

MARCH 20, 2020

It's the Bible study Evangelista show. Bible study spinach that tastes like cake, and here we love and lift all we've been given. I'm going to try to do that for you today through our new series a Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments. I am so excited about this series partly because you're so excited ha-ha, but also because this is one of my favorite things to teach. It's part of our RCIA for me which if you're not Catholic that is the sort of Catholic 101 that we teach those who are curious about Catholicism and its teachings. And so, this is one of my favorite things to teach because what I discovered upon my own fledgling research into the Catholic church is that God does not change as the scriptures say. And he is masterfully consistent, he is consistent. He did not do away with the structure of the Old Testament like an old shoe. He built on the skeleton of the Old Testament and he gave it to salvation, he made it salvific.

That's a big word we'll be using salvific or efficacious meaning that it brings salvation now through Christ, he built on the skeleton. And I remember asking Jesus, I asked him I said, "You know, how does that actually work?" And he sort of gave me a picture of his resurrected body. And he sort of said to me, "My body, my resurrected body is the same body, but now it is transformed. It can no longer die, and it is transformed, and it is supernatural, and in the same way then the Old Testament is the skeleton of salvation." It did not bring salvation because it didn't have any grace in it, but it was the foundation for which Christ would infuse it with salvation and change it. And I'm going to prove that throughout this series, but today specifically we're going to talk about whether sacraments are even biblical. Is the word Sacrament biblical?

The word Sacrament actually means covenant or swear. It's Latin. It's from the Latin word for oath, or sacramentum, and that's where we get the word Sacrament from. And in the international Standard Bible Encyclopedia, it's interesting because they give a very thorough argument against why sacraments are not biblical, and so I'm going to read part of that to you and I'm going to refute it because they actually refute it themselves throughout the entry under Sacrament, and I'll show you that. It also mentions that the word Sacrament comes from the Latin Sacramentum and in the classical Latin it was used in two ways.

The first was a legal term that denoted a sum of money deposited by two parties which was forfeited by the loser in some sort of legal suit, and it was given then to the winner for a sacred use. And so, it was a sacred use, that's the main point in that first use in the classical Latin. Its use was as a military term to designate the oath of obedience taken by a newly enlisted Soldier. So, we can see there that whether it refers to an oath of obedience or something set apart for sacred use it's evident then that sacramentum describes baptism, and the Lord's Supper; the sacraments, what we know of as the sacraments. But in the Greek New Testament there is no word for Sacrament because it's Greek ha-ha. The word Sacrament comes from the Latin. However, because it means an oath or a swear because of that it is entirely biblical. The Hebrew word for swearing an oath is **Sheba** and it means actually to seven one's self, but I'm getting ahead.

Augustine defined a sacrament as the visible form of an invisible grace, and we'll get into that further on into the show. But the Protestant churches kind of cut away from that definition of Augustine's during what they called the Reformation. We would call it the Rebellion and that's a whole nother I call it, down here in the south, argument which I've treated in several places but specifically in my book Fulfilled. But they cut away from the idea of sacraments and they did it based on the fact that there weren't settled principles for all of them in the Bible. And that's actually true because they're not explicitly described. Even baptism and the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper as Protestants would call it, they don't acknowledge any other institutions of Christ, those are the only two, and even those are not given to us in the complete form that we use today, whether it's Protestant or Catholic. And so that argument is completely null and void even for a Protestant. Because the way Protestants do baptism and the

01\_The “Masterwork” of God, A Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments

Lord's Supper is not what is given to us in the scriptures which I'll talk about as we unpack each of the sacraments in turn.

We're going to do a week on just the fact of whether or not sacraments are biblical. And then we'll do each of the sacraments in turn, and are they biblical, and where is it in the Bible? So, it will be about an 8-week series here on the sacraments.

