

Sacraments and Salvation

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig



Sacraments are viewed by various mainline liberal denominations (Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopal, Methodist) as a means to receive grace into one's life. Denominations call baptism, Mass, the Eucharist, Confession to priests, Absolution of priests or ministers, Penance, and Last Rites as sacraments which transfer grace into a person's life. Webster's definition of a sacrament reads in part as "a rite considered to have been established by Christ as a channel for grace." Another dictionary defines sacraments as "an outward sign combined with a prescribed form of words and regarded as conferring some specific grace upon those who receive it." The experience of many people within the mainline denominations is that they need to receive sacraments in order acquire forgiveness before God. They view the sacraments as the way to receive God's grace and salvation. The sacraments are regarded as an essential part of becoming a Christian.

The Catechism of the **Catholic Church** states: "The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us" (Catholic Church Catechism 1131). "In the forgiveness of sins, both priests and sacraments are instruments which our Lord Jesus Christ, the only author and liberal giver of salvation, wills to use in order to efface our sins and give us the grace of justification" (Catholic Church Catechism, par. 987). Catholic Church Catechism 1129 also states: "The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation ..."

What does the Catholic Church teach about baptism? Catechism 1213 says: "Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and

the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God. Catholic Church Catechism 985 teaches: “Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of the forgiveness of sins.”

Catholic Church Catechism 986 states this about absolution (acquiring forgiveness of sins through a priest): “By Christ's will, the Church possesses the power to forgive the sins of the baptized and exercises it through bishops and priests normally in the sacrament of Penance.” “Only God forgives sins. Since he is the Son of God, Jesus says of himself, ‘The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins’ and exercises this divine power: ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name.”

What is the power Christ allegedly gives to priests? It is the power to forgive sins – not merely declare them to be forgiven. There is no doubt about it. The official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is that priests have the power to actually forgive the sins of people. More on this later.

One **Methodist** statement of faith proclaims: “Through baptism, we are joined with the Triune God, the whole of Christ’s church, and our local congregation. The water and the work of the Holy Spirit in baptism convey God’s saving grace, the forgiveness of our sins, and new life in Jesus Christ.” It goes on to state: “The Lord’s Supper is another name for the Eucharist, the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving the church offers to God for all God has done, is doing, and will do to save us and renew all things in Christ.”

Article XVI in the Methodist Church declares: “Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in him. Article XVIII states: “The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death.” In other words, the benefits of Christ’s redemptive work come through the agency of sacraments. This is erroneous since our redemption is rooted only in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:25; Eph. 1:7). We are redeemed

only by the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18-19) - not by 21st century denominational sacraments transferring redemption into our lives.

Sacraments, according to an **Episcopalian** statement of faith, records: “In the sacraments we realize his presence and his favor towards us. Through the sacraments, which are freely given to us by God, our sins are forgiven, our minds are enlightened, our hearts stirred and our wills strengthened.” The Episcopal Church accepts seven sacraments which is very similar to Catholic teaching on the sacraments. “Baptism is the means by which we become members of the community of believers, defined in the New Testament as the Body of Christ.” The Episcopal Church recognizes seven sacraments. Baptism and the Holy Eucharist are the two ‘great sacraments of the Gospel.’” This means that Episcopalian teaching is that the saving benefits of the Gospel come to us only when we participate with the sacraments and have our sins declared forgiven on the basis of priest or bishop acting on Christ’s behalf. However, the Bible never states that sacraments are the way we receive the benefits of the Gospel. It is only by faith in Christ alone that brings the saving benefits of the Gospel into our life (John 3:16-18, 36; 5:24; 6:47).

Lutherans accept three sacraments – Baptism, Eucharist, and Absolution (acquiring the forgiveness of sins through a minister). The Lutheran Church statement of faith says: “In and through Baptism, God cleanses us from all of our sins, snatches us from the power of Satan, and gives us everlasting life.” Another Lutheran statements of faith says: “The knowledge and benefit of Christ’s redemption from sin is brought to the human race through the means of grace, namely the Word and the sacraments.” Article 9 in the Book of Concord, which is taken from the Augsburg Confession (1530) states: “Of Baptism they teach that it is necessary to salvation, and that through Baptism is offered the grace of God, and that children are to be baptized who, being offered to God through Baptism are received into God's grace. They condemn the Anabaptists, who reject the baptism of children, and say that children are saved without Baptism.”

Some Lutherans claim baptism is necessary, but not absolutely necessary for salvation. What they mean by this is that although baptism is indeed necessary for salvation, it is, as Luther concluded, *contempt* for the sacraments that condemns, not lack of the sacraments. This seems to be nothing more than theological

doubletalk (1 Tim. 6:4; Titus 3:9). The Lutheran teaching is that sacraments save those who partake of them.

