

Faithful to the Word of God – An Overview of Systematic Theology

A Video Series by Dr, R.C Sproul

Introduction to Session 40, “The Sacraments of the Church”

Part 3 in a study of Ecclesiology, the study of the nature, function, and mission of the church

Preview

- Ecclesiology. From the Greek “ekklesia.” Meaning those who have been called out, or chosen by God (Mat 16:18)

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- The Sacraments are sacred and holy gifts (from the Latin *sacer*) that Christ has given to His church, but they are also an area of theology that has provoked endless controversy
 - For the Reformers, one of the genuine marks of a valid church was the proper administration of the sacraments. But there was a sharp disagreement with Rome about the specifics
- The number of the sacraments is disputed
 - The Roman Catholics recognize 7, roughly corresponding to the stages of life
 - But for the Reformers, the qualification for a sacrament was that it had to be instituted directly and explicitly from Christ Himself. Only two qualify:
 - Baptism (Matt 28:18-20)
 - The Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:23-26)
- The benefits of the sacraments are also a point of distinction
 - Roman Catholics understand them to be the means by which grace is infused into the soul of the participant
 - But the Reformers insisted that they are beneficial only for those who receive them in and by faith. When genuine faith is present, then the blessing is fully received
- In the life of the Protestant church the sacraments are seen as signs and seals
 - Signs: The Word dramatized. Communicating the truth of it by visible signs.
 - Seals: God’s visible guarantee of His promises of redemption to us