



The **Sacraments**

Divine Invitations



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Changed Hearts. Changed Lives. Changed Community.

The Sacraments:

Divine Invitations

Epigraph

For God's truth is of itself firm and sure enough, and it cannot receive better confirmation from any other source than from itself. But as our faith is slight and feeble unless it be propped on all sides and sustained by every means, it trembles, wavers, totters, and at last gives way. Here our merciful Lord, according to his infinite kindness, so tempers himself to our capacity that, since we are creatures who always creep on the ground, cleave to the flesh, and do not think about or even conceive of anything spiritual, he condescends to lead us himself even by these earthly elements, and to set before us in the flesh a mirror of spiritual blessings. For if we were incorporeal (as Chrysostom says), he would give us these very things naked and incorporeal. Now, because we have souls engrafted into bodies, he imparts spiritual things under visible ones.

John Calvin

Institutes of Christian Religion, 4.14.3

Introduction

Many Christians have strong opinions concerning various aspects of the sacraments, yet too few have had their opinions formed by a sermon or writings on baptism and/or the Lord's Supper.¹ This proves problematic as many divisions have arisen concerning the sacraments. In addition, a poor foundational understanding of baptism and the Lord's Supper diminishes their intended value in the life of the church and as witness to the world. Our hope with this series based on Westminster Larger Catechism (WCF) Chapters XXVII-XXIX and Larger Catechism (WLC) Questions 161-177 is that we will be better equipped to benefit from Jesus's Gospel made visible in both sacraments and bear witness of this truth for the life of the world.²

The sacraments serve as storytellers or acted parables that divinely invite us to spiritually and bodily participate in the past, present, and future covenant work of Christ.³ Christ's covenant work fulfills God's promises to redeem His people and form them further into His image. As Hyde writes, "(God) confirms this with his official seals – his sacraments."⁴ Baptism displays the need to enter God's covenant community through death to sin in Christ and emerges in resurrection newness of life by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.⁵ Concerning baptism as the initiation rite, Baillie writes, "In every part of the New

¹ WCF XXVII.4; WLC Q. 164 recognize only baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments.

² This series will be less polemical overall and will not address arguments with various views for the most part. The goal is to help establish or sure up a firmer foundation for understanding baptism and the Lord's Supper in Christ for the greater benefit of the church. The WCF, Chap. XXVII-XXIX and WLC Q. 161-177 serve as the frame for the series to facilitate a firmer foundational understanding and practice. For brief-ish answers to why we baptize infants, don't practice paedocommunion, and don't re-baptize, please see Appendices A-C on pages 35-44. For further reading, see the Resources on page 45.

³ Donald M. Baillie, *The Theology of the Sacraments and Other Papers* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), 94.

⁴ Daniel R. Hyde, *Jesus Loves the Little Children: Why We Baptize Infants* (Grandville: Reformed Fellowship, Inc., 2006), 12. Also WCF XXVII, 1.-2. and WLC Q. 162-3.

⁵ WCF XXVIII, 1. and WLC Q. 165.

Testament it appears to be assumed that baptism was the universal and essential gate of entry into the Christian community.”⁶ Once initiated into the covenant community, we need the ongoing intercession of Christ and work of the Holy Spirit to nourish us at the Lord’s Table for the journey between the Now and the Not Yet.⁷ Murray describes how the sacraments work together to accomplish these things for us: “Summarily stated, baptism represents the inclusion of the person baptized in the body of Christ and in the fellowship of saints – it is the rite that signifies initiation; the Lord’s supper represents the abiding responsibility of and provision for those who are the members of Christ’s body – it is the rite of edification.”⁸ Thus, baptism ushers us into God’s covenant community while the Lord’s Supper sustains us until Christ returns.

Critical to our understanding of the sacraments and their purposes is the recognition that they originate with God’s relational (or covenant) promises as signs and seals.⁹ Sartelle recognizes that, “(i)t is God who initiated, drew the terms of, and seals His covenant with His people. He graciously binds Himself to the promises of His Word. And He calls His children and His children’s children to keep His covenant and know His blessing from generation to generation.”¹⁰ God uses the sacraments to come down (or condescend) to us in our weakness to grant us tangible elements of His covenant love.¹¹ Baillie captures this in writing, “...God in His kindness has promised helps in the form of sacraments – definite, visible, tangible elements and actions attached to the word of promise, something that we can see and touch, something that we can do, to bring the promise home to us and help us to lay hold of it.”¹² God tangibly invites us into the Redemptive Story through water, bread, and cup to remind us of His use of ordinary means to accomplish His glorious eternal purposes.

⁶ Baillie, 76.

⁷ WCF XXIX, 1. and WLC Q. 168.

⁸ John Muray, *Christian Baptism* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1980), 76.

⁹ WLC Q. 176.

¹⁰ John P. Sartelle, *What Christian Parents Should Know About Baptism* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1985), 22.

¹¹ See Calvin’s quote in the Epigraph, 4.

¹² Baillie, 58.

While the sacraments have no power in themselves apart from faith in what they point to, they do serve as a means (or conduit) of God’s grace.¹³ Baillie helpfully points out “that grace is not a transmissible substance but a living personal relationship...”¹⁴ Fesko also writes that, “...God’s grace is not a thing but a person.”¹⁵ This is where understanding the work of the Holy Spirit proves critical to our relational understanding of the purpose and power of the sacraments.¹⁶ The Spirit serves as the active means by which the seals of the sacraments apply to us as He convicts of sin to reconcile, guides in righteousness and loving obedience, and exalts Jesus in and through us (cf. **John 14:26, 16:7-15**). This makes the preaching of God’s Word critical to preparing for the sacraments. The Spirit uses God’s Word particularly to accomplish His purposes. The mere recitation of the words of institution prior to the sacrament proves ineffective in and of themselves. As Calvin instructs, “For we ought to understand the word (of institution) not as one whispered without meaning and without faith, a mere noise, like a magic incantation, which has the force to consecrate the element. Rather, it should, when preached make us understand what the visible sign means....The sacrament requires preaching to beget faith.”¹⁷ Preaching and the sacraments as God’s means of grace prove complimentary in presenting Christ. Robert Bruce captures this in his observation that, “The Word leads us to Christ by the ear; the Sacraments lead us by the eye...”¹⁸

The sacraments serve as a sign and seal of God’s covenant love. The sign visibly represents the covenant promise of redemption while the seal authenticates its truth as accomplished for those who respond in faith.¹⁹ The sign displays the work of Christ and its

¹³ WCF XXVII, 3. and WLC Q. 161.

¹⁴ Baillie, 66.

¹⁵ J.V. Fesko, *Word, Water, and Spirit: A Reformed Perspective on Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), 274.

¹⁶ Baillie, 65; WCF, Chap. XXVII, 3.; WLC Q. 161.

¹⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. 2* ed. John T. McNeill (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960; Reissued 2006), 4.14.4, 1279.

¹⁸ Robert Bruce, *The Mystery of the Lord’s Supper* as quoted in Robert Letham, *The Lord’s Supper: Eternal Word in Broken Bread* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2001), Epigraph.