In “The Sacrament of the Altar,” the Missouri Synod says: “As great as is our need, even greater is the life-giving meal He has provided! It is a very personal way God works in our life to save us, to strengthen us and to keep us close to Him. Jesus promised to be with us always, to the very close of the age (Matt. 28:20). Through His precious Word and Sacraments, our Lord continues to fulfill His promise.”

“In the Sacrament of the Altar our Lord and Savior is continually distributing to us the body and blood of the sacrifice He made for us, the sacrifice by which He paid for the sins of the entire world. Thus, receiving His body and blood, we receive forgiveness, life and salvation.” Luther wrote: “Therefore it is absurd to say that Christ’s body and blood are not given and poured out for us in the Lord’s Supper and hence that we cannot have forgiveness of sins in the sacrament.” However, just the opposite is true. the Bible clearly reveals that Christ’s death **on the cross** (not in the sacraments) was the only place where His blood was poured out for our redemption. Colossians 1:20 says, “And, having made peace through the blood of his cross.” When Jesus spoke about the Lord’s Supper He taught, “This do ye ... in remembrance of me” (not to find forgiveness through me!). Forgiveness is not found through eating but by believing in Christ (Acts 16:31).

While dialoguing back and forth with one Lutheran minister, he made this remark: “Absolution and Eucharist are gifts of Christ to His people, the Church. They are not law (things we have to do to get right with God, but are Gospel, things Jesus uses to serve His people).” But where does the Bible say that sacraments are **gifts** and **Gospel things**? Furthermore, how can they be Gospel things? The Bible tells us what the Gospel is in unmistakable terms. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4: “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” This is the Gospel, what Christ had done for us, and there is no mention of “gospel things” (the sacraments) as Lutheranism teaches. Adding anything to the Gospel creates “another gospel” (Gal. 1:8) which leads people to hell and not to Heaven.

The Lutheran pastor also remarked: “Justification by Faith requires Jesus to serve us.” He was referring to Jesus serving us in the sacraments. But Jesus Christ does not serve us through baptism or the Eucharist. He has already served us through His work on the cross. Jesus said in Matthew 20:28, “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” The Lutheran minister than stated: “Baptism is where Christians are made and brought into the church.” However, Christians are created (made anew or born again) through the work of Jesus Christ alone (“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” - 2 Corinthians 5:17). People are never said to be reborn through baptism (baptismal regeneration). Those who believe the Gospel are born again (James 1:18) and brought into the true Church through the saving work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19) – not through the saving work of the sacraments.

Finally, the Lutheran minister declared this when referring to salvation through sacraments: “The church is where these things are found.” This is not true. It’s only in Christ where salvation is found (Acts 4:12). 1 Corinthians 1:30 declares: “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Salvation is found in the life-giving message of the Gospel and can be received anywhere, anytime, and anyplace – without sacraments and without attending a denominational church. This is why Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel” (Mark 16:15). He did not say, “Go ye into the Lutheran, Catholic, Methodist, or Episcopalian church to be saved.”

The early witnessing Christians did not need church sacraments to see people saved from hell. They only needed the message of the cross. 1 Corinthians 1:18 says, “For the **preaching of the cross (not the preaching of baptism or the sacraments)** is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” The mainline denominations in America actually believe that water (a sacrament) when combined with the Word of God, spoken through a Lutheran pastor, priest, or some other church official, can bring salvation into a person’s life, even the lives of little children.

Lutherans believe that whenever the sacraments are properly administered that God is, in a way specific to each sacrament, present with the Word and physical or visible component of the sacraments. They also teach that God earnestly offers to

all who receive the sacraments forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. Both Lutheran and Catholics teach absolution or receiving forgiveness of sins through ministers or priests whereby men can actually declare a person's sins forgiven based upon their confession of sins. The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod states: "The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.

For Lutherans in general, confession and absolution (acquiring forgiveness through a Lutheran minister) are considered proper preparation for receiving the sacrament of the Eucharist. "Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven." The Lutheran Confession (AC XXV3) claims that the ministers word of forgiveness actually is God's Word, which results in a person's forgiveness, since the minister is speaking it in God's place. In many church traditions the sacraments have been traditionally called "sacraments of the Gospel" meaning that the benefits of the Gospel are dispensed into a person's life through the various sacraments and declarations of men. When a priest or some other minister says, "I absolve you from your sins," he is actually declaring that he has the authority and power to forgive the sins of that person through a judicial act. He believes he is acting on Christ's behalf and in Christ's name to forgive sins. Communicating to someone the very forgiveness of sins is much different than declaring someone forgiven.

