

Theme: A sacrament is a special symbol given by God to His people that, when received in faith, serves as a sign and seal of His promises to us, functions as a means of grace to strengthen us, and through which we testify of our faith in Him and His promises.

I. Intro – Power of Symbols

- A. Desecrating American Flag - why react?
- B. Dip Crucifix in urine - art - why react?
- C. Symbols can have real power for us
- D. Symbols are not the real thing though
- E. Starting series on water baptism
- F. Sacrament or ordinance - any real power?
- G. Begin with question 'What is a sacrament?'

II. Sacraments - A Definition

- A. Different traditions - sacrament vs. ordinance
- B. Ordinance too broad, focused on law rather than promise
- C. We will use sacrament, define what we mean & don't
- D. Definition

III. Exploring Sacraments

- A. A special type of symbol
 - 1. Symbols point to something else
 - 2. Sacraments - Symbols that can actually convey thing signified
 - 3. 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 - participation

- 4. Rom 6:3-4 - into Christ, death, through baptism
- B. Sacraments are instituted by God Himself
 - 1. He received the sign (v11)
 - 2. Received from God (Gen 17:10-11) - not Abram's idea!
 - 3. They are ordained by God - ordinances
 - 4. This is why we do not have 7 sacraments
- C. Sacraments are signs & seals of God's promises
 - 1. Rom 4:11 - sign & seal
 - 2. Sign - external, visible pointer to internal, invisible
 - 3. Seal - confirmation, authentication of promise
 - 4. Always related to God's Word
 - a. Word contains promises, which are invisible
 - b. Word explains Sacraments, stirs faith
 - c. Berkhof quote
- D. Sacraments must be received in faith to benefit
 - 1. Must have faith (Rom 4:11-13; Heb 4:2; 11:6)
 - 2. No ex opere operato - must have faith
 - 3. External visible sign connects to reality only by faith
- E. Sacraments are a means of grace to strengthen believers
 - 1. Concrete activities where God promises to give grace if done in faith
 - 2. Sacraments are participation (1 Cor 10:16-17)

F. Sacraments allow believers to testify of their faith

1. Show we believe in God's promises
2. Tertullian's original use - soldiers vow of obedience
3. Public profession - 1 Tim 6:12; Rom 10:9
4. Ancient response to Creed - Credo - I believe
5. This is not primary; response to God's promise

IV. Applying the Word

A. Do we see the importance of the sacraments?

1. These are given by God Himself - not man!
2. God gives promises to us in sacraments!
3. These are not optional add ons - essential
4. These are how we grow - not other things
5. Much of evangelicalism downplays these for other things
6. No promise from God regarding other things

B. Do we see God promises to meet us in sacraments?

1. They are a participation with God
2. Not just external symbols - tied to spiritual realities!
3. This is why they are not just tiresome rituals

C. Do we see the importance of faith?

1. Nothing is ex opere operato in Christianity
2. There must always be faith!

3. Do we approach baptism, Supper in faith?

4. World sees meaningless ritual - faith sees God at work!
5. Even our testimony in them is of faith - not works
6. Come in faith - He will meet you there!

D. Come to the Lord's Table - in faith

1. He has promised to meet us in simple meal
2. If we come in faith - we participate with Him
3. Come and feast - find strength, joy,

What Is A Sacrament?

Romans 4:11; 1 Cor 10:16-17; Rom 6:3-4
Galatians 3:26-29
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Communion
Numbers 6:24-26

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. Romans 4:11

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. Romans 6:3-4

This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. Genesis 17:10-11

“The truth addressed to the ear in the Word, is symbolically represented to the eye in the sacraments.” Berkhof, 616

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. 12 And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. 13 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. Romans 4:11-13

For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. Hebrews 4:2

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 1 Timothy 6:12

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9