¹⁹ Cornelis P. Venema, *Children at the Lord’s Table?: Assessing the Case for Paedocommunion* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009), 32.

benefits as offered to the participants. Chapell writes of the sign, “While the covenant continues, its sign changes to reflect what has done to maintain his promises....Therefore, New Testament believers receive a new sign for the covenant that indicates what Christ has accomplished for them.”²⁰ As a seal, the sacrament reflects the surety of Christ’s completed work to accomplish salvation by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Murray states, “As seal it authenticates, confirms, guarantees the reality and security of this covenant of grace. It is not indeed indispensable to the grace sealed; the grace exists prior to the seal and the seal does not produce the grace sealed.”²¹ In the sacraments, God offers and guarantees eternal life by His grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

The biblical testimony on baptism displays it more within the context of the Redemptive Story as opposed to parsing out a spare set of rules. The Gospels primarily record John’s baptism of repentance for Israel that prepared the way for transitioning from the Old to the New Covenant in Christ.²² Jesus’s baptism signifies the fulness of redemption as sealed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit for both Israelites (or Jews) and Gentiles. In the Great Commission in **Matthew 28:16-20**, Jesus sends them out to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant by taking the Gospel to the nations. Baptism in (or into) the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit becomes the initiation rite into this greater covenant community.²³ This establishes the central relational meaning of baptism as signifying union with Christ.²⁴ As West observes, “Baptism is not first of all an outward sign of an inward change, but a personal sign of covenant possession.”²⁵ God first declares this covenant possession, not us (cf. **Ephesians 1:3-**

²⁰ Bryan Chapell, *Why Do We Baptize Infants?* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2007), 13.

²¹ Murray, 84.

²² See Appendix C: Why We Don’t Re-Baptize, 42-44, for a fuller discussion on the transition from John’s baptism to Jesus’s.

²³ There are 12 passages that refer specifically to Trinitarian baptism in the New Testament following Jesus’s commission in Matthew 28:16-20: Acts 2:41, Acts 8:12, Acts 8:13, Acts 8:38, Acts 9:18, Acts 10:48, Acts 16:15, 33, Acts 18:8, Acts 19:5, and 1 Corinthians 1:14, 16. In addition, Paul addresses baptism in various ways in 1 Corinthians 10:2, 12:13, 15:29, Galatians 3:27, Ephesians 4:5, Colossians 2:8-15. The only other reference is in 1 Peter 3:18-22 which Luther refers to as one, if not the most, incomprehensible passage in all of Scripture.

²⁴ Jim West, *The Covenant Baptism of Infants* (Palo Cedro: Christian Worldview Ministries, 1994), 17; Murray, 3; Fesko, 311.

²⁵ West, 17.

15, 2:1-10). The thing we declare in baptism is a confession of original sin and separation from God without Christ's saving work.²⁶ The focus of baptism as initiating rite is on God's relational invitation to us through Christ's death and resurrection. West observes, "The emphasis of baptism is not at all what we do for Christ, but what He does for us. It is He Who baptizes us, and not we ourselves. It is He Who brings us into the covenant, not we ourselves. The subjects of baptism are passive because they are baptized by another."²⁷ All those baptized are baptized because of God's loving invitation to become His child.

In addition to union with Christ, baptism also signifies washing or cleansing from sin, the reception of the Spirit, and union with other believers.²⁸ The various modes of baptism and practice within the context of worship emphasize each of these motifs. We practice sprinkling, pouring, and immersion within the context of Lord's Day Sabbath worship.²⁹ Sprinkling served to cleanse instruments and set them apart for God's purposes in worship (**Leviticus 14:7, Numbers 8:7, Ezekiel 36:25, Hebrews 9:13-14, 19-22, 10:22, 1 Peter 1:2**). Infants who are sprinkled in baptism are set apart to be trained up to worship and give praise to God who's covenant love preceded their knowing.³⁰ Pouring reflects the outpouring of the Holy Spirit when a believer professes faith (**Joel 2:28, Acts 1:5, 2:17-18, 33**). Immersion gives us a picture of being united with Jesus in His death by being plunged into the waters of judgment and His resurrection to emerge in newness of life (cf. **Romans 6**).³¹ Though each highlights a different aspect of the Redemptive Story, they are ultimately all pointing to the same thing: the need for redemption in Christ. Baillie writes, "(The motifs) are all aspects of the newness, the renewal,

²⁶ Hyde, 52. For infants, it's the parents and covenant community that declare this reality and need as they commit to keep this and, even more importantly, God's love in Christ before them. For adults, it's the same confession of reality and need confirmed by the covenant community.

²⁷ West, 20.

²⁸ Guy M. Richard, *Baptism: Answers to Common Questions* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2019), 23; WCF XXVII, 1.

²⁹ WCF XXVIII, 3. The wording concerning immersion ("dipping of the person in water") was polemical against the Anabaptists who argued for immersion as the only legitimate mode. It is not saying that immersion isn't valid or shouldn't be done but that it's not necessary.

³⁰ See Appendix A: Why We Baptize Infants, 35-38, for a fuller discussion.

³¹ Hyde, 56.

of which baptism speaks sacramentally to us; a new life, a new and clean conscience, a fresh start, a new heart, a new spirit.”³² The church benefits from the use of all 3 modes as baptism helps tell the story of the Gospel.

The Lord’s Supper also displays the story of the Gospel for the ongoing benefit of the church.³³ According to Mathison, “... the Lord’s Supper is a sign of the body and blood of Christ and of our union and communion with him. It is a seal of the promise that we truly partake of the body and blood of Christ whenever we partake of the Supper in faith.”³⁴ Baillie adds, “The sacrament, by giving us not only words, but visible and tangible elements, should draw our thoughts away from ourselves to that great divine reality which is even nearer and more truly real than the things we can see with our eyes and touch with our hands. The Lord’s supper is indeed the sacrament of the Real Presence.”³⁵ Thus, the elements represent the One who is present with His people as opposed to substituting for His absence.³⁶

Christ’s presence can’t be bodily as He physically bodily at the right hand of God (cf. **Colossians 3:1-2**).³⁷ The Holy Spirit, however, indwells each of us and spiritually presents each of us before Christ to have our faith nourished by His past, present, and future work on our behalf.³⁸ Phillips notes, “While the sacramental elements represent Christ’s past and completed work on the cross. Christ is present and active through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, through whom he applies the benefits of those who receive the sacrament in faith.”³⁹ Concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in the Supper, Ferguson more fully explains:

³² Baillie, 79.

³³ WCF XXIX, 1. and WLC Q. 168

³⁴ Keith A. Mathison, *Given for You: Reclaiming Calvin’s Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2002), 273.

³⁵ Baillie, 102.

³⁶ Mathison, 23.

³⁷ WCF XXIX, 2. and 6. as well as WLC Q. 170

³⁸ This is Calvin’s view of the Lord’s Supper as opposed to the Catholic view of transubstantiation, the Lutheran view of consubstantiation, and the Zwinglian view of it being a memorial. Mathison’s book gives the clearest and most thorough explanation of Calvin’s view.

³⁹ Richard D. Phillips, *What is the Lord’s Supper?* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2005), 17.

