

## Means of Grace #5 - The Sacraments

### Westminster Confession of Faith & RP Testimony, Chapter 27

**WCF 27.1.** *Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ, and his benefits; and to confirm our interest in him: as also, to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church, and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to his Word.*

**Testimony 27.1.** *The sacraments are signs of our covenant union with Christ and His Church, and our common profession that we are owned by Him. They are to be observed under the direction of the elders in a service of worship in which members of the congregation are present.*

- Sacraments are given in the context of a covenant - the sign of the old covenant was circumcision; the sign of the new covenant is baptism
- Sacraments are signs and seals
- Sacraments are a “visible difference” between those that belong to the church and those that belong to the world.

**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.*

- There is a relation between the outward sign of the sacraments and the thing signified.
- The sacrament does not cause what it signifies, but it is spiritually tied to the reality because God has promised such.

**WCF 27.3.** *The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them; neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it: but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers.*

**Testimony 27.2.** *The administration of the sacraments is to be accompanied by the reading and preaching of the Word.*

- The grace that is exhibited by the sacraments is not conferred by any power in them.
- The efficacy of a sacrament does not depend upon the person who administers it, but rather upon the Holy Spirit.
- The words of institution when administering the sacraments are important, for in them the promises of God are conveyed.

**WCF 27.4.** *There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, baptism, and the Supper of the Lord: neither of which may be dispensed by any, but by a minister of the Word lawfully ordained.*

**Testimony 27.3.** *We reject the view that sacraments are mere symbols and not means of grace.*

**27.4.** *We reject the view that the sacraments are not necessary in the Church.*

- Roman Catholic Church has seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist (Lord’s Supper), penance, holy orders, matrimony, and Extreme Unction (last rites)

**WCF 27.5.** *The sacraments of the old testament, in regard of the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited, were, for substance, the same with those of the new.*

- There are both elements of continuity and discontinuity in the sacraments from old to new testaments, however the discontinuity is not radical.
- The sacraments are the same in substance, or in essence.