



The Power of Baptism— The Word of God

NOT THE PAPER ...

Jeremy stood there looking at two pieces of paper. His two best friends had each paid what they owed him with a piece of paper. Jeremy sighed as he looked at the paper that said "IOU." He crumpled it up and threw it away. He looked at the other piece of paper, a \$10 bill, and put it in his pocket.

Both were pieces of paper. What made the difference? If you look closely at a dollar bill you will see the words, "This note is legal tender for all debts, public and private." Those words and the promise of the U.S. government behind it provide the power that makes the difference.

NOT THE WATER ...

In Baptism, it is not the water that has the power; it is the Word

of God connected with the water; it is the certainty of God's promise to forgive us and make us His own children through Christ Jesus. This Word provides the power! This makes the difference!

Look at some other kinds of examples in the Bible. (See the chart below.) In each incident God used a physical means or act. But what was the real power in each instance?

... THE WORD OF GOD

Let's take a closer look at this powerful Word. Let's look at the written Word and the Word made flesh.

1. God inspired some of His servants to write the Holy Bible, His written Word. The Holy Spirit works through this Word, and the Word in the sacraments, to bring us to faith, to keep us in faith, and to empower us to live in faith. What does each of the Bible verses on the next page say about this Word?

Bible Story	Physical Action	The Real Power
1. Judges 7:7, 16-22	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
2. Luke 17:11-14	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
3. John 9:1-7	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

a. John 20:31

b. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

c. Ephesians 6:17

d. Romans 15:4

2. Read John 1:1-14. As you read these words, remember that Jesus Himself is the Word of God made flesh. God's Power and Promise and Plan are fulfilled in Jesus.

In Baptism, by faith, we receive Jesus in our hearts and lives: "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26-29).

... AND FAITH

If the Word of God gives the power to the water in Baptism, why does Luther add "along with the faith which trusts this word of God"? Think back again to the story of Jeremy. Why did he throw away the IOU? He didn't trust that friend's word; he rejected it.

Receive it or reject it? People do not receive the blessings of Baptism if they refuse to believe. The power of God is certainly present in Baptism, but people may reject it. The power of Baptism comes from the Word of God, and we take hold of this power by faith.

Here are several important things we know about faith:

- Faith is a gift of God, not something we create inside ourselves.
• Faith may come before Baptism (when someone hears the Word of God).
• Faith may come as a result of Baptism (as with infants).
• Faith is necessary for our salvation, but it is not necessary to give power to Baptism—God has already done that.
• Faith receives and accepts the blessings that come in Baptism: in other words, God's gift of faith enables us to receive God's gift of Baptism!

The Power of Baptism

How can water do such great things?

Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus chapter three:

"He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying."

[Titus 3:5-8]

BACK TO THE DOLLAR BILL

We have compared a \$10 bill and Baptism several times during this lesson. There are similarities in the power of the two. But there are also some big differences. Complete these sentences to show these contrasts.

1. The dollar depends for its value on human government; Baptism's

2. The dollar's value is insignificant compared to Baptism's

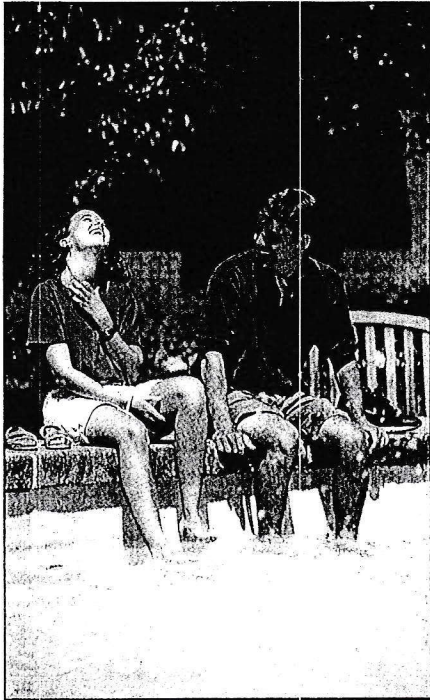
3. A dollar's value changes; Baptism's

4. _____

TO REVIEW AND REMEMBER

The Power of Baptism.

Ephesians 5:25b-26: Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word.



WALKING IN NEWNESS OF LIFE

What do these verses tell about our walk through life with Jesus?

a. Romans 5:1

b. Romans 5:2

c. Romans 5:3

d. Romans 6:13

e. Romans 7:22

LIFE, LED BY THE SPIRIT

Complete the following not as fill-in-the-blank answers but as you, through Christ, willfully determine to live.

1. While my old self would like to laugh at someone's mistake, the new person in me

2. While my old self might think drinking alcohol will make me popular with others, the new person in me

3. While my old self wants to get angry when my parents tell me what to do, the new person in me

TO REVIEW AND REMEMBER

Galatians 3:27: All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Colossians 3:12-14a: As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive. ... And over all these virtues put on love.