“What, then, is the role of the Spirit in the Supper? It can well be described in the words of John 16:14. The Spirit will take from what is Christ’s and ‘make it known’ to his disciples. He does this fundamentally through apostolic revelation, so that nothing is revealed in the Supper that is not already made known in the Scriptures. But in the Supper there is (1) visual representation, and (2) simple and special focus on the broken flesh and outpoured blood of Christ. This takes us to the heart of the matter, and indeed to the center of the Spirit’s ministry: to illumine the person and work of Christ.”⁴⁰

Thus, in preparation for, during, and following the Lord’s Supper, the Holy Spirit works to convict us of sin, guide us in righteous obedience, exalt Christ’s work on our behalf. This sanctifying work helps nourish us for our journey in fallen world.

This nourishment isn’t just individual but corporate which is a critical component of the Redemptive Story. Maclean states it this way: “While there is a horizontal aspect to the communion in that believers share the elements with one another, even their sharing points to the fact that the prior aspect to the communion is vertical. The believers have communion together as they share Christ and his benefits.”⁴¹ This is why in **1 Corinthians 11:17-34** Paul calls for us to examine both ourselves and the health of the body before we partake.⁴² As Maclean reflects, “Self-examination is a reminder that the Lord’s table is holy and the guests are still sinful.”⁴³ This sinfulness often leads to conflict with others in the church or even stronger feelings against those outside the church. Letham writes, “Before partaking, we must not bear hatred toward anyone, for this is a sacrament of reconciliation.”⁴⁴ Perfection isn’t the goal of examination prior to partaking, but humility and fruits in keeping with repentance are desired to partake in a worthy manner.⁴⁵ This is why we send out a preparatory letter prior to each celebration of the Lord’s Supper to que and aid you in this process.

⁴⁰ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996), 204.

⁴¹ Macloim Maclean, *The Lord’s Supper* (Scotland: Mentor, 2009), 201

⁴² WCF XXIX, 7.-8. and WLC Q. 172-174.

⁴³ Maclean, 37.

⁴⁴ Letham, 36.

⁴⁵ Letham, 37.

While the need for self-examination and reflection on the health of the church can be a solemn, somber experience, the Lord's Supper itself is intended to be a celebration of reconciliation in Christ.⁴⁶ Venema describes the Lord's Supper as "an occasion for thanksgiving and praise – a eucharistic meal that has a character not only of reverent commemoration but also of joyful thankfulness."⁴⁷ The word eucharist means "to give thanks" or "thanksgiving." Thus, we should participate in the Supper with grateful festivity given what God's love has done, is doing, and will do for us!

While there are many aspects of the sacraments that can be debated, what they point to is worth agreeing on and being reminded of with every celebration of the sacraments. Fesko deserves the closing words as he so beautifully captures this firm foundation for the sacraments in writing:

"In the wake of the eschatological Adam, baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs that indicate that the eschaton has begun. These signs visibly preach that Christ has accomplished His work, that He has been cut off from the land of the living God for the sake of His bride (Isa. 53:8) and that He has poured out the Holy Spirit, inaugurating the new heaven and earth. The sacraments indicate the "already" of the already/not yet continuum. They remind the believer that though Christ has come, at present, believers walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). However, the fact that the sacraments are visible tells the church that one day faith will give way to sight when the dead in Christ are raised, clothed in immortality, given glorified bodies, and behold the face of God in the face of the incarnate God-man (cf. John 14:7-9; 1 John 3:2)."⁴⁸

May God be glorified, Christ exalted, and the Holy Spirit humbly responded to as we engage the sacraments in this series and in the life of the church!

We will continue to seek nourishment from the Old and New Testaments for our weekly devotion and worship. Our Calls to Worship will come from **the Psalms** to help us see

⁴⁶ WLC Q. 169.

⁴⁷Venema, 40.

⁴⁸ Fesko, 301-2.

the continuity of God's covenant love throughout the Redemptive Story. We will respond together from **the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 27.1** to keep the purpose of the sacraments before us each week. Our assurances of pardon will come from **various New Testament texts** that support the Larger Catechism Question(s) for that week. The benedictory blessing will come from **Galatians 6:14-16, 18** to send us out blessed with the grace of the crucified Christ to which the sacraments point. The goal of these various elements is to invite us further into the Redemptive Story to experience God's love more deeply for us in Christ.

This devotional is designed to encourage daily meditation and prayer in personal devotions and/or family worship. You are encouraged to use it the week prior to the associated sermon so that you and your family are prepared for worship. In addition to the Scriptures and associated questions, there are opportunities to pray for the various aspects of the Church. On Wednesdays, we will pray for various aspects associated with our weekly worship. We also have the opportunity on Saturday to prepare for worship on Sunday as we will participate in a sacrament each week. On Sunday, the Lord's Day Sabbath, we will pray for the means of grace to bear specific fruits in our lives. May God bless our time in personal devotion, family worship, and corporate worship as we seek for the Church to grow in knowing God's unchanging love and living in a way that reflects our gratitude and His glory!

Soli Deo Gloria!

Sermon Schedule

Date	Call to Worship	Assurance of Pardon	Benediction	Sacrament
<i>Sunday, 7 /30:</i> 1 Corinthians 3:1-17	Psalm 127	1 Corinthians 12:12-13	Galatians 6:14-16, 18	<i>The Lord's Table</i>
<i>Sunday, 8 /6:</i> Genesis 17:1-17	Psalm 105:1-6	Ephesians 2:11-22	Galatians 6:14-16, 18	
<i>Sunday, 8 /13:</i> Matthew 28:16-20	Psalm 47	Revelation 1:4-6	Galatians 6:14-16, 18	<i>The Lord's Table</i>
<i>Sunday, 8/20:</i> Acts 2:37-41	Psalm 105:7-11	Galatians 3:23-29	Galatians 6:14-16, 18	
<i>Sunday, 8/27:</i> Luke 3:15-22	Psalm 89:1-4	Colossians 1:15-20	Numbers 6:24-26	<i>The Lord's Table</i>
<i>Sunday, 9 /3:</i> Luke 18:15-17	Psalm 8	John 3:34-36	Galatians 6:14-16, 18	
<i>Sunday, 9/10:</i> Colossians 2:6-23	Psalm 40:1-10	Romans 6:1-4	Galatians 6:14-16, 18	
<i>Sunday, 9 /17:</i> Matthew 26:26-30	Psalm 80:1-7	John 6:32-40	Galatians 6:14-16, 18	<i>The Lord's Table</i>
<i>Sunday, 9 /24:</i> 1 Corinthians 11:17-34	Psalm 36:5-9	1 Corinthians 10:14-17	Galatians 6:14-16, 18	

<i>Sunday, 10/1:</i> Matthew 5:21-26	Psalm 133	Philippians 2:12-13	Galatians 6:14-16, 18	<i>The Lord's Table</i>
<i>Sunday, 10/18:</i> Mark 9:14-28	Psalm 31:21-24	Matthew 5:3-4	Galatians 6:14-16, 18	
<i>Sunday, 10/15:</i> Acts 2:42-47	Psalm 5:1-7	Luke 24:27-35	Galatians 6:14-16, 18	
<i>Sunday, 10/22:</i> 1 Corinthians 6:9-20	Psalm 11	Titus 3:3-8	Galatians 6:14-16, 18	<i>The Lord's Table</i>

Weekly Congregational Response

Sacraments are holy signs and seals
to 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!

The Westminster Confession of Faith

XVII, 1. Of the Sacraments

Westminster Larger Catechism

Questions on the Sacraments ⁴⁹

Q. 161. How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?

A. The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not by any power in themselves, or any virtue derived from the piety or intention of him by whom they are administered, but only by the working of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of Christ, by whom they are instituted.