Both Catholics and Lutherans, as well as other denominational ministers, believe they have, through apostolic succession, inherited what they call "the keys" of the apostles, which allow them to grant forgiveness of sins for their people. John 20:22 states: "Whose soever sins ye remit (forgive), they are remitted (forgiven) unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain (do not forgive), they are retained (not forgiven)." What Jesus was teaching in this verse is not difficult to understand. As the disciples went forth they could announce the terms upon which people could be forgiven. Their terms were that forgiveness was only found through Jesus Christ. (the Messiah). If people would place their faith in Jesus Christ to forgive their sins, then the apostles could officially announce and declare the people's sins forgiven.

However, if they refuse to repent of their sins and place faith in the Messiah, they would official declare that a person's sins cannot be forgiven.

The declaration of sins forgiven is an announcement – not a prerogative, right, power, or authority to actually forgive sins. Jesus never promised that He would have successors on earth that would follow in His footsteps and be able to actually forgive the sins of the people like He did (Luke 7:48). Only God can forgive sins (Matt. 9:5-6; Luke 5:21). We must remember that the authority the apostles had was not to forgive sins but to announce that the people's sins were already forgiven through their faith in the Gospel message of Christ (1 Cor. 15:3-4). *There is a vast difference between announcement and absolution.* To claim that I have the God-given authority to forgive sins, which only God possesses, is not a small matter.

Luther said, "Confession consists of two parts. The first is my work and act, when I lament my sin and desire comfort and restoration for my soul. The second is a work which God does, when he absolves me of my sins though the word placed in the mouth of a man." This is preposterous. We don't need the word of any other person to experience and claim our forgiveness through Christ. God's Word and promise is sufficient. Hebrews 10:17 declares: "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

The **Churches of Christ** also promote baptism for the forgiveness of sins which also turns baptism into a sacrament or something that saves a person. They try and make the teaching of forgiveness through baptism more palatable by arriving at this conclusion. "We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8), but the process is not unconditional. You must take a certain step in order to receive this free gift." Of course, they go on to say that the step one must take is to be baptized ("Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you" and "At baptism they become part of the spiritual Body of Christ, the true Church of God").

In one breath the Church of Christ says salvation is by grace and is free but in the very same breath they conclude it is not unconditional but conditioned upon baptism. This again is a legalistic salvation. If a person must do something, obey something, or be sure they are baptized in order to be forgiven, then salvation is not free and forgiveness is passed down to people through the sacrament of

baptism. Once again, baptism gets in the way of Christ alone for salvation by placing something before Christ.

Church of Christ advocates argue that when the Bible speaks of salvation “by faith,” it is speaking of a living faith, a faith that produces works of obedience, such as baptism and confession. They do not claim that baptism is a work that earns salvation, or in any sense makes a person worthy of salvation. Rather, the Church of Christ teaches that baptism is a work that God requires before He grants salvation. This is nothing but “vain jangling” (1 Tim. 1:6) or that which is empty, senseless, doubletalk. If God requires a person to do any work in order to receive salvation, then it is just that, a legalistic, works-based salvation. Titus 3:5 says, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

Where does the Bible actually teach that sacraments are necessary for forgiveness and salvation? The truth is this; sacramental forgiveness and absolution is not taught anywhere in the Bible. When Scripture is properly interpreted (2 Tim. 2:15) a reader will discover that salvation is by grace alone without any accompanying works (Eph. 2:8-9). God does not contradict Himself and He is a God of perfect order (1 Cor. 14:33). God’s Word does not give us a double message of salvation through grace and legalism (good works). Salvation through sacraments is invented by modern-day legalizers who are seeking to keep people bound to a system of religious dogmas and works for their salvation.

Acts 15:1

“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.”

The same thing is said today with a different twist: “Except ye receive the sacraments of Baptism, Mass, Eucharist, Penance & Reconciliation, Absolution, and Last Rites, ye cannot be saved.” Here is the point. Instead of finding total and eternal forgiveness before God through faith alone in Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), many Episcopalians, Methodists, Catholics, Lutherans, and even Church of Christ parishioners seek forgiveness through some or all of the sacraments. All the denominations mentioned in this study agree that Baptism is

necessary for salvation. Others add additional sacraments such as the Mass, Eucharist, the Absolution of ministers or priests, Penance, and Last Rites.

According to Catholic Theology, each sacrament is designed to provide forgiveness for certain kinds of sins (venial or mortal sins). In Episcopalian, Methodism, Lutheranism and Catholicism forgiveness is seen as partial and temporary. This means there is always a need for more sacraments to keep providing forgiveness for more sins that are committed. This makes these sacraments necessary to keep preparing a person for eternity. In fact, according to Catholic Theology, even after death there is still need for more forgiveness in Purgatory before one can enter Heaven. For a Catholic, salvation and forgiveness is temporary, ongoing, and never fully experienced until the last vestiges of sin are wiped away after suffering in Purgatory.

