

Is a sacrament effective only when it is received with faith? Or is it effective even when it is received with *unfaith*?

Certainly, when Paul talks about taking the Lord's Supper to oneself unworthily, thereby eating and drinking judgment upon oneself (1 Cor 11:27-30), he implies a negative as well as a positive effectiveness of the sacrament.

n. d.; rev. 23 August 2003; 19 July 2006

Equally certain is that Luther, for one, entirely agrees with Paul's position. A wicked priest, he says, may set forth the promise of the sacrament of the bread "and administer it to those who partake, and even partake himself, as did Judas the traitor at the supper of the Lord. It still remains the same sacrament and testament, which works its own work in the believer but [works] an 'alien work' in the unbeliever" (LW 36: 56). A footnote to this passage adds, significantly: "Its own work is salvation. The 'alien work' is condemnation. The expression [*sc.* "alien work"] derives from Isa. 28:21."

6 February 2008