Q. 162. What is a sacrament?

A. A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ in his church

- to signify, seal, and exhibit the benefits of his mediation to those who are within the covenant of grace;
- to strengthen and increase their faith and all other graces;
- to increase their sense of duty to obedience;
- to testify to and give sweetness to their love and communion one with another;
- and to distinguish them from those that are outside the covenant of grace.

Q. 163. What are the parts of a sacrament?

A. There are two parts of a sacrament: one is the outward and perceivable sign, used according to Christ's own instruction, and the other is the inward and spiritual grace signified by it.

Q. 164. How many sacraments has Christ instituted in his church in the New Covenant?

A. In the New Covenant, Christ has instituted only two sacraments in his church, namely baptism and the Lord's supper.

Q. 165. What is baptism?

A. Baptism is a sacrament of the New Covenant, in which Christ has ordained the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, to be a sign and seal

- of being grafted into himself;
- of remission of sins by his blood and regeneration by his Spirit;
- and of adoption into his family and resurrection to everlasting life.

By this the people baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's.

Q. 166. To whom is baptism to be administered?

A. Baptism is not to be administered to people outside of the visible church, and therefore

⁴⁹ From https://www.cityreformed.org/uploads/9/8/8/6/98869954/wlc_in_modern_english.pdf

strangers from the covenant of promise, until they profess their faith in Christ and their obedience to him. But infants descending from parents who profess faith in Christ and obedience to him, either both or only one of them, are in that respect within the covenant, and are to be baptized.

Q. 167. How are we to build upon our baptism?

A. The needful but much neglected duty of building upon our baptism is to be performed by us all our life long, especially in times of temptation and when we are present at the administration of it to others, by the following:

- by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, the purposes for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed by it, and our solemn vows made in it;
- by being humbled for our sinful defilement and for the ways in which we fall short of it and walk contrary to the grace of baptism and our commitments in it;
- by growing up to an assurance of pardon for our sin and all of the other blessings sealed to us in this sacrament;
- by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin and enlivening of grace;
- by endeavoring to live by faith and to have a way of life of holiness and righteousness, as those who have given up their names to Christ in their baptism;
- and by walking in brotherly love, since we are baptized by the same Spirit into one body.

Q. 168. What is the Lord's Supper?

A. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of the New Covenant in which, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to the pattern set up by Jesus Christ, his death is shown forth. Those who worthily take part

- feed on his body and blood to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace;
- have their union and communion with him confirmed;
- and testify and renew their thankfulness and commitment to God and their mutual love and fellowship with each other, as members of the same mystical body.

Q. 169. How did Christ establish bread and wine to be given and received in the sacrament of the Lord's supper?

A. Christ established that the ministers of his Word, in the administration of this sacrament of the Lord's supper, are to set apart the bread and wine from common use by the words of institution, thanksgiving, and prayer, and are to take and break the bread and give both the bread and the wine to the participants. The participants are, by the same pattern set up by Christ, to take and eat the bread and drink the wine, in thankful remembrance that the body of Christ was broken and given for them and his blood shed for them.

Q. 170. How do those who worthily participate in the Lord's Supper feed on the body and blood of Christ in it?

A. The body and blood of Christ are not bodily or physically present in, with, or under the bread and wine in the Lord's supper, and yet are spiritually present to the faith of the receiver, no less truly and really than the elements themselves are to their outward senses. Therefore

those who worthily participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper feed on the body and blood of Christ in it, not in a bodily or physical manner but in a spiritual manner, but nevertheless truly and really, while by faith they receive and apply to themselves Christ crucified and all the benefits of his death.

Q. 171. How are those who receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to prepare themselves before they come to it?

A. Those who receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper are to prepare themselves for it before they come by examining themselves in the following ways:

- of their being in Christ;
- of their sins and needs;
- of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance, and love to God and the brethren;
- of their charity to all people, forgiving those who have done them wrong;
- of their desires for Christ and of new obedience;
- and by renewing the exercise of these graces by serious meditation and fervent prayer.

Q. 172. May one who doubts of being in Christ, or of being properly prepared, come to the Lord's Supper?

A. One who doubts of being in Christ, or of being properly prepared for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, may still have a true union with Christ, although he may not yet be assured of it. In God's accounting, such a person has this connection if he is properly moved by the perception of lacking it and unreservedly desires to be found in Christ and to depart from iniquity. In this case (because the promises are made, and this sacrament is appointed, for the relief even of weak and doubting Christians) such a person is to bewail his unbelief and work to have his doubts resolved, and in so doing, he may and ought to come to the Lord's Supper, so that he may be further strengthened.

Q. 173. May anyone who professes the faith and desires to come to the Lord's Supper be kept from it?

A. Those who are found to be ignorant or scandalous, despite their profession of the faith and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, may and ought to be kept from that sacrament, by the power that Christ has left with his church, until they receive instruction and show that they have reformed.

Q. 174. What is required of those who receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper during the administration of it?

A. Those who receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper are required, during the administration of it, to the following:

- that they wait upon God with all holy reverence and attention;
- that they diligently observe the sacramental elements and actions;
- that they heedfully discern the Lord's body;
- and that they deeply meditate on his death and sufferings.

By this they should stir themselves up to a vigorous exercise of their graces, judging themselves and sorrowing for sin, earnestly hungering and thirsting after Christ, feeding on

him by faith, receiving his fullness, trusting in his merits, rejoicing in his love, giving thanks for his grace, and renewing their covenant with God and their love for all the saints.

Q. 175. What is the duty of Christians after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper?

A. The duties of Christians, after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's supper, are the following:

- They are to seriously consider how they have behaved themselves during it, and with what result.
- If they find new life and comfort, they are to bless God for it, beg for the continuance of it, keep watch against relapses, fulfill their vows, and encourage themselves to a frequent attendance of that ordinance.
- If they find no present benefit, they are to carefully review their preparation to and behavior at the sacrament. In both their preparation and behavior, if they can approve themselves to God and their own consciences, they are to wait for the fruit of it in due time, but if they see that they have failed in either, they are to be humbled and to attend to it afterwards with more care and diligence.

Q. 176. How are the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper similar?

A. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper are similar in that

- the author of both is God;
- the spiritual part of both is Christ and his benefits;
- both are seals of the same covenant;
- both are to be dispensed by ministers of the Gospel and by no one else;
- and both are to be continued in the church of Christ until his second coming.

Q. 177. How do the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper differ?

A. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper differ in the following:

- Baptism is to be administered only once, with water, to be a sign and seal of our regeneration and grafting into Christ, and is administered even to infants;
- The Lord's Supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and growth in him, and is to be administered only to people who are of the years and ability to examine themselves.

Weekly Benedictory Blessing

Boast only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to you, and you to the world. For neither the religious rites count for anything, nor the lack of religious rites, but a new creation. And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon you all, and upon the Israel of God. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Adapted from

Galatians 6:14-16, 18

1 Corinthians 3:1-17

The Week of July 30th

Monday, 7/24: Psalm 127: Meditate on God's sovereignty. Where do you need to cultivate a deeper trust and rest in His sovereign control over all things?