But the ISBE says that, "The notion that there are seven sacraments has no New Testament authority and must be described as purely arbitrary. While the definition of a Sacrament is so vague that anything, but an arbitrary selection of particulars is impossible." Which I think this is hysterical because I'm going to show you exactly how it's biblical. It's so biblical they miss the forest for the trees by saying something like this because it over arches the entire Bible and I'm going to show you how in a moment. But it's through that idea of the Covenant. So, we know then that non-Catholics also acknowledge that baptism and the Lord's Supper were definitely distinctive rites and Paul himself ties those to the Old Testament. And in the New Testament -this is straight from the ISBE, it says, "In the New Testament the sacraments are presented as a means of grace."

Now they just previously said that the sacraments were not in the New Testament and now they say that in the New Testament the sacraments are presented as a means of grace. And that's true, they give baptism and the Eucharist as examples for; forgiveness in Acts 2:28, cleansing Ephesians 5:25, and spiritual quickening, or renewal in Colossians 2:12 are associated with baptism, and the Lord's Supper is said to be a participation in the body and blood of Christ in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:16 and actually I would argue also 11:10. And it says:

"So far all Christians are agreed but wide divergence shows itself thereafter. According to the doctrine of the Roman Church sacraments are efficacious in virtue of a power inherent in themselves as outward acts whereby they communicate saving benefit to those who receive them without posing any obstacle." That's a whole bunch of big old words and we'll unpack that in a moment. I want to continue reading the paragraph though.

"The reformed Doctrine, on the other hand, teaches that their efficacy lies not in themselves, as outward acts, but in the blessing of Christ and the operation of his spirit, and that it is conditioned by faith and the recipient." Okay now that's a total misunderstanding of what the church teaches about sacraments because, of course, yes, the sacrament itself is efficacious, but it's only efficacious because of the disposition of the person who's receiving it and the fact that the Holy Spirit is operating through it. So, for them to say that, that the Catholic church sees the sacrament as in and of itself efficacious just because, that's not an understanding of proper Catholic Doctrine, because the church teaches and believes that a Sacrament is a visible form, as Augustine said, of an invisible grace. That's not actually the exact definition of what a Sacrament is, but we'll get to that in a moment as well. I want to continue.

"The traditional Lutheran Doctrine agrees with the reformed in affirming that faith is necessary as the condition of saving benefits in the use of the sacraments." And of course, the Catholic Church does as well. It goes on, "But resembles the Roman teaching in ascribing the efficacy of baptism and the Lord's Supper, not to the attendant working of the Holy Spirit, but to a real inherent an objective virtue resident in them. A virtue however which does not lie, as the Roman Church says, (they say), in the elements and the action of the sacraments, but in the power of the divine word which they embody."

Now they just described the Catholic teaching of the sacraments because the Catholic Church understands that the sacraments in and of themselves are only efficacious because Jesus and his word, in the Holy Spirit through that, is active in them. Okay? So, I wanted to just read you what the non-Catholics think about sacraments ha-ha. And now I'm going to tell you what the Church teaches about the sacraments.

We know then that because the word Sacrament in Latin means to Covenant or to swear. The Latin word Sacramentum it means oath, or a swear, and the Hebrew word for an oath or a swear is **Sheba**, or a Covenant. And it literally means to seven one's self. A covenant is to seven one's self. We saw it immediately in the creation when

01\_The "Masterwork" of God, A Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments

God created on 6 days and he rested on the seventh and he made a covenant with both creation and Adam and Eve. Which we'll get into and break up and just a moment. But covenants are how God Father's his family throughout salvation history. And he began it immediately with creation and with Adam and Eve. And even before the fall God had this plan to ensure that all of creation would remain with him forever. He created it and he blessed it because he loved it. He created it because he loved it. You exist because he loved you first into being. Oh, my goodness I love this I can't wait to get into it more when we get back. I'm Sonja Corbitt the Bible study Evangelista.

