

Sacrament Policy

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I - Definition

- 1) Sacraments,¹ also known as ordinances², are worship ceremonies created and commanded by the Lord Jesus for His church.³ They proclaim through physical signs (such as water, bread and wine) the divine promise of forgiveness through the good news of Jesus Christ.
- 2) There are only two sacraments in the New Testament church, baptism and the Lord's Supper.
 - a) Baptism is the sacrament of admission into the visible church.⁴
 - b) The Lord's Supper is the sacrament of spiritual nourishment and continuance in the visible church.⁵
- 3) Such Old Testament ceremonies as circumcision and Passover point to, and have their fulfillment, in baptism and the Lord's Supper.⁶

II - Description

- 1) The sacraments, when coupled with the Word (i.e. the verbal proclamation of the Gospel), represent . . .
 - a) The Gospel to our senses, through hearing, tasting and washing.⁷
 - b) Christ's sacrificial death and the salvation and hope that it brings.⁸
 - c) God's authority and His guarantee of favor because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.
 - d) The benefits of being in the new covenant of grace⁹, united with Christ, heirs of His Kingdom, and belonging to His church.

¹ The word "sacrament" comes from the Vulgate (the Latin translation of the Bible) where the Greek word "*mystērion*" (μυστήριον), or "mystery", was translated as "*sacramentum*." For example, Ephesians 5:32 speaks about the "mystery" of the relationship between Christ and His Church using such sacrament language of "washing of water" (Eph 5:26) and nourishing the flesh (Eph 5:29). Also see Mark 4:11; 1Cor 2:1-2; 4:1-2; Col 1:24-28; 2:2-3; Eph 1:7-10; 3:2-10.

² From the 2nd century on the western church, following the lead of such writers as Tertullian and Cyprian, have used the term "sacrament" to refer to the worship ceremonies commanded by Christ. The Eastern Church, following the Greek language, has preferred the term "mysteries." While the majority of the early Protestant Reformers, such as Martin Luther, Huldrych Zwingli, John Calvin and Thomas Cranmer, and such noted Congregationalists as John Owen and Jonathan Edwards, continued to use the term "sacraments" some Protestants of the Reformed "low church" tradition, such as Baptists, objected. They thought the term "sacrament" was too closely tied with Roman Catholicism and preferred the term "ordinances."

³ Matt 28:19; 1Cor 11:24-25.

⁴ Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38-39; 8:35-38; 16:14-15, 31-33; 18:8; Rom 6:3-7; Gal 3:26-29.

⁵ Matt 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:17; John 6:26-58; Acts 2:42,46; 20:7,11; 1Cor 10:1-33; 11:17-34; Eph 5:29-30.

⁶ Gen 17:1-22; Ex 12:1-13; Num 9:1-14; Matt 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:15-20; John 13:1-4; 1Cor 5:6-8; 10:1-4; Col 2:9-17; Heb 8:1-6.

⁷ Ps 34:8; 51:7; 119:103; Ezek 36:25-27; John 3:5; 6:53-58; Acts 22:16; 1Cor 6:11; Eph 5:26,29; Titus 3:5-6; Heb 6:4-5; 10:22; 1Pet 2:3; 3:21.

⁸ Acts 2:38.

⁹ Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1Cor 11:25; 2Cor 3:6; Gal 3:15-29; Heb 9:11-10:18; 13:20.

- 2) By partaking in the sacraments, in faith alone, Christians . . .
 - a) Are reminded of what Christ has done for them and are strengthened in their faith.
 - b) Publicly proclaim, and submit, to Christ as their Lord, Savior and God.
 - c) Are reminded that just as Christ came to serve, we are called to serve God and our neighbor.¹⁰
- 3) The sacraments are not . . .
 - a) Magical. Any benefit by partaking in them is received by grace alone in Jesus Christ.¹¹
 - b) Required for salvation, though it is a sin to neglect them.
- 4) The act of partaking in the sacraments by themselves offers no certainty of salvation, however, the sacraments point to the certainty of the promises we have in Christ through faith alone.

III - Administration

- 1) The sacraments shall only be administered by those appointed by the church.
- 2) The usual time of administering the sacraments is during public worship on the Lord's Day.
- 3) The sacraments can be administered outside of public worship with the permission of the Pastor and the Diaconate.
- 4) Since the sacraments are only for Christians, the Diaconate should guard their administration with much charity.

¹⁰ Rom 6:3-4; 1Cor 10:21. (*Eph 5; Matt 6:12; 1Cor 11;13; 1John 1:7ff.; 1Pet 3:21,4:1ff*)

¹¹ 1Pet 3:21. Will not baptize, even Jesus!