Tuesday, 7/25: 1 Corinthians 12:12-13: How have you been blessed by the diversity of God's Kingdom?

Wednesday, 7/26: Read Larger Catechism Q. 161, and give thanks for the working of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of Christ unto your salvation as signified in the sacraments.

Thursday, 7/27: 1 Corinthians 3:1-17: Have you ever made the mistake of identifying too closely with a preacher, teacher, or theologian? Why is this dangerous for you and potentially destructive to the body of Christ?

Friday, 7/28: Galatians 6:14-16, 18: Give thanks to God for delivering you from the worldly powers that call for you to follow anyone but Christ.

Saturday, 7/29: Read the preparatory letter for the Lord's Table and ask the Holy Spirit to restore to you the joy of your salvation by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Sunday, 7/30: *The Lord's Day Sabbath with the Lord's Table:* Pray for the means of grace to nourish us into a deeper understanding of God's love for us.

Genesis 17:1-17

The Week of August 6th

Monday, 7/31: Psalm 105:1-6: What recent wondrous works of the Lord could you share with someone this week? Pray for opportunities to share.

Tuesday, 8/1: Ephesians 2:11-22: Give praise to the Lord for His reconciling work in and through Christ to remove not only what separates us from Him but also what separates us from each other.

Wednesday, 8/2: Read Larger Catechism Q. 162-164, and meditate on how your faith has been strengthened and increased by participating in the sacraments in the context of the local church.

Thursday, 8/3: Genesis 17:1-17: How does God choose to relate to Abraham, Sarah, and their offspring? What impact does God's covenant have on all who are in relation to them?

Friday, 8/4: Galatians 6:14-16, 18: Give thanks to the Lord for transforming you into a new creation through His covenant relationship with you.

Saturday, 8/5: Pray for the Holy Spirit to bring visitors who will be blessed by being a part of our covenant community.

Sunday, 8/6: The Lord's Day Sabbath: Pray for the means of grace to bring to fruition the redemption signified in baptism as the initiation rite to our covenant community.

Matthew 28:16-20

The Week of August 13th

Monday, 8/7: Psalm 47: What moves you to rejoice in worship?

Tuesday, 8/8: Revelation 1:4-6: Consider the various ways in which God's love in Christ has been and continues to be displayed to you. Share this with someone this week.

Wednesday, 8/9: Read Larger Catechism Q. 165 and 176, and reflect on how you've benefitted from what is signified and sealed in baptism.

Thursday, 8/10: Matthew 28:16-20: What is the initiating and distinguishing rite in Jesus's Great Commission? What depth of relationship is required to fulfill this commission?

Friday, 8/11: Galatians 6:14-16, 18: Give thanks for those who were faithful to the Great Commission in inviting you to become a disciple of Christ to walk in newness of life.

Saturday, 8/12: Read the preparatory letter for the Lord's Table and ask the Holy Spirit to invite people into our covenant community to be discipled, baptized, and edified in Christ.

Sunday, 8/13: *The Lord's Day Sabbath with the Lord's Table:* Pray for the means of grace to strengthen us in living out the Great Commission in our spheres of influence.

Acts 2:37-41

The Week of August 20th

Monday, 8/14: Psalm 105:7-11: Do you recall the promises and covenants of God in your prayers? How might they be of benefit to you when you pray?

Tuesday, 8/15: Galatians 3:23-29: Reflect on the meaning of your baptism. What role does it play in how you live?

Wednesday, 8/16: Read Larger Catechism Q. 166, and give thanks that the Lord pursued you in redemption despite your ignorance in childish rebellion against Him.

Thursday, 8/17: Acts 2:37-41: Who all benefitted from the Holy Spirit's baptism at Pentecost? How would a first-century Jew have understood the covenantal position of their children in the redemptive promise?

Friday, 8/18: Galatians 6:14-16, 18: Give thanks to God for keeping His generational promise to baptize you in the Holy Spirit to walk in peace and mercy in newness of life.

Saturday, 8/19: Pray for the Holy Spirit to be at work in our children to bring to fruition the Lord's generational redemption promise for the edification of our church.

Sunday, 8/20: *The Lord's Day Sabbath:* Pray for the means of grace to be at work in those who are far off to bring them into our covenant community for their joy and God's glory.

Luke 3:15-22

The Week of August 27th

Monday, 8/21: Psalm 89:1-4: Notice how the Psalmist anchors his praise in God's character and covenant relationship. How would this affect how you pray to do the same?

Tuesday, 8/22: Colossians 1:15-20: How is Christ holding all things together in your life?

Wednesday, 8/23: Pray for Matt and Robby as they officially become assistant pastors in service of Christ within our church. Encourage each of them in some way this week.

Thursday, 8/24: Luke 3:15-22: How is Jesus's baptism by John the Baptist different than others baptized by him? What signifies the transition to being baptized in Christ?

Friday, 8/25: Numbers 6:24-26: Give thanks to the Lord for blessing and keeping you in His presence in peace through His grace given to you in Christ.

Saturday, 8/26: Read the preparatory letter for the Lord's Table and pray for the Holy Spirit to use you to help Matt and Robby remain healthy and vibrant in their callings.

*Sunday, 8/27: *The Lord's Day Sabbath with The Lord's Table:** Pray for the means of grace to bless us with the Lord's favor in His presence.

Luke 18:15-17

The Week of September 3rd

Monday, 8/28: Psalm 8: What is the crown jewel of God's Creation? What impact does this have on the responsibilities within Creation of the crown jewel?

Tuesday, 8/29: John 3:34-36: Meditate on what it means for your life to have received the Holy Spirit without measure through Christ's redemptive sacrifice.

Wednesday, 8/30: Pray for the children of our church to experience welcome and blessing through their involvement with our covenant community.

Thursday, 8/31: Luke 18:15-17: How can we help our children to come to Jesus to inherit the Kingdom of God? How can we be more child-like in our reception of His Kingdom?

Friday, 9/1: Galatians 6:14-16, 18: Give thanks to the Lord for granting you the ability to boast in the cross of Christ as His redeemed child.

Saturday, 9/2: Pray for the Holy Spirit to draw the children and youth of our church to Jesus to receive His eternal blessing.

Sunday, 9/3: *The Lord's Day Sabbath:* Pray for the means of grace to grow us in child-like wonder at God's glorious Kingdom.

Colossians 2:6-23

The Week of September 10th

Monday, 9/4: Psalm 40:1-10: According to this Psalm, who is blessed? Does this describe you?

Tuesday, 9/5: Romans 6:1-4: How are you walking in greater newness of life this year as compared to last?

Wednesday, 9/6: Read Larger Catechism Q. 167, and meditate on how you can improve upon your baptism as part of your ongoing sanctification.

Thursday, 9/7: Colossians 2:6-23: What is helping to root you further in and build you up in Christ? Are you abounding in thanksgiving as a result?

Friday, 9/8: Galatians 6:14-16, 18: Give thanks to the Lord for the tangible evidence of salvation in Christ displayed in and through your life.

Saturday, 9/9: Read the preparatory letter for the Lord's Table and beseech the Holy Spirit to help root and build you up in Christ.

Sunday, 9/10: *The Lord's Day Sabbath with The Lord's Table:* Pray for the means of grace to further reveal God's incomprehensible love for us.

