

The Benefit of the Sacrament of the Altar

Wednesday, March 7 at 11 AM & 7 PM

Fourth Wednesday of Lent – 2018

During Lent: Wednesday Services at 11 & 7; Meals at 12 & 6

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Last week we focused on the **NATURE** of the Sacrament of the Altar, today we focus on the **BENEFIT** – *beginning on page 331 of the 2017 edition of Luther's Small Catechism.*

This is Luther's **second** Sacrament of the Altar question and answer: What is the benefit of this eating and drinking? These words, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," show us 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.

The Central Thought

"In the Sacrament, we receive a great treasure: the forgiveness of sins. Our Lord's words assure us that this treasure 'is passed along and made our very own' when we receive His body and blood" (LC v 29)."

Today's section includes ONLY 2 questions: **362 and 363**

A Closer Reading of the Small Catechism

362. **What is the benefit promised in the Sacrament?**

- a. "The forgiveness of sins..." Jesus said, "...eat... Drink... for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt. 26:26 ESV). The Bible also says that "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7 ESV).

- b. “...life with God now and salvation everlasting.”
 In other words, *since we are forgiven*, we have:
- i. Spiritual life: ^{ESV} **1 Peter 1:23** “...you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God...”
 - ii. Eternal salvation: ^{NAS} **John 6:47** “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.”
- c. In other words, *since we are forgiven*, we also have Christ living in us to give us:
- i. The victory over sin and Satan:
^{NAS} **Galatians 2:20** “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...”
 - ii. Strength to live for Him: ^{NAS} **1 Peter 2:24** “and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

Connections and Applications

363. **Why should Christians be encouraged to receive the Sacrament frequently?**
- a. “Jesus invites... us to come.”
 - i. Knowing we are poor miserable sinners,
 - ii. knowing of our need for forgiveness, and
 - iii. knowing of Jesus’ invitation to “Take, eat... [and] Drink of it, all of you... for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt. 28:26-28 ESV),
 - iv. we should gladly *run, receive, and rejoice!*

- b. “We need the comfort and strength of Christ’s forgiveness for living our new life while we are assaulted by the devil and struggle with our sinful nature.” As one pin will quickly exhaust a balloon, *so one unforgiven sin can quickly exhaust our desire and strength to live for Christ.* Therefore, *through the Sacrament of the Altar*, God wants to **✦**assure us of His forgiveness, **✦**strengthen us to live for Christ, and **✦**defend us against the assaults of our sinful nature!
- c. “We are united with Christ and our fellow believers in this Sacrament.” Using one loaf of bread would point to our unity: ^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 10:17** “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”
- i. Vertical: We are in communion **with God** on the basis of *His Word* **and** *our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*.
 - ii. Horizontal: We are in communion **with our fellow communicants** as we, *who are all poor miserable sinners*, **✦**confess Christ as Savior, and **✦**receive His very body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins.
- d. “As Christ has given Himself to us so completely with His body and blood, so, too, the Sacrament strengthens us to give ourselves in sacrificial love and service to the neighbor.” Jesus commanded His disciples, “...**love one another as I have loved you**” (John 15:12 ESV). *So He calls us to take action to help others according to their needs!*

Luther's Christian Questions with Their Answers:

19. What should admonish and encourage a Christian to receive the Sacrament frequently?
- First, both the **command** and the **promise** of Christ the Lord. // Come to receive God's forgiveness!
 - Second, his own **pressing need**, because of which the command, encouragement, and promise are given. // We all need God's forgiveness!
20. But what should you do if you are not aware of this need and have no hunger and thirst for the Sacrament? To such a person no better advice can be given than this:
- First, he should touch his body to see if he still has **flesh and blood**. // Some are not spiritually hungry and thirsty *because they are spiritually dead*.
 - Second, he should look around to see whether he is still in the world, and remember that there will be **no lack of sin and trouble**. // Since we live in a fallen world, *we will certainly fall into sin and encounter trouble*; such things should make us long to receive the sacrament often!
 - Third, he will certainly have the devil also around him, who with his lying and murdering day and night will let him have **no peace, within or without**. // We have no peace *when we are not sure of God's forgiveness*; so **aware of our sins and sorry for our sins, God invites us to be sure through Jesus' body given and His blood shed for our forgiveness!**

Conclusion: Let us pray: "Lord Jesus Christ..." (Luther's Small Catechism Explanation, 334).

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