The Latin word Sacrament is from the root for Covenant or swear, and the Hebrew word for swearing an oath, or a covenant, is to seven one's self. The word is **Sheba**. And we've talked about how covenants are how God Father's his family throughout salvation history. And this is why the sacraments are biblical because this swearing or this covenanting takes place throughout salvation history. It began with Adam and Eve and, throughout salvation history, is the story of this plan of Salvation that works all the way to the end of time through a series of seven Covenants. So, salvation history is this sweeping story of that working until, or through, the end of time through a series of covenants. So that, the Bible tells us this love story of the sevening of Humanity to God, and of human salvation from the beginning to its final conclusion of time.

St. Irenaeus was the bishop of Lyons in late 2<sup>nd</sup> Century France and he said that to understand the Divine program and economy for the Salvation of humanity we have to understand God's several covenants with humanity and also the special character of each Covenant. Now I'm not going to get into all of the covenants because the main Covenant that we are going to look at is the Covenant in Christ. That's the one we're going to look at because that's where the sacraments are. But each Covenant throughout the Old Testament carries a sign as a permanent memorial of its validity. Covenants illustrate this relationship between God and his people, and they include an increasingly larger circle of relationship than the Covenant that came before. It's almost like concentric circles and each one is contained in the next and they're all permanent. Every covenant foreshadows the final covenant in Christ and his new creation, which is what we are in now.

So, covenants also involve built-in blessings and curses. Now the curse idea is going to bother some of you and that's okay because I'll explain that in a moment. But all covenants progressively reveal more of God's complete self-gift, this self-donation of himself to humanity. And that proceeds from the Trinitarian communion until the final Covenant in which he reveals Himself as the Bridegroom of his Church, through Christ. So, I don't know if you've ever wondered why God created in 7 days rather than just one, but he's swearing an oath. He's sevening himself. He swears an oath because seven is the number of divine perfection in the Bible. So, he created in six days and he rested on the seventh and by doing so God sevened himself to everything he made. And in doing so he invites all of us, all of creation: the cosmos, angels and humanity in to Covenant with Him, and He swears Himself to us as our Father for all eternity.

And so, following the pattern of seven days of creation, there are seven covenants of salvation history. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day of creation covenants himself to Adam and Eve and all of creation. Then we're told and Luke that Adam is the son of God. So, there's this intimate family relationship that is established by that covenant. And then God the Father continues to father His family through covenants even after Adam and Eve broke it in the garden, he then establishes another covenant. He does one with Noah, and then one with Abraham; and then with Moses; and then with David; and then finally Jesus. And if you're counting that's actually only six; Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus, that's six. And through Jesus the final covenant is given and that's what we're in now; the covenant, the seven sacraments are themselves a sevening of God to his people in Jesus, in that final covenant. So, Jesus himself is a covenant to people, but also Jesus's sacraments are a covenant to the people. So, each time we receive a sacrament we are covenanting ourselves to God because he has first covenanted himself to us through Christ. Okay? Do you see that self-donation, that giving of love between God and his people?

So, all of those succeeding covenants God expands the family until there is one Holy Catholic and Apostolic church. And we see that in Adam and Eve they are a marriage, then Noah is a family, Abraham is a tribe, Moses is a nation, David is a kingdom, and Jesus is the universal church. Do you see how each of those then is wrapped up in 01\_The "Masterwork" of God, A Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments

the next? Adam and Eve is the smallest unit and then Noah is a family which includes the smallest unit of marriage. Then Abraham is a tribe which includes the family of Noah and the marriages of people ha-ha. And then Moses is a nation that includes all the tribes, all the families and all the marriages. David is a kingdom which includes the nation, the tribes, the families, and the marriages. And then Jesus which includes the Kingdom's, the nations, the tribes, the families, and then the marriages. Do you see how God then expands the Covenant? He doesn't set one aside, he includes it in the next so that none of it is lost, and all of it remains completely permanent. And that is one of the important things about a covenant or oath swearing.

In the Old Testament when one swears an oath there are a couple things that are always involved. The first one is the invoking of God's name; I swear. And then there is an exchange, not of goods and services like in a contract but in an exchange of persons in love: I am yours, and you are mine. I am your God; you are my people. And then the third thing is that unlike a contract covenants are permanent. That's why throughout the Old Testament God said you do this perpetually, this is a sign forever, this is a memorial forever, this is a participation forever, it's permanent; forever. And so that's why each of the succeeding covenants embraces the one before, wraps it up in this big embrace, this big hug and carries it forward to the next in a bigger way.