One ex-Catholic priest says this of the sacraments:

“The Roman Catholic religion had never taught me that our own righteousness is fleshly and not acceptable to God, nor that we need to trust in his righteousness alone . . . during all those years of monastic life I had relied on the sacraments of Rome to give me grace, to save me.”

The Bible makes something very clear to us. Forgiveness and salvation are not gradually dispensed into a person’s life through many years of receiving and participating with sacraments. The Holy Spirit is the One who dispenses salvation to us DIRECTLY and FOREVER through the saving work of Jesus Christ on our behalf (2 Thess. 2:13). No sacraments are necessary. We must place our faith DIRECTLY and ONLY in Jesus Christ for our salvation. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12).

If sacraments are “necessary for salvation” then we must add something additional to the Gospel message (1 Cor. 15:3-4), add something else to the content of our faith, other than faith alone in Jesus Christ (John 6:47), and we must also add something to God’s display of grace, which is only manifested through Jesus Christ death on our behalf (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 2:11). Christ’s saving work is not found in the

sacraments; it's found in the Gospel alone, a Gospel without sacraments and the absolution of ministers or priests.

If you really want salvation and eternal life, you must bypass the sacraments and all your meritorious good deeds, which you think will make you fit for Heaven, since Jesus Christ said He was the ONLY way to Heaven (John 14:6) – not the sacraments received in the Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopal, Anglican, Church of Christ, or Greek Orthodox Church. Jesus did NOT say “I am the way through baptism, Mass, Absolution, and all the sacraments offered in the denominational churches.”

If you ask the average Catholic if they could go to Heaven without the Catholic Church, without sacraments, without baptism and confirmation in the Catholic Church, without priestly forgiveness, without Mass, without Mary, without doing Penance, good works, Indulgences, without receiving the necessary Last Rites, and without going to Purgatory for final cleansing, they would tell you emphatically “No!” This demonstrates that they have not placed faith in Christ ALONE for justification and salvation before God. This is an indication that they need to transfer their faith to Christ for the free gift of salvation and eternal life.

If you ask a Lutheran if they can go to Heaven without being baptized and taking the Eucharist, they will normally answer – “No.” Why? It's because they are not expressing their faith in Christ alone to be their Savior. Instead, they are viewing the sacraments as the necessary instrument of their salvation. They also believe that the Lutheran minister can declare them forgiven of their sins. Their faith is not Christ's centered but sacramentally centered or man-centered.

Sadly, in the modernistic and liberal denominations of our day, and even in the Churches of Christ, sacraments are viewed as the means of transferring God's grace into one's life. They are seen as the vehicles or channels that actually bring God's grace, forgiveness, and salvation into a person's life. The word “efficacious” in the Catholic catechisms (1127, 1129) means that the sacraments effectively channel God's grace into the life of the Catholic. In other words, to get to Christ one needs sacraments. To experience Christ's saving work a person needs to partake and participate with sacraments. This is the main teaching in all of the liberal and apostate denominations today.

Are sacraments presented in the Bible as necessary means or channels to provide grace, salvation, and forgiveness for people? This question can be easily answered by answering four basic questions. In answering these four questions, we will discover if sacraments are necessary to transfer the grace of God's forgiveness and salvation into a person's life.

What is the Gospel? Christ died for our sins (paying the full and final penalty of judgment for our sin), was buried (proving He had died and paid the sinner's debt before God), and rose again the third day (providing the evidence that the Father accepted His sacrifice and that He can give us eternal life through His victory over death (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Since Jesus paid the penalty of judgment for our sins in full and rose from the dead we can possess eternal salvation, forgiveness, and acceptance in the presence of God forever.

Notice that there are no sacraments found in the original Gospel message. To add sacraments such as baptism, Mass, Confession to priests, Penance/Reconciliation, and Last Rites to the Gospel message which are deemed as necessary to provide forgiveness is to change the Gospel message and create "another gospel" (Galatians 1:6). Sacraments add something to the original evangel or message that God gave. Sacraments also detract and divert a person away from the original message of the Gospel. They distort the Gospel message and take a person's eyes off of Christ and puts them on religious ceremonies and replacements for Christ.

What saves a person? The Gospel is what saves a person. It is called "the gospel of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13) and it is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). The Gospel message does not contain sacraments (acquiring Christ's forgiveness and salvation through ceremonies and good works). This means that sacramental forgiveness is not Gospel forgiveness and salvation. *You cannot receive Gospel forgiveness through the means of sacraments since sacraments have nothing to do with the Gospel that saves a person.* Forgiveness is not transferred to us through the sacraments of baptism, Mass, Confession to priests or any other means.