Matthew 26:26-30

The Week of September 17th

Monday, 9/11: Psalm 80:1-7: Have you ever felt like God was angry with you? How did you respond?

Tuesday, 9/12: John 6:32-40: Reflect on the various ways in which Jesus has nourished you in various seasons. Share this with someone this week.

Wednesday, 9/13: Read Larger Catechism Q. 168 and 177, and consider how the Lord's Supper helps you to remember, presently experience, and hope more fully in Christ's finished work on your behalf.

Thursday, 9/14: Matthew 26:26-30: Why would Jesus choose such ordinary elements to represent His forgiveness and newness of life? What does this indicate about His invitation for us to serve as ambassadors of His reconciliation?

Friday, 9/15: Galatians 6:14-16, 18: Give thanks to the Lord for condescending all the way to us in Jesus's ordinary humanity to redeem us.

Saturday, 9/16: Read the preparatory letter for the Lord's Table and ask the Holy Spirit to increase your hunger for the things of Christ.

Sunday, 9/17: *The Lord's Day Sabbath* ^{with The Lord's Table}: Pray for the means of grace to nourish our faith in Christ's forgiveness to help us run more quickly to Him.

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

The Week of September 24th

Monday, 9/18: Psalm 36:5-9: Meditate on how God has expressed His steadfast love for you over your life. Share this with someone this week.

Tuesday, 9/19: 1 Corinthians 10:14-17: How are you becoming more like Christ through your participation in the means of grace and Christian fellowship?

Wednesday, 9/20: Read Larger Catechism Q. 169-170, and give thanks for Christ's sacrifice given for you.

Thursday, 9/21: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34: Do you consider the church's relational unity as you prepare for the Lord's Supper? Do you prioritize time to examine yourself?

Friday, 9/22: Galatians 6:14-16, 18: Give thanks to the Lord for the unifying power of Christ's crucifixion.

Saturday, 9/23: Pray for the Holy Spirit to draw those who need to hear, witness, and experience the Gospel amid the body of Christ.

Sunday, 9/24: *The Lord's Day Sabbath:* Pray for the means of grace to guide us to rightly examine our church's unity and to judge ourselves according to the Gospel.

Matthew 5:21-26

The Week of October 1st

Monday, 9/25: Psalm 133: How have you benefitted from dwelling together in unity with other believers in Christ?

Tuesday, 9/26: Philippians 2:12-13: What are some ways in which you are working out your salvation with fear and trembling?⁵⁰

Wednesday, 9/27: Read Larger Catechism Q. 171, and reflect on your preparatory practice for being invited to the Lord's Table.

Thursday, 9/28: Matthew 5:21-26: Have you ever been at odds with someone else in the church? How did it impact your worship?

Friday, 9/29: Galatians 6:14-16, 18: Give thanks to the Lord for Jesus being crucified in your place to reconcile you to Him.

Saturday, 9/30: Read the preparatory letter for the Lord's Table and ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of any relationships within the church that need to be reconciled.

Sunday, 10/1: The Lord's Day Sabbath with The Lord's Table: Pray for the means of grace to grant us the strength to regularly forgive one another.

⁵⁰ This is not a reference to being anxious and scared; it refers to being in awe at God's grace and being humbled by your unworthiness and sinfulness which magnifies even further His love for you.

Mark 9:14-28

The Week of October 8th

Monday, 10/2: Psalm 31:21-24: How do you regularly express your love for the Lord and His work in your life?

Tuesday, 10/3: Matthew 5:3-4: How does Christ address those who struggle with faith and sorrow? Does this give you encouragement?

Wednesday, 10/4: Read Larger Catechism Q. 172-173, and ask the Lord to grant you a deeper assurance of your pardon in Christ.

Thursday, 10/5: Mark 9:14-28: How should we deal with our spiritual doubts? How should we deal with the spiritual doubts of others?

Friday, 10/6: Galatians 6:14-16, 18: Give thanks to the Lord for the surety of Christ's finished work for you.

Saturday, 10/7: Pray for the Holy Spirit to bid the doubting to come to worship on Sunday to help their unbelief.

Sunday, 10/8: *The Lord's Day Sabbath:* Pray for the means of grace to encourage us to be honest in our struggles to trust Jesus on various issues.

Acts 2:42-47

The Week of October 15th

Monday, 10/9: Psalm 5:1-7: What makes it possible for you to attend worship and be encouraged?

Tuesday, 10/10: Luke 24:27-35: What story is being told from Genesis to Revelation? How should this affect how we read Scripture?

Wednesday, 10/11: Read Larger Catechism Q. 174, and consider how the Lord's Table stirs you to exercise the graces entrusted to you.

Thursday, 10/12: Acts 2:42-47: What role is hospitality and community currently playing in your discipleship?

Friday, 10/13: Galatians 6:14-16, 18: Give thanks to the Lord for blessing you with a cruciform community to help you walk in newness of life.

Saturday, 10/14: Pray for the Holy Spirit to help grow our small groups to include more people in God's family.

Sunday, 10/15: *The Lord's Day Sabbath:* Pray for the means of grace to spark awe in God's work in our church.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

The Week of October 22nd

Monday, 10/16: Psalm 11: What does it look like for you to take refuge in the Lord?

Tuesday, 10/17: Titus 3:3-8: What good works are you devoted to that exalt Jesus, bring you joy, and edify others in the Holy Spirit?

Wednesday, 10/18: Read Larger Catechism Q. 175, and meditate on how you should live in the days following your participation in the Lord's Supper.

Thursday, 10/19: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20: How does your body and life not being your own affect the decisions you make?

Friday, 10/20: Galatians 6:14-16, 18: Give thanks to the Lord for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ being with your spirit as you go about life.

Saturday, 10/21: Read the preparatory letter for the Lord's Table and ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of the things that are dominating your heart and mind.

Sunday, 10/22: *The Lord's Day Sabbath with The Lord's Table:* Pray for the means of grace to help us glorify God in and through our bodies.

Appendix A⁵¹

Why We Baptize Infants

From the start, we must confess that the Bible contains no “smoking gun” passage concerning infant baptism. Nowhere does it specifically command that infants be baptized. However, we do recognize a long-standing Biblical pattern of including infants and children within the covenant community as marked by an initiation rite that is consistent across Redemptive History and in the Old and New Covenants. We believe the sweep of Scripture points to including infants through baptism as the initiation rite into Christ’s covenant community. As Hyde writes, “Infant baptism is a biblical doctrine because it is a “good and necessary consequence” of the entirety of scriptural teaching.”⁵²

As Sartelle writes, “Throughout Scripture we see God working His grace and judgment through families.”⁵³ This begins in the opening pages of the Bible as children play an important part in God’s covenant community. God commands Adam and Eve as His image bearers to be fruitful and multiply to fill the earth with His image (cf. **Genesis 1:26-28**). This is known as the Creation or Cultural Mandate. Even amid the Fall, children serve an important role in the fulfillment of God’s redemptive promise (cf. **Genesis 3:15**). The children of the woman will ensure that God’s image remains and goes forward in the world despite the children of the serpent seeking to exterminate that image (cf. **1 Peter 5:8-11; Revelation 12**). In the downward progression of the Fall in **Genesis 6-9**, God commissions Noah and his family to the Cultural Mandate to fill the earth with God’s image through their children. Peter

⁵¹ This appendix and those following are not intended to be exhaustive arguments. The intent is to provide the basic rationale for why we do what we do and don’t do. This will hopefully help provide a foundation for any needed follow-up discussions.