So, when we talk about the final thing that's involved in any sort of covenant making, or oath swearing, the final things, is the blessing and the curses. So, the blessing is God is ours, and we are his. The curse is, if we don't participate in the blessings then we stand outside them and are automatically cursed. That is the punishment for sin. The punishment for sin is not something that God does to us, it's something that we take on ourselves by forfeiting the blessings of the Covenants. It's not – I mean it is a punishment, it's actually worked in. Saint Paul talks about it in the Book of Romans, the wages of sin is death. That's an automatic thing it's just like gravity. I mean you can't argue with it, and it's not something that God does to people. It's what they do to themselves. They stand outside of the blessings of the Covenant if they don't receive them. So, God then after he put those covenants in place, all of those successive covenants, he promised throughout the scriptures to be mindful of His Holy Covenant and of the oath he swore to Abraham our father. He talked about that in the prophets specifically Zechariah.

But the amazing thing is that God himself is the one who swears the oath. In fact, Abraham was completely out of it in what the saints call an ecstasy. He was put in a different conscious state, or unconscious state we could say, he was in the state of ecstasy, and God then- he did all the work. And that's- that's what always happens, because we always break the covenant. God himself is always faithful even if we are not faithful the Bible says.

So, he is the one on whom each of the covenants rests. It's faithfulness rests in God. And in Christ, now Christ Jesus is the sixth covenant maker, right? or the one through whom God made that final covenant, or the almost final covenant. But the final one is actually made in Christ, so it's embraced in the covenant that Christ instituted in his own flesh; his body and blood. And in Christ there are seven covenants; seven sacraments. 7 in Salvation history, and then 7 in Christ for the rest of time.

That is too beautiful and too consistent to argue against. It is just too mysterious, too lofty for any man to have assembled or thought of on his own. And so Jesus then instituted 7 covenant making, 7 covenant renewing oaths, or promises, or swears. They are baptism; Eucharist; confession, or reconciliation; confirmation; marriage; holy orders and the last rites, or the anointing of the sick. And as I said we're going to go through each of these in the coming weeks. But like every other covenant, or every other oath in the Bible, the sacraments involve the invoking of God's name, an exchange of persons, permanency, and blessings and curses. So, we invoke God's name in baptism. We say I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And then we make the three signs of the cross, the priest does when he performs the right of baptism. And then we have put ourselves under oath to fulfill the terms of the covenant. What is the terms of the covenant? That God is ours and we are his: a complete self-donation in love.

That's what the covenant means. It's not a contract. It's not a legal document, it's an exchange of persons and that is what baptism does for us. And then the priest says, "receive the Light of Christ", and then we respond, "Amen." And we receive the new birth of Christ through that water and the word of Christ. And so that person has offered

01\_The "Masterwork" of God, A Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments

his child or himself to God, depending on whether or not it's an infant baptism, or a child's baptism, or an adult's baptism. And both are valid obviously because the parents have faith on behalf of the child and that's perfectly biblical which we'll talk about next week. And then God has given back his life to him for all of eternity and he's brought him into the family of God. Back in a moment.

All right I'm only about a third of the way through all of what I wanted to share with you and if I don't get to it I'll do like I did in the last series and I'll offer it as a bonus episode to the Friends of the Show. And that's a great segue into my newest Friends of the Show that I want to shout out. Although the list is long, I'm going to do it because I appreciate you so much.

