

The Holy Spirit and the Sacraments

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all.” John 6:63

What are sacraments? Why did God give sacraments?

Remember: The primary ministry of the Holy Spirit is to bring the believer unto Christ. (Jn 14:20) The Holy Spirit’s role in the sacraments is, alongside the Word, to bring about union and communion with Christ, and to strengthen believers’ faith in Jesus Christ.

How do the sacraments work?

WSC 91 The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them.

WLC 163 The parts of a sacrament are two; the one an **outward and sensible sign**, used according to Christ's own appointment; the other an **inward and spiritual grace** thereby signified.

WCF 27.2 There is, in every sacrament, a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified: whence it comes to pass, that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other.

We must avoid the errors of both hyper-sacramentalism and bare memorialism.

Where does the efficacy of the sacraments lie? What is the connection between the outward sign and the inward reality?

1. Not empty memorials
2. Not tied to the outward elements or the elder who administers
3. Not automatic- the outward sign *must* match the inward. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make Christ’s ordinances effectual **by faith**.

“God has given the seal of grace upon condition that we make use of it in faith, else the sacrament is blank and null.” Samuel Rutherford

Distinguishing the two New Testament sacraments: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper

Baptism	Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:17-32)
Water Prefigured by Circumcision (Col 2:11-12) Initiatory sign (Gal 3:27, 1 Cor 12:13) Administered once (Eph 4:5) Administered immediately (Acts 2:41) Come as households (Acts 16:23) Passive recipient No inward qualifications Warnings absent	Bread and wine Prefigured by Passover Sign of ratification, nourishment Frequent, ongoing administration Delayed administration Come as individuals Active recipient Qualifications (knowledge, examination) Warnings for unworthy partaking

*Rightly distinguishing the sacraments helps us understand the biblical, classical reformed view.

Baptism and the Holy Spirit- Incorporation into the Church and Spiritual Washing

“Christian baptism is a sign from God that signifies inward cleansing and remission of sins, Spirit wrought regeneration and new life, and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit as God’s seal testifying and guaranteeing that one will be kept safe in Christ forever.” JI Packer

BAPTISM:

- A sign of washing: regeneration (Titus 3:5), forgiveness and cleansing (Luke 3:3, Acts 2:38, Ez 36:25-27, Ps 51:1-2,7)
- Consecrates us to the priestly service of prayer and praise (Ex 24:8, Heb 10:22)
- Sign of the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)
- Administered once at our incorporation into the church and must be improved upon throughout our whole life. (WLC 167)
- Sign of union and communion with Christ (Gal 3:27, Rom 6:3-4, Col 2:11-12)
- Baptism is Trinitarian, taking on of the ‘family name’ (Matt 28:19)

How does the Holy Spirit’s work in baptism help us understand why we baptize infants?

The Lord’s Supper and the Holy Spirit- Ongoing Spiritual Nourishment

“Christ gave us the Supper to awaken, arouse, stimulate, and exercise the feeling of faith and love, and indeed, to correct the defect of both.” Calvin

THE LORD’S SUPPER:

- Bread and wine show forth the Lord’s death (1 Cor 11:26)
- The visible gospel, shown forth to our senses
- Worthy communicants really feed upon his body and blood by the Spirit for spiritual nourishment and growth in grace (John 6:54-55)
- Union and communion with Christ and with the body exhibited and confirmed (1 Cor 10:16-17)
- A testament of covenant renewal, engagement to God, and fellowship with one another as members of one mystical body (1 Cor 11: 17, Eph 4:4)

Difficulties: Partaking worthily? Examining yourself? Discerning the body? Frequency?

Application

- Improving your baptism throughout your life (WLC 167)
- Preparation for the Lord’s Supper (WLC 171)

If you sow to the Spirit you will reap life from the Spirit, but if you merely sow to the flesh you will reap corruption. (Gal 6:8)