

# Instruction In The Westminster Standards

## The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations

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### STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 92. What is a sacrament?

- A. A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.

**Scripture References:** Gen. 17:7, 10. Exodus 12. I Cor. 16:23, 26.

#### Questions:

1. Where did we obtain the word "sacrament"?  
The word "sacrament" is a theological word, not a biblical word. It is of Latin origin and was used by the Romans to signify their military oath. The soldiers, in taking this oath, promised that they would not forsake the standard of their leader.
2. How is the word "sacrament" used by the church today?  
Rightly used, it means something that is sacred, it is a solemn engagement to be the Lord's.
3. Why do we call a sacrament a "holy ordinance"?  
It is called a "holy ordinance" because it has been appointed for holy reasons.
4. Is it necessary that a sacrament be "instituted by Christ"?  
Our Larger Catechism uses the words "instituted by Christ in His Church" and our Confession states "immediately instituted by God" and Paul expresses the necessity by his words in I Cor. 11:23 — "For I have received of the Lord. . . ."
5. What are the two parts to a sacrament?  
The two parts to a sacrament are: (1) The outward or sensible signs; (2) The inward grace, the spiritual part.
6. How can we bring these two parts together?  
We can bring them together by recognizing that the inward graces are represented by the outward signs.
7. Why are the benefits only applied to believers?  
They are applied to believers for it is only believers who have the true faith that enables them to discern and apply the spiritual grace involved. It is only the believer who has a real, effectual application of Christ.

## COVENANT BREAKING

As we have studied further in the area of the sacraments, we are now more responsible than we were before our study. We have learned how the sacraments are effectual to salvation and we have learned what a sacrament is and its two parts. We will learn more as we go on in our study of the individual sacraments. The question we have before us now is: Dare we neglect the partaking of the sacraments?

This question, in the eyes of most members of the church, would be one to which they would certainly have the right answer. The problem is that to so many members of the church the answer is purely academic. It is academic and proven to be such by the actions of those same members. In short, they are covenant-breakers!

Too many times we fail to realize that neglect of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper make us covenant-breakers. Under the Old Testament it is very plain that neglect of the signs and seals of the covenant was pronounced as covenant-breaking by the Almighty, Sovereign God. And yet we fail so many times to realize that the neglect of the New Testament equivalents must be pronounced as covenant-breaking by the same God.

Time and time again ministers are faced with the problem of parents who, by their very membership in a church that teaches and practices infant baptism, are neglectful in the important area of presenting their children for baptism. The greater problem though is the church member who absents himself from the Lord's Supper time and time again. There does not seem to be any attitude of obligation on the part of the believer in this regard.

Charles Hodge in his book "The Way of Life" said that "the public confession of Christ is an indispensable condition of discipleship; that this confession must be made by attending on the ordinances which he has appointed; that these ordinances are not only the signs and seals of spiritual blessings, but are made, by the Holy Spirit, to the believer, effectual means of grace; that attendance upon them is, therefore, an indispensable duty . . ." May God keep us faithful in this regard. May we never be considered as covenant-breakers before Him!

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