Tim G; Cheryl C; Jalisa A; Denise S; Heather W; Patti D; Joseph B; Yajaira O-W; Susan B; James Y; Rowena A; Elva R; Courtney H; Lisa W; Angelica P; Katie P; Connie E; Elizabeth B; Dana T; Susan J; Kathy R; Kathy H; Jennifer M; Mary Z; Vicky D; Dawn B; Karen S; Sonia V; Tracy B; Tessa W; Jill A; Tricia H; Michele R; Coleen W; Patty G; Kathleen Marie A; Debrah M; Mary Beth B; Carolyn S; Jose S; Abigail M; John U; Bethany B; Margarita Y; Maria M; Samantha W; Veronica W; Jane J; and Mary S, thank you! All of my newest friends of the show. That's a long list but I wanted to shout you out because it's very important that I do so. I want to tell you also that you are, if you are a monthly donor your gifts are coming. I had to order a new shipment because I ran out halfway through. So, they're coming in the next week, I think.

So, God then gives himself to us and through our amen which means so be it, yes. It's like a solemn yes. We are receiving in baptism his life and we give our lives back to him that's what baptism has called us to do. We give ourselves to God, he gives himself to us in a complete self-donation.

He gave himself up to death for us so that we could receive him and so then we are called to give ourselves up unto death so that he might receive us. And this exchange of the complete person, both Divine in Christ, and ourselves is to be permanent, not that we're divine but that we receive the Divine Life of Christ in us and it is permanent, okay? We'll talk about that when you get to baptism. But we know that God cannot break the covenant because God is always faithful even if we are not, and that's where the blessing and the curse come forward.

Throughout our lives we are to call on the blessings of God to aid us in fulfilling this covenant and that's why they have to have grace in them because that was the drawback of the Old Testament covenant. It gave them the set of rules to obey and it gave them the way to come into closest contact possible, through the worship of the Old Testament system, but it didn't give them grace to be able to do it faithfully, and to keep their covenant. But we though have that grace in Christ and that's the difference. When we don't keep the covenant, when we don't live a life worthy of the calling to which we've been called in Christ, which that's actually quote from the scriptures, the covenant curse comes upon us. We see that in the fact that when we're not receiving the sacraments, we forfeit eternal life. We'll just start with baptism right there.

If you are not baptized- now there are situations in which you can't be baptized but you're long too and if you are one of those people that longs to receive baptism but you're hit by a bus before you can, the church calls that the baptism of desire, and so that counts. God understands that. Infants who are aborted, or situations in which there wasn't a baptism available, but God knows the heart of the person and if he or she had been able to receive it they would have wanted to. Those people have that baptism of desire and he assumes that for them, and then of course they are part of that Covenant. We see that in the good thief on the cross with Christ. He was not able to receive baptism, but Jesus himself was not confined and neither is God. He's not confined to the sacraments. The sacraments don't serve God. God serves us through the sacraments. And so, we can't put him in the box and say that it can't operate outside them, but in the ordinary way the church says, in the ordinary way baptism is necessary for salvation because it incorporates us into the body and the family of God.

And so we see then that the curse in this covenant swearing- the blessings are all the blessings that come through the covenant, and the curse is simply the forfeit of those blessings, and the main one is the forfeit of those blessings and the main one is the forfeit completely of final salvation.

01\_The "Masterwork" of God, A Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments



Jesus said to Nicodemus, “You must be born again in water and Spirit. What is that? Water and Spirit are baptism because later in Ephesians Saint Paul says that we are cleansed by water and word. That right there is a perfect description of the rite of baptism. Water and word. You have form, or matter, and you have the word of God, the word of Christ. And so, we see – well, I’m getting way ahead.

But the catechism says in 11:14 that adhering to the teachings of the scriptures, to the apostolic traditions and the consensus of the fathers we profess that the sacraments of the new law were all instituted by Christ our Lord. Jesus’s words and actions during his hidden life and public ministry were already salvific, for they anticipated the power of His Paschal mystery. They announced and prepared what he was going to give the church when everything was accomplished. The mysteries of Christ’s life are the foundations of what he would henceforth dispense in the sacraments through the ministers of his church. For what was visible in our Savior has passed over into his Mysteries.