When a person senses their need to participate in sacraments in order to receive forgiveness and salvation, then the Gospel message has been distorted and

masqueraded in religious disguise. In short, you don't get to grace or receive the benefits of the Gospel message through the medium or way of the sacraments. You get to the Gospel through Jesus Christ alone who said, "I am the way (not the sacraments), the truth (not the sacraments), and the life (not the sacraments): no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). A person goes to Heaven exclusively and only through Jesus Christ. Jesus' statement destroys the heresy of sacramental forgiveness and salvation.

Where is grace found? Is God's grace found and experienced in the sacraments?

There is nothing revealed in the Bible that says the expression of God's grace is found in sacraments and transferred to us through the sacraments. John 1:17 says, "For the law was given by Moses, but **grace and truth came by Jesus Christ**" (not by the sacraments). God's full and final expression of grace was revealed directly and only through Jesus Christ (Acts 15:11; Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:10). Never once do we see the word grace related to the sacraments. Salvation and forgiveness was never intended to be conveyed through tangible objects that would act as channels of grace. Martin Luther himself wrote: "Faith must have something to believe – something to which it may cling and upon which it may stand. Thus faith clings to the water and believes it to be Baptism in which there is sheer salvation and life ..."

Yes, faith must have something to believe and cling to which should be the promise given in God's Word of salvation through Jesus Christ (John 3:16; 6:47; 1 John 5:13). True faith does not need tangible objects to cling to for it is the "evidence (conviction) of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). True faith clings only to Christ for salvation plus nothing. Luther taught that baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Confession is not the work of man that saves, but the work of God. For instance, Luther convinced himself that *God's participation in baptism* was the element that produced salvation for man but this is not what the Bible teaches. There is no visible and tangible element on earth that God uses to transfer grace into our life.

God never promised to participate with baptism or any other sacrament, in which He would mystically or literally manifest His presence, and then transfer His grace into the lives of people. The ordinance of baptism was the *testimony* of a person's salvation (Acts 2:41, 8:35-38, 10:44-48, 16:14-15; 18:8, 12) and *confirmation* of a

person's salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16) while the ordinance of the Lord's Table was a *remembrance* of a person's salvation (1 Cor. 11:24-25). God's presence is never promised to be experienced in the sacraments and God's grace was never promised to be transferred through the agency or vehicle of sacraments.

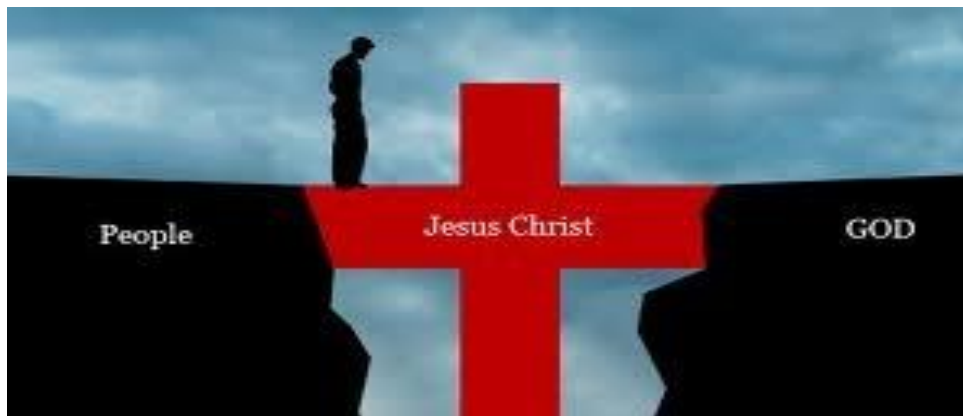
The issue is the Son of God – not baptism (“What think ye of Christ” - Matt. 22:46). God looks at the supreme and final sacrifice of His Son or the shed blood of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:18-19; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14) as the *means* to bring forgiveness and salvation into the lost sinner - not baptism. We are justified by *means* of His blood (Rom. 5:9) and not by the means or agency of baptism or any other sacraments. God also participates in convicting and drawing people to salvation (John 6:44: 12:32) through the agency of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11) – not through baptism and the sacraments.

In summary, it is the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), the Spirit of God (2 Thess. 2:13) testifying of salvation that comes only through the Son of God (John 3:16; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5), and also the goodness of God (Rom. 2:4) and the people of God (Rom. 10:15), who share the Gospel message with others, that God uses as the *means* to bring people to faith and salvation. **There is no water from God! There are no sacraments of God!** In fact, there is not one instance found in the Bible that says God participates in a person's baptism or any other sacraments to bring them to faith and salvation in Christ. There is no place in Scripture where we see God promising to transfer grace into a person's life through baptism and the sacraments.

