jesus Christ, it is not the mere eating and drinking that does such great things, but Thy gracious promise: "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins." Grant that we may not by self-righteousness, unbelief, or other wickedness forfeit these great things of Thy Sacrament, but with firm faith in Thy merits obtain the remission of our sins. Since without Thee we can do nothing, we beseech Thee to enable us also by Thy omnipotent grace to serve Thee in newness of life. Amen.

No care, nor effort either,
Is heeded day and night,
How ye may draw Him hither
In your own strength and might.

He comes, He comes, with gladness,
Moved by His love alone,
To calm your fear and sadness,
Which unto Him are known.

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