Then in 1116 Sacraments are powers that come forth from the body of Christ which is ever living and life-giving. They are actions, here is a teaching, this is the teaching of the Catholic church; they are the actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his body the church. And I love this, they are, the sacraments are the masterworks of God in the new and everlasting covenant. And that covenant in Christ that was the sixth covenant in Christ. Jesus gave himself completely to us and we are called to give ourselves completely to him and in order to do that he gave us another set of covenants; the sacraments, and they are necessary for salvation it says in the catechism 11:29.

And in the sacraments, we swear to God that we believe and that we will live a life that is faithful to the Lord and we give ourselves completely to him in a total self-donation. That means you can’t hold something back. You can’t give him church on Sunday and then go out and live however you want to throughout the week because you’re not keeping the covenant. It means every single aspect of your life Sunday and Monday through Saturday in the boardroom, the family room, the bedroom, everywhere. There’s to be no picking and choosing which part of your life you give to Christ. That means your politics. That means your social justice. That means going to the shopping center. Everywhere you go and everything you do; you are giving yourself to God and to other people through him. You’re giving, you’re really giving him to people through you. He’s working through you.

Now why are the sacraments necessary? Because the belief in a body of teachings or even in Jesus is not biblical faith. Yes, you heard me say that. Believing in the teachings of the church is not faith. Believing in Jesus as the Son of God is not faith according to the Bible. Why? Because even the demons believe and tremble James says in chapter 2:19. So simple belief in a body of teachings or in a particular kind of worship, or any of that, all of that is necessary and good, but it’s not faith. Why? Because faith needs action. It’s a matter of action and I can prove it throughout the scriptures. Paul says that it is about faith and not of works but he’s talking about the Old Testament works of Judaism. When he talks about works, he’s talking about Old Testament Judaism. He’s not talking about the fact that Christians don’t need to do works. We were created for good works before the foundation of the world the Bible says, Paul says himself. We were created for that. So, if you don’t have any works James says then your faith is dead. You don’t have faith, there is no faith without works. James says it plainly, no matter what Martin Luther said or anybody else says, you must have works why? Because faith involves action.

Greek verbs all have motion and so that’s why throughout the New Testament we hear that we are saved, we are being saved oh, we have been saved, and we will be saved ha-ha because Greek verbs have motion. It means that salvation, the seed of Salvation comes to us through baptism, and we’ll talk about that next week, but that seed then has to continue to grow and it has to be completely fulfilled upon death. We can’t begin well and then quit. Jesus said it himself, ‘He who puts his hand to the plow and turns back is not worthy of the kingdom of God.’ It’s not a matter of losing your salvation where like you’re holding it in your hand, like a penny, and you’re walking, and then, “Whoops I dropped it, I lost it, I lost my salvation.” That’s not what it means to lose your salvation, it means to forfeit it by turning away from God and that is possible because each of us has free will. We are created in the image of God with that free will because God wants this complete self-donation, and he wants it to be voluntary out of love. And he won’t compel us or force us to give ourselves to him in that love and that

01\_The “Masterwork” of God, A Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments

reciprocation of love that he has shown us throughout salvation history, and all of those covenants, and then in Christ His Son and now through the sacraments. He is constantly giving himself to us.

Over the Easter, well Holy Week I was kind of talking to God and I was thinking about him on the cross. I was praying the sorrowful Rosary, the seven dolors rosary and it struck me, Jesus said very plainly, "I had no more blood to give you." And I just thought oh my gosh he has nothing else to give us that he hasn't already given us. You have everything that he could possibly give you in his life, his death, his resurrection and his sacraments. Back in the moment

Mercy! I'm still torn up after that. But we're talking about this self-donation and the sacraments, or the oaths or the covenants are necessary for us because they give us grace, they give us the grace that will get us to final salvation because salvation in the New Testament, in the Bible has motion. It's a Greek verb and it means it's begun, it is current, and it will continue until the very end. And that's why we have to have the sacraments because they are our helps, they are the spigot of grace we could say. They are the conduit for the flow of Grace that keeps us keeping the Covenant Faithfully and their tangible. This is a very important thing because a Sacrament contains both matter and spirit. They are tangible ways that we can receive Grace so there's no self-deception. We know that we've received Christ because God said that we would. Now I'll get into what all that means in a moment, but the actual formal definition of the church for a Sacrament is sort of similar to Augustine's. He said it was an invisible form of an invisible Grace and the formal definition of the church says an outward sign of an inward reality that gives grace. It's actually a grace giver.

