
What About Baptism?

Analyzing the Federal Vision
Lecture 2

What About Baptism?

I. Scripture and Standards: Sacraments

1. *What are sacraments?*

“signs and seals of the covenant of grace.”

Sacraments “represent Christ and his benefits” and “confirm our interest in him”
(WCF 27.1)

2. *Sacramental union*

“the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other” (WCF 27.2)

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3. *Sacramental Efficacy*

- “a promise of benefit to worthy receivers”
(WCF 27.3)
- “The efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God’s own will, in his appointed time.”
(WCF 28.6)

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4. *Baptism – a converting ordinance?*

“The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls ... is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word, by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.” (WCF 14.2)

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5. *Baptism and Regeneration*

“Yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it [the ordinance of baptism], as that no person can be regenerated, or saved, without it; or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated” (WCF 28.5)

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The FV and Baptism: Westminster Standards

1. Douglas Wilson –

The *true* meaning of the Standards?

2. Rich Lusk –

Divide and Conquer

What About Baptism?

One's baptism is "*unto him* a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of *his* engrafting into Christ, or regeneration, of remission of sins, and of *his* giving up unto God, through Christ Jesus, to walk in newness of life" (28.1). The Confession is very clear: every baptized person should regard himself as a member of the covenant of grace and united to Christ ... Note that the benefits listed in 28.1 are spoken of in reference to the administration of baptism and the covenant, not to eternal election, which remains secret to us (cf. Dt. 29:29). In other words, they are objective and applicable, in principle, to every baptized person. The blessings belong to the one baptized, regarded as a member of the visible church, not as someone who is "secretly elect" or "genuinely regenerate."

Rich Lusk

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The “Paradox” of the Standards:

“Baptism saves but not all the baptized are saved”

“The objective meaning of baptism is not softened, but our subjective response determines what we actually get from the sacrament. And that response is subject to God’s foreordination. Baptism is the offer; faith is the receptor.”

Rich Lusk

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The FV and Baptism: Biblical Arguments

Acts 2:38 “Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” (NASB)

Acts 22:16 “Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.” (NASB)

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Rom 6:3-4

“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (NASB)

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- 1 Cor 6:11 “And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God” (NASB)
- 1 Cor 12:13 “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (NASB)
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The FV and Sacraments: Exposition & Critique

Sacramental efficacy

- ❑ Sociological
 - ❑ Redemptive
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“Preaching makes us desire what God offers in the sacraments”
(Rich Lusk)

“At this point, the Word has done its work. The hearers have been aroused and convicted. But apparently, they still aren't saved. Preaching alone is insufficient to make them participants in Christ's work of redemption. Thus Peter tells them what they must do [a citation of Acts 2:38 follows]. They must respond to the preached word with repentance and be baptized to enter into the way of salvation. Baptism, not preaching per se, is linked with forgiveness and the reception of the Spirit. Clearly, Peter believes God will give them something in baptism that they have not received through preaching alone. Baptism will consummate the process of regeneration begun by the Word preached.”

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“Preaching communicates truth, the sacraments communicate life” (Rich Lusk)

“Indeed there is a kind of equal ultimacy between these means [Word and sacraments]. Christ designed Word and Sacrament to work together, not to stand alone, in the application of redemption. However we construct our *ordo salutis*, each means of grace must be given its full due. We need truth and life, instruction and renewal, and so both preaching and the sacraments are essential to a biblically shaped Christian life.”

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Steve Wilkins
Baptism and Union with Christ

“The Bible teaches us that baptism unites us to Christ and to his body by the power of the Spirit. By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, we’ve all been made to drink of one Spirit.”

“To be baptized is to be covenantally joined to Christ. Not that baptism justifies, but it inaugurates covenant union with Christ just as circumcision did.”

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Steve Wilkins

Baptism and Redemptive Benefits

“When you’ve been baptized and put on Christ, at baptism *all the promises and blessings of the covenant* are delivered over to you, and God calls you then to *embrace them by faith* and *persevere* in the grace of God that has been given to you.”

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Steve Wilkins

Baptism and Redemptive Benefits

“Baptism, then, is the sign and seal of this reality [i.e. union with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection; our partaking of the Holy Spirit]. In baptism, we are transferred by the power of the spirit, from the old Adam, and the wrath and curse of God which rested upon the old man, into the new man, which is Christ Jesus. We are made new creatures in that sense, by the power of the Spirit, being restored to living communion with God.”

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Steve Wilkins

Baptism and Redemptive Benefits

“By baptism the Spirit joins us to Christ since he is the elect one and the Church is the elect people, we are joined to his body. We therefore are elect. Since he is the justified one, we are justified in him. Since he is the beloved one, we are beloved in him.”

What About Baptism?

II. Scripture and Standards: Perseverance

“They whom God hath accepted in his beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.” (WCF 17.1)

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“The perseverance of the saints depends not upon own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.” (WCF 17.2)

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The FV and Perseverance

Baptism gives *real* redemptive benefits

Saul “really did taste of God’s mercy and love; he really did possess the Holy Spirit and the new creation life the Spirit brings; he really was adopted into God’s family and really lived a godly, exemplary life for a time. But he failed to persevere.

The application should be clear: We are like Saul in Chapter 10. We have received the Spirit and been adopted by God in our baptism/anointing. But now we must persevere. If we sin, we must not make excuses, blameshift, pridefully try to save face, etc., but must, like David, cry out in humble repentance and brokenness and move on knowing God has forgiven us.”

Rich Lusk

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WLC 68

Q. Are the elect only effectually called?

A. All the elect, and they only, are effectually called; although others may be, and often are, outwardly called by the ministry of the Word, and have some common operations of the Spirit; who, for their wilful neglect and contempt of the grace offered to them, being justly left in their unbelief, do never truly come to Jesus Christ.

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“All in covenant are given all that is true of Christ. If they persevere in faith to the end, they enjoy these mercies eternally. If they fall away in unbelief, they lose these blessings and receive a greater condemnation than Sodom and Gomorrah. Covenant can be broken by unbelief and rebellion, but until it is, those in covenant with God belong to Him and are His. If they do not persevere, they lose the blessings that were given to them (and all of this works out according to God’s eternal decree which He ordained before the foundation of the world)”

Steve Wilkins
