

Westminster Confession of Faith

CHAPTER 27 — Of the Sacraments

1. Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, directly instituted by God, to represent Christ and his benefits and to confirm our connection to him. They also put a visible difference between the rest of the world and those who belong to the Church, and solemnly commit them to the service of God in Christ, according to his Word.
2. In every sacrament there is a spiritual relationship, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified. Because of this, the names and effects of the one are often attributed to the other.
3. The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments, rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them. Nor does the effectiveness of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intentions of him who administers the sacrament. Rather, it depends on the work of the Spirit and the word of institution, which contains a promise of benefit to those who receive it in a worthy fashion, together with a precept authorizing the use of it.
4. There are only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel, namely, baptism and the Lord's supper. Neither of these may be dispensed by anyone except a lawfully ordained minister of the Word.
5. The sacraments of the Old Testament were the same in essence as those of the New Testament in regard to the spiritual things signified and exhibited by them.

CHAPTER 28 — Of Baptism

1. Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the person baptized into the visible Church, but also to be a sign and seal of the covenant of grace to that person, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of the remission of sins, and of his being given up to God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life. This sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in his Church until the end of the world.
2. The outward element to be used in this sacrament is water, with which the person is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, by a minister of the Gospel, lawfully called to this.
3. Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water on the person.
4. Not only those who actually profess faith in and obedience to Christ, but also the infants of one believing parent, or both, are to be baptized.
5. Although it is a great sin to neglect this ordinance or to treat it with contempt, yet grace and salvation are not inseparably connected to it; a person can be regenerated, or saved, without it, and not all people who are baptized are necessarily regenerated.
6. The effectiveness of baptism is not tied to that moment of time when it is administered. Nevertheless, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Spirit to those whom that grace belongs to, whether of age or infants, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time.
7. The sacrament of baptism is to be administered to any person only once.