Any verse that is used to teach this is a reckless handling of the Word of God (2 Cor. 4:2) and presumes upon the grace of God which is only seen and expressed through the death of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:24). Grace is linked to the Gospel message (“the gospel of the grace of God” - Acts 20:24; Phil. 1:7) – not the sacraments. Grace comes through Jesus Christ alone (John 1:17; Eph. 2:8) and is transferred into our life through the work of God alone (without sacraments) which brings a sinner to faith and salvation (John 6:44; 12:32; Acts 16:14). Salvation from start to finish has nothing to do with sacraments.

What does it mean to believe on Jesus Christ or how does a person believe on Christ? Is faith really expressed in Christ when receiving sacraments? Does a person

actually believe that Jesus Christ alone saves them when they are baptized, when they need repeated Masses, the continued forgiveness of priests, when they work to earn or merit their salvation through Penance, and when they need Last Rites and Purgatory fires to finally cleanse them from all of their sins? Is this what it means to believe on Jesus Christ. A thousand times – no! Belief in Jesus Christ is a one-time expression of trust or reliance upon the Son of God (Jesus Christ) to satisfy the wrath of God on your behalf, to freely provide you with total and complete forgiveness and justification (legal righteousness) in God’s presence forever, and grant you eternal life without sacramental works. Anything less than this is not belief in Christ. Acts 16:31 says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” It does not say, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ through baptism, the sacraments, the church, and absolution.”



Belief in Jesus Christ means to express faith in Christ ALONE and His death upon the cross without the use or need of sacraments (John 3:16; 6:47; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 2:8-9). Sacramental salvation (the transferring of grace into a person’s life through sacraments) is not the same as expressing faith in Jesus Christ. *It is actually expressing faith in something else that is necessary for one’s salvation other than Christ.* People will tell you that they are expressing faith in Christ while they take the sacraments or participate with the sacraments. However, this is a deceptive, counterfeit faith that is not genuine faith in Christ (“but the word being preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” - Heb. 4:2). This is the experience of many who are sitting in mainline liberal churches today, whose churches claim to present the Gospel through the creeds of Christendom, while at the same time rejecting salvation through the Gospel and Jesus Christ alone.

In God's providence (John 12:32), either through the witness of the Word itself (Rom. 10:17) or a Gospel witness of a friend (1 Cor. 3:5), some who remain in mainline denominational churches are saved and have seen through the sacramental salvation that is being presented. They understand that it is Christ who has saved them – not the sacraments. However, the average participants in the sacraments actually believe that God is conveying grace to them through the sacraments and they depend or rely upon the sacraments for salvation and forgiveness instead of Jesus Christ. In short, *many are trusting in sacraments to bring salvation to them instead of trusting in Christ to bring salvation to them*. This is the sad reality that is taking place within corrupt denominationalism. This is the reason for exposing the false teaching of sacramental salvation. Our hearts should be burdened (Psalm 126:5-6) for those who believe that eating or drinking something, participating in some religious ceremony, or doing some kind of penitential work will grant them forgiveness and bring salvation into their lives.

We are never told in Scripture to place faith in Christ through sacraments, or something that *indirectly* points to Christ, but to place our faith *directly* in Christ alone to be our Savior. In order to get to Christ people are told that they must go through something else (the sacraments) or someone else (Priests, bishops, Mary). But the Bible says we receive God's grace for salvation and eternal life by DIRECTLY and ONLY expressing faith in Christ (John 1:12) who is the only way to Heaven (John 14:6). Therefore, believing in the need to receive forgiveness through sacraments is not the same thing as believing in Jesus Christ and Him alone for salvation.



Sacraments won't take you into God's presence. They cannot save you. This means that you will spend eternity in hell if you rely upon sacraments to save you. This is because sacraments hide or mask the saving and sufficient work of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16) and keep you from trusting in Jesus Christ as your Savior. For most people in mainline denominational churches, the sacraments are a barrier that keep them from expressing faith alone in Christ alone for their salvation. When a person is seeking forgiveness through the waters of baptism, continued forgiveness through Mass or the Eucharist, when they need to acquire forgiveness of their sins through the absolution of priests or some other ecclesiastical minister, and when they believe they need to have Last Rites performed over them, this is not an expression of faith in Christ ALONE to be one's Savior from hell.

Think of it this way; if Christ cannot save you without sacraments, then you are not placing your faith ALONE in Christ for your salvation. Faith in sacraments is not faith in Christ and faith in Christ is not faith in sacraments. Here is something you must never forget. *You don't get to Christ through sacraments; you get to Christ through Christ* who alone is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Jesus is not a mediator through another mediator (sacraments). He is the only mediator between God and man.