⁵² Hyde, 2.

⁵³ Sartelle, 13.

connects the story of Noah and the Flood specifically to baptism in **1 Peter 3:20-22**. Infants and children pass through the Red Sea which Paul calls a baptism into Moses in **1 Corinthians 10:1-5**. These passages help us to see the importance of children to God's covenant relationship with His people.

The Abrahamic Covenant serves as the most pronounced evidence of this. In the Abrahamic Covenant in **Genesis 12-17**, He promises future generations through children and provides a covenant sign to be applied to 8 day old male infants as evidence of their covenant relationship with God. In **Galatians 3**, Paul refers to the Abrahamic Covenant as the gospel that's been fulfilled expansively in Jesus. Murray views this as foundational to why we baptize infants. He writes, "The basic premise of the argument for infant baptism is that the New Testament economy is the unfolding and fulfilment of the covenant made with Abraham and that the necessary implication is the unity and continuity of the church."⁵⁴ Both Jews and Gentiles redeemed by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone become children of Abraham as evidence of the mysterious expansion of God's covenant love. Hyde writes of the expansive, progressive nature of the New Covenant and continuity with the Abrahamic Covenant:

"...if the grace of God incorporated the children of the Israelites, their household servants, and their servants' children into the covenant people, why would we believe that the children of Christians are not to be included under the New and better Covenant, with a better mediator and better promises? Think for a moment about this question from the following angle. The Old Covenant was made with Israelites; the New Covenant is made with Jews and Gentiles, the entire world. The Old was restrictive; the New is universal. Circumcision in the Old was a sign to only male infants; baptism in the New is a sign to both male and female infants (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). The point is that infant baptism shows to us visibly the magnitude and endless bounds of God's grace."⁵⁵

Nowhere does Paul exclude infants from the now fulfilled Abrahamic Covenant that previously included infants. Chapell recognizes that, "Since the (Abrahamic) covenant remains

⁵⁴ Murray, 45; Fesko, 356 makes a similar argument.

⁵⁵ Hyde, 47; Murray makes a similar argument in 48-49, 68.

but the sign changes, New Testament believers would naturally expect to apply the new sign of the covenant to themselves and their children as the old sign was applied.”⁵⁶ While this is ultimately an argument from silence, the connections between the Abrahamic Covenant and its expansion, progression, and fulfillment in the New Covenant grant the argument and the silence significant weight.⁵⁷

Peter in **Acts 2:37-41** also fails to exclude infants as he declares the promise of the Holy Spirit as a gift to them, their children, and even Gentiles (i.e. “those who are far off”). If he had denied infants and children the initial rite into this New Covenant community, he would have in essence created a discontinuity by excommunicating those previously welcome to a stricter, less inclusive covenant. This would require some level of explanation to the Jews present at Pentecost. Chapell again proves helpful as he writes, “It seems highly probable that if the apostles changed that practice (of including infants), the change would have been recorded in the New Testament, either by example or by precept.”⁵⁸ Given the inclusion of infants in God’s covenant community from the start of the Redemptive Story and the progressive expansion of the New Covenant to include more through the initiating rite of baptism, we baptize infants as evidence of the continuity between the covenants and gracious expansion of the covenant family.

As B.B. Warfield writes, “Every time we baptize an infant we bear witness that salvation is from God, that we cannot do any good thing to secure it, that we receive it from his hands as a sheer gift of his grace, and that we all enter the Kingdom of heaven therefore as little children, who do not do, but are done for.”⁵⁹ Thus, we confess in baptizing an infant that God receives them into the visible church as sinners born helpless to save themselves placing them amid His promises and providences gloriously displayed in the baptized, communing

⁵⁶ Chapell, 14.

⁵⁷ Hyde, 35, declares, “Basically, the New Testament teaches that the New Covenant is the Abrahamic covenant come to maturity.”

⁵⁸ Chapell, 16; Richard, 92 and Fesko, 358 make similar arguments. Richard goes so far as to say it would be a complete reversal of the covenant in Genesis 17.

⁵⁹ B.B. Warfield, “Christian Baptism” in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. John E. Meeter (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1970), 1:329

members of their covenant community.⁶⁰ It also serves as a confession by the parents “that they will trust and follow God in the raising of their child” given the helplessness of both the infant and the parents to bring salvation to fruition.⁶¹ This makes the role of the church as their covenant community very important. Chapell writes, “Thus, the church becomes God instrument of presenting the reality of Christ to the mind and heart of the child.”⁶² The church accomplishes this through its ongoing continuity in hospitality, edification, discipleship, prayer, service in Children’s Ministry, worship, and loving community. As Hyde notes, “Baptism is not the end of the story, but the beginning, for both you and your children, as a lifetime of discipleship begins.”⁶³ Baptism helps lay out the path toward faithfulness and discipleship for the child.⁶⁴ May we be helpful guides and companions to the children God entrusts to us so that we could celebrate many professions of faith in the Christ signified and sealed in their baptisms!

⁶⁰ Hyde, 83.

⁶¹ Chapell, 25.

⁶² Ibid., 27.

⁶³ Hyde, 79.

⁶⁴ Richard, 111.

Appendix B

*Why We Don't Serve Infants Communion*⁶⁵

We must be careful that we don't use arguments for why we don't serve infants communion that we reject in our reasons for why we baptize infants. For instance, it would be inconsistent if we used the lack of a clear Biblical command for why we don't serve paedocommunion but ignored the same lack of clarity regarding baptism. It's also important to remember there will be some significant differences between baptism as an initiation rite into God's covenant community and the Lord's Supper as ongoing sanctifying help. As Venema observes, "The Lord's Supper requires the active participation of its recipient in a way that is not required of the recipient of baptism, who is a passive recipient of the sacramental sign and seal of the gospel promises."⁶⁶ Ultimately, we see instructions in Scripture for participating in the Lord's Supper that would preclude infants and some younger children from partaking of the elements.

In **Matthew 26:26-29** when Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper, His separate commands to eat and drink require the ability to respond to His invitation. This response is based on understanding that the bread signifies His body sacrificed for them and that the cup represents His blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins in the New Covenant.⁶⁷ Participation in the Supper requires the recipient to remember and comprehend Jesus's redemptive work on their behalf.⁶⁸ Infants and many children would cognitively be unable to do this.

Paul's instructions for the Lord's Supper in **1 Corinthians 11:17-34** highlight the need to remember what Christ has done and to examine themselves as well as the church. This process

⁶⁵ Also known as paedocommunion.

⁶⁶ Venema, 80.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁸ Fesko, 363.

helps to protect them from partaking of the Supper in an unworthy manner. Venema describes the examination in this way: “The self-examination requires believers to test their faith against the normative requirements of the Word of God. Essential to such faith are the acknowledgement of the believer’s sin and unworthiness, the recognition that Christ alone by His mediatorial work has made atonement for the sins of His people, and a resolution to live in holiness and obedience to His will.”⁶⁹ The examination of the body seeks to identify any areas where disunity exists with the purpose of pursuing reconciliation. This judgment of self and the body of Christ requires a level of cognition that infants and many younger children don’t yet possess.⁷⁰

This exclusion from partaking doesn’t mean that they don’t participate or benefit from being present in worship with the Lord’s Supper. Just as the infants benefited from the Passover event and its ongoing celebration but were not included in all aspects of the meal, our children benefit from bearing witness and reaping the results from this means of grace.⁷¹ Their bearing witness to the practice also helps cultivate a hunger in them to partake of all of God’s means of grace. The nourishment and maturation of their covenant community through the Supper benefits them both now and in years to come as many will share the Gospel with them in a variety of ways.