It's not symbolic, it *is* symbolic actually but not merely symbolic. It's both symbolic, *and* real. And this is where we diverge mightily from our non-Catholic brothers and sisters who think that baptism and the Lord's Supper, they call it instead of the Eucharist, they think that those things are simply symbolic. They are but they're all so real, they are grace givers. Else why would Jesus tell us to do it, if it had no purpose? If it wasn't going to do something for us why would he tell us to do it? The simple answer is he told us to do it because he knew there would be grace in it and he made it that way. 'This *is* my body.' And when you receive it, he said in John 6 you will have eternal life, why? Because Jesus' body *is* eternal life. He is experiencing and living that eternal life now. When we receive his body and blood, when we receive his life in baptism, when we receive those graces through the sacraments, then we *are* participating in the Life of Christ himself. And that's the reason we can have eternal life because he is eternal life because we are receiving him and his graces.

So, sacraments then are a spigot of grace and they are a union because God is consistent right? He knows that Humanity, human beings are a union of material and spiritual. They are a union of body and soul; they are a union of matter and form. And so, the sacraments also have those two elements; material and spiritual, body and soul, matter and form. So every Sacrament has two elements; the matter which is the thing that is used; in baptism it's water, in confirmation its oil, the Eucharist it's Bread and Wine, in confession it is our own confession and then the absolution, the words of the priest. All of them have a matter, the thing that conveys the grace and then a form which are the words of Christ, or the words of the church through which Christ works. So, think about it no human power, not even one that is guided by the divine, but humanely applied power in the church could attach an inward grace to an outward sign.

Only God can do that and that's the difference between a sacrament and an ordinance. How are non-Catholic brothers and sisters see these institutions of Jesus as merely symbolic. They're ordinances rather than sacraments. They don't think – in fact I remember every single time I watched a baptism of a particular very dear Pastor whom I still love and keep in touch with- he would always run his hands through the water and let it drip out of his fingers and he would say, "There is no power in this water, it is merely symbolic."

And yet we know that because of the Holy Spirit that agitated the waters of creation, and that was in the boat in the storm with the disciples that agitated the waters in that storm; Jesus himself. That water brings life when the Holy Spirit is present and that is exactly what the church teaches about a sacrament. Only God can attach the grace to an outward sign, and he does. Every Sacrament is instituted by Christ because the church cannot Institute new

01\_The "Masterwork" of God, A Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments

sacraments. There are never more or less than seven because seven is the Divine swear number, the Divine oath number, the Divine Covenant number. There are seven in Christ.

And so, the other thing is that a Sacrament always gives grace. Unless it gives Grace, an outward sign is not a Sacrament, even if it is instituted by Jesus. An example of that is the washing of feet. Jesus did that in the upper room before his passion but that is not a Sacrament because he did not attach the grace to it. It's a sacramental rather than a sacrament. It doesn't mean that he couldn't, or he doesn't offer grace to people through the washing the feet because I've had my feet washed. I've done it in Retreats with other women, my husband has washed my feet and it is a very beautiful very humbling to receive. And you know it as well as I do every holy Thursday when the priest does it, we're all just in tears because it's so beautiful, but it's not a Sacrament in and out of itself, it's a sacramental.

Instead the sacraments give sanctifying Grace and that sanctifying Grace is eternal life. And that means a quality of life. It is God's own life, it is not quantity, it is life without end because God himself is eternal. It's more a quality, Jesus came to give us abundant life and that is, he's talking about, that quality of eternal life; God's own life. God's love and his grace does not increase through the sacraments because the Holy Spirit is not given to us in measure, John says in 3:34. But what does increase is my own capacity to receive grace.