1 Timothy 2:5

"For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

A one-time expression of faith alone in Jesus Christ is all that is needed to grant eternal life, forgiveness, and justification before God (John 6:47; Acts 26:18; Titus 3:7). The faith of many Catholics, Methodists, Episcopalians, and Lutherans is a *misplaced, misguided, and misdirected* faith that is centered upon one's need to seek repeated forgiveness through the reimplementation of sacraments instead of only through Christ. The vehicles or agents designed to channel salvation into a person's life (the good works of sanctifying grace, the sacraments of baptism, Mass, Eucharist, Reconciliation/Penance, Absolution of priests or ministers, Last Rites, Mary, Indulgences, Purgatorial purging) become the basis of a person's faith instead of Christ.

Believing that salvation gradually comes into a person's life through a lifetime of eating, seeking forgiveness through priests or bishops, and participation with all of the sacraments is not trusting in Christ for one's salvation. The Churches of Christ that promote forgiveness of salvation through baptism are really no better. They also require this sacrament in order for a person to be forgiven of all their sins and saved from hell.

What does the Bible say? The Bible teaches "For by grace (the unmerited, unearned, undeserving favor of God) are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). Grace is only seen in Christ's death (Acts 15:11; Titus 2:11) - not in the sacraments. Christ, His presence, and salvation are not in the sacraments. The Bible teaches this nowhere. The Bible goes on to say that salvation is "the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). This means that salvation is something that cannot be conditionally earned by anything a person does, or is required to do, in order to obtain forgiveness before God (Baptism, Mass, eating something, Penance). The Bible passage ends by saying that salvation is "Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:9). This means that sacraments (something we do or someone else does for us to channel grace and salvation into our lives) cannot be part of Biblical salvation. Sacraments are a works-based salvation and the Bible says that salvation is by grace and not by works.

Many religious people view their salvation as a process whereby sacraments are reapplied to their lives over and over again. The reapplication of sacraments is deemed necessary to provide forgiveness of their sins before God and bring salvation into their lives. However, the Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and **thou shalt be saved**" (Acts 16:31); "**he shall be saved**" (John 10:9); "**thou shalt be saved**" (Rom. 10:9); "**shall be saved**" (Rom. 10:13); "**ye are saved**" (1 Cor. 15:2); "**he saved us**" (Titus 3:5); "**who hath saved us**" (2 Tim. 1:9) and "**them which are saved**" (Rev. 21:24). None of these Bible texts say that a person is saved gradually through a lifetime of receiving sacraments. Instead, a person is saved once-and-for-all-and-forever the moment he places faith alone in Jesus Christ for salvation from hell. You don't have to keep back to the sacraments to find forgiveness and salvation.

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The Bible does not say that we believe in Christ through receiving visible or tangible sacraments, or participating with sacramental orders in a church denomination, so that you can be forgiven, accepted before God, and in the end receive eternal life. A thousand times no! We can simply believe in Christ without the implementation and participation with sacraments and know that we have eternal life right now and forever through faith in God's promise.

1 John 5:13

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; (not believe with sacraments) that ye may know that ye have eternal life (through Jesus Christ ALONE - without sacraments), and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

We do not need tangible objects to transfer our faith to Christ. God's promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ alone, without tangible or visible sacraments, should be the anchor of our faith and give us assurance that we have eternal life. The need to receive sacraments for forgiveness and salvation has deceived great masses of religious people. Sacraments are designed to take the place of Christ's finished work on the cross and devise another way to bring salvation into a person's life. Jesus taught that he which "climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber" (John 10:1).

Jesus also taught in John 10:9:

"I am the door (not sacraments): **by me** (not by the sacraments) if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

It's not baptism and Christ. It's not Mary and Christ. It's not Mass and Christ. It's not sacraments and Christ. It's not absolution and Christ. It's not Penance (good works) and Christ. It's Christ! If a person *needs* something else outside of Jesus Christ to grant them forgiveness and salvation, if a person must *receive* something other than Jesus Christ (John 1:12) for salvation and forgiveness, and if a person must *repeat* their participation in sacraments to find acceptance before God, then that person's faith is not rooted in Jesus Christ alone for his or her salvation.

Sacraments have nothing to do with the Gospel or faith in Jesus Christ. Neither the Gospel message or the way to receive the Gospel message through faith in Christ includes sacraments. From a Biblical viewpoint, sacraments are not part of the Gospel message (1 Cor. 15:3-4), sacraments are not part of the expression of a person's faith (Gal. 3:26), and sacraments have no ability to transfer grace into one's life, since grace and salvation is only channeled into our life through Jesus Christ alone (John 10:9; 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5).

There is not one shred of evidence in the Bible that teaches we receive salvation through sacraments. Taking external sacraments for one's salvation is a DIVERSION from genuine faith in Christ which is ONLY trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ to save you (Christ died for you and rose again – 1 Cor. 15:3-4).