With the individual’s and church’s health affected by how we partake (cf. **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**) as well as our being accountable for this health as elders (cf. **Hebrews 13:17**), we require a simple profession of faith and basic understanding of the Lord’s Supper for admittance to the table. Age will vary based on the cognitive abilities and maturation of each child which is why we don’t ascribe to a specified age of accountability. We want our children to partake of and benefit from the table as soon as they are able to profess readiness. We have a help on our website for families to this end called “Do This in Remembrance of Me: A Communicant’s Guide.” Our Sunday School classes serve this end as well through catechesis

⁶⁹ Venema, 43.WCF, XXIX, 7. and WLC Q. 170-175 also addresses the preparation and responsibilities of those invited to the Lord’s Table.

⁷⁰ Some try to argue for a federal headship (or covenant head of the household) interpretation of this text, however, the language Paul uses indicates that he’s addressing all present as individuals and not just the federal heads of families.

⁷¹ On inclusion and exclusion in the Passover meal, see Venema, 57 and 69-70.

in the Scripture and confessional doctrines. Please let us know if we can be of assistance in helping your child come to the Lord's Table to taste and see that He is good!

Appendix C

Why We Don't Re-baptize

Over the years, some have sincerely requested to be re-baptized. The typical reasons are usually tied to the age at which they were baptized (“I was too young to remember” or “I’ve grown so much since then that I’m not sure I was a Christian then”) or the denomination in which they were baptized (often Catholic or a cultish circumstance). The request can sometimes be related to a recent significant encounter with God or particularly emotional experience related to growing in some way. Given the sincerity of the requests and the gravity of the situation, we would benefit from examining the issue Biblically and confessionally. We must first turn to Scripture to see if there are any instances of re-baptism recorded or any sort of analog that could apply.

To start, we need to recognize that there were different baptisms recorded in the Bible for different purposes. There were several washings and cleansings in the Old Testament under the Levitical law that point forward to the ultimate washing and cleansing in Christ as signified and sealed in baptism. **Hebrews 9** helps us to see that those practices are no longer needed as Jesus has come and accomplished what they pointed forward to. John’s baptism of repentance prepared the way for Jesus’s baptism of reconciliation by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It served as the transition between the Old and New Covenants.⁷² In **Matthew 5:13-17**, Jesus’s baptism inaugurates this transition.⁷³ He was not guilty of any sin requiring repentance, and yet He takes on the identity of sinful Israel in a foreshadow of His crucifixion that will usher in the New Covenant.⁷⁴ Jesus makes this connection in **Mark 10:35-45** and **Luke 12:50** when he refers to His coming crucifixion as a

⁷² Muray, 1-2.

⁷³ Paul addresses this transition in **Acts 13:23-25** in a sermon at Antioch.

⁷⁴ Fesko, 218.

baptism. Luke also records a powerful example of this transition from John's baptism to Jesus's in **Acts 19:1-7** to illustrate the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant as the Ephesian Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit. Thus, being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit wasn't a re-baptism as that would keep the baptized burdened under the tutelage of the Old Covenant. **Hebrews 6:1-8** warns about immaturely remaining under the elementary doctrines and means that point us to Jesus including various washings (or baptisms). Paul declares in **Ephesians 4:4-6** that we now have one baptism in Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of our Trinitarian baptism is to free us from the weakness and weight of the law and its associated practices so that we could walk in newness of life in union with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Given that the Trinitarian baptism proves not to be a re-baptism of John's or any other baptism, we need to look for any instances or analogs of a Trinitarian re-baptism. You won't find any clear or even approximate Trinitarian re-baptisms in Scripture. The fact that all recorded Trinitarian baptisms serve as the initiation rite into the covenant community goes against the concept of re-baptism. You would essentially be exiting and re-entering the covenant community of your own volition contra being established and assured in Christ.

Paul also makes a strong argument against one of the main reasons that someone might want to be re-baptized. In **1 Corinthians 1:10-17**, Paul addresses divisions that arose in Corinth based on the strengths or weaknesses of who had discipled and baptized them. He makes it very clear that the focus should never be on the worthiness of the one who baptizes but should instead be firmly fixed on Christ in whom they were baptized.⁷⁵ Thus, re-baptism lacks the biblical support necessary to be practiced in the church.⁷⁶

Does our lack of memory or power of emotions concerning our baptism invalidate our baptism? Scripture offers us some wisdom on this question. In **Psalm 22**, a Messianic Psalm, David recognizes the Lord's sovereign power over his life from before he could have possibly

⁷⁵ This was a significant issue in Church History known as the Donatist Controversy. In the early 300's in North Africa, a number of people who had suffered persecution renounced the validity of their and the baptisms of others if they had been baptized by someone who had either directly betrayed them or had renounced some aspect of their faith to avoid persecution. Augustine and others responded by firmly denouncing the need for re-baptism or a new baptism as the actions of the baptizer were not what their baptism signified or sealed nor was what was signified and sealed affected by him.

⁷⁶ WCF XXVIII, 6.-7. opposes re-baptism for this reason.

remembered. Verses 9-10 detail God's election prior to, at, and following his birth. **Psalm 71:6** makes a similar argument. **Psalm 139** offers an even stronger argument in **verses 13-16** as David acknowledges God's sovereign work beginning in utero. Paul in **Ephesians 1:3-14** declares love being bestowed on His people from before the foundation of the world! Thus, we recognize that our memory or emotions of our baptism doesn't determine the efficacy of what it signifies and seals.

To re-baptize someone would be to place the power and efficacy of that sacrament on either the one baptizing, the one being baptized, or baptism itself. This would be inconsistent with our understanding of Scripture, doctrine, and our historic confessions. The only baptisms that we don't recognize as valid are non-Trinitarian baptisms such as practiced by Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. In these instances, it would not be re-baptism but would be a Trinitarian baptism by faith alone in Christ alone through God's grace alone. Please contact us to discuss this further if you're struggling with your baptism.

Resources

on Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Beginner:

Bryan Chapell, *Why Do We Baptize Infants?* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2006)

Richard D. Phillips, *What is the Lord's Supper?* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2005)

John P. Sartelle, *What Christian Parents Should Know About Infant Baptism* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1985)

Guy M. Richard, *Baptism: Answers to Common Questions* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2019)

Intermediate:

Daniel R. Hyde, *Jesus Loves the Little Children: Why We Baptize Children* (Grandville: Reformed Fellowship, Inc, 2006)

John Murray, *Christian Baptism* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1980)

Malcolm Maclean, *The Lord's Supper* (Scotland: Mentor, 2009)

Cornelis P. Venema, *Children at the Lord's Table?: Assessing the Case for Paedocommunion* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009)

Advanced:

J.V. Fesko, *Word, Water, and Spirit: A Reformed Perspective on Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010)

Keith A. Mathison, *Given for You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Table* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2002)