If you think about, and I say this all the time in RCIA, if you think about your soul as an artery that receives grace from God, a soul in sin has a very restricted, very small, very thin artery but the more grace that comes into that artery - it's even blocked, the artery is blocked when there's serious sin. But when Grace comes in it expands and it unblocks the artery so that the blood of that grace can pump through the person, this person's soul. And so, a sacrament increases the capacity to receive grace. So, every time you receive a sacrament you receive grace. Now that is according to your own disposition which we'll talk about in the moment.

I mean if I go receive a sacrament it's not going to do me a whole lot of good if my disposition isn't good. So that's why you can go to confession for a hundred times for the same sin and because you haven't moved your will to repentance you continue to sin in it, even though you've received grace in the sacrament. At least you've gotten forgiveness at least you have if you have turned your will toward that repentance, but if you haven't then you might as well not even go to confession because it's not going to do you any good. We'll talk about that when we get there. But I remember before I was Catholic, I asked God or Jesus I said, Lord there's got to be a way that we can be closer. Is there not a way that we can be closer? And when I received my first Eucharist it was a super marital moment. It was a complete self-donation of Christ to me in an answer to that prayer and it was my own complete self-donation to him. It's not that he doesn't do it in any other way, it's that this is a unique way.

The sacraments are a unique way to receive grace. They are a guaranteed way to receive grace. And so, Jesus answered that prayer and gave himself to me in a total self-donation in that Eucharist; his own body and blood. And it conveys that eternal life to us when our dispositions are proper. So, disposition itself doesn't cause the grace, the sacrament gives us grace, but a good disposition does remove the obstacles to a freer flow of grace through the spigot of the sacraments. And disposition of the priest doesn't matter either. The priest does not matter. Your priest can be as wicked a pervert or anything else, it doesn't matter. If he is truly through holy orders a priest, then the priest does not matter. The priest who actually conveys the grace is Jesus himself the high priest. That is the teaching of the church, the solemn dogma, the teachings of the church. It is not the priest who does it. It is Jesus through the priest. And we'll talk about why we need a priest for those, some of those sacraments when we get to holy orders.

But throughout the life of Christ then Jesus has provided for us ways to receive grace. Birth, at birth we have received baptism for a new birth. Then we are nourished through the food of the Eucharist. Then we receive medicine and strength through penance and confession and then we rise to maturity through confirmation. Then we have two states or vocations of life in matrimony or holy orders and at sickness or death we can receive extreme unction.

## 01\_The "Masterwork" of God, A Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments



So, to review only after understanding this self-donation- basis of covenant can we really understand the meaning of the New Testaments sacramental economy. In the Old Testament God gave himself in covenant through those increasing stages of self-donation. First to a couple, then a family, a tribe, a nation and a kingdom but there was no grace invested in those observances of their side of the covenants. And so that's why only in Christ could the observances that he commanded become grace filled and therefore lead us to salvation and so what connection does this have with sacraments? Well we saw that the Latin word for a swear or an oath or a covenant is sacramentum and that's where we get the word sacrament. Jesus instituted seven.

There were seven in the Old Testament up to Christ and then the last one will be the new heavens, the earth which will have come through these seven sacraments. The seven covenant-making, and seven covenant renewing oaths. Each one in an increasing self-donation. Baptism, Eucharist reconciliation, confirmation, marriage, holy orders, and anointing of the sick. And like all other oaths the sacraments involve the invoking of God's name, an exchange of persons, permanence, and then blessings, and curses for forfeiture. And so, he gives us to us through our amen. I think that is just absolutely beautiful and consistent. That is how consistent God says. So, we stood to wear a nurse through the sacraments to God that we will live faithfully and give ourselves to him completely. The law did not communicate Grace, but the sacraments do and that my friend we will look at next week at baptism as the sacrament that incorporates us into the family of God. Until then I'm Sonja Corbitt your Bible study Evangelista.