Making sacraments (Baptism, Mass, Eucharist, Confession, Absolution, Penance, Last Rites), as a NECESSARY part or expression of one's faith in Christ, is actually not faith in Christ at all – it's unbelief. If you think that you need sacraments to provide you with forgiveness and save you, then you are really saying, "Christ, you are not enough." But the Bible repeatedly teaches that Christ is enough to save you forever, give you eternal life, and take you to Heaven (John 3:15-16; 6:47; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; Col. 2:10; Gal. 3:13-14).

Believing that the sacramental ceremonies of Baptism, Mass, holy Eucharist, Confession, the Absolution of priests or bishops, and Last Rites convey grace into your life is believing that you need someone else (priests and bishops) or something else (ceremonies and good works), other than Jesus Christ, to save you and make you right before God. Your faith is not rooted in Christ but in the sacraments. The Bible teaches that grace, forgiveness, and salvation is not channeled to us gradually throughout the years of our lifetime through sacraments, but is given to us once and for all through Jesus Christ, when we express faith in Him for salvation. Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." This means we are delivered from God's wrath forever through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We believe and we receive salvation freely, fully, finally, and forever.

Isaiah 45:22

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is none else.*"

God did not say look unto me *through the sacraments* so you can be saved. He said “look unto me and be ye saved.” There is a difference! Where you look for your salvation is very important. Many people today are looking for salvation through their church, the sacraments that they receive or perform throughout their lifetime, and by waiting for some priest or other clergyman to pronounce them forgiven. But God says, look unto my Son Jesus Christ who died in the sinner’s place, so you can find total forgiveness and salvation from hell forever! Genuine faith in Jesus Christ bypasses the sacraments. All we must do is look to Christ. Look and live! Oh the simplicity of it! Have you only looked to Jesus Christ for your salvation from hell and the free gift of eternal life?



Jesus said in John 3:14-15:

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

Looking is compared to believing in these verses. As the children of Israel looked upon the serpent upon the pole, they were physically saved from death. In a similar way, as we look only to Christ, who was high and lifted up on the cross, we can be spiritually saved from hell and the second death (Rev. 20:11-15). We must look at Jesus alone in order to receive forgiveness for all of our sins forever, salvation from hell, eternal life in Heaven, and full and final acceptance in God’s presence. We are not to be looking to sacraments but looking to Christ. Will you look to Christ today for your salvation? Is your faith resting in sacraments instead of the true Savior? If so, will you transfer your faith alone to Christ and receive the free gift of eternal life?

Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin *is* death (separation from God in hell); but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

A gift can only be free! The free gift of eternal life comes to us DIRECTLY through the saving work of Jesus Christ. No sacraments are required. No baptism, repeated Masses, no Eucharist, no confessions to priests, Absolution of priests, works of penance (good works) or Last Rites are required. Christ is enough! Just transfer your faith to Jesus Christ instead of to sacraments and you can receive the free gift of eternal life.



Will you transfer your faith away from the sacraments and place your faith only in Jesus Christ to be your Savior from hell?

Romans 10:13

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Calling upon Christ in prayer is how a person expresses faith, trust, or full confidence and reliance in Jesus Christ alone to be his Savior. You don't need sacraments. Don't allow sacraments to create a barrier between you and salvation through Jesus Christ alone. Transfer your faith to Christ alone right now. He will save you from hell forever by giving you the free gift of salvation and eternal life. Bypass the sacraments and go straight to Jesus Christ for your salvation.

Acts 4:12

“Neither is there salvation in any other (no other sacrament, ceremony, person, or church): for there is none other name under heaven given among men (the name of Jesus!), whereby we must be saved.”

Life's biggest decision is what you do with Jesus. Will you express faith in Christ to save you or not? You cannot be neutral in this matter. It's yes or no! You might say that I came to Jesus through the sacraments, through the church, through baptism, but this could never be! You can only come to Jesus through the cross of Christ and believing upon His finished work on the cross you can be justified and saved.

“What will you do with Jesus?
Neutral you cannot be;
Someday your heart will be asking,
“What will He do with me?”

Below is a prayer that might help you to express your own personal faith in Jesus Christ. Remember that it is your faith alone, in Christ alone, that saves you by grace alone. Bypass the sacraments and rely only upon Jesus Christ to be your Savior.

“Dear Lord Jesus, I have been looking to sacraments as the basis of my salvation and entrance into Heaven. I realize that I cannot get to Heaven through receiving or participating with sacraments but by only trusting in the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Right now I transfer my faith from sacraments to Jesus Christ. I want Christ to be my Savior from hell and give me the free gift of eternal life. I will believe from this day forward that my sins are forgiven through Jesus Christ alone, that I have eternal life, and that I am going to Heaven when I die. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”