

4. The Necessity of the Ordinances/Sacraments

a. The Baptist View

A. H. Strong treats this question of necessity in connection with baptism. He writes:

- B. This external rite intended by Christ to be of universal and perpetual obligation.
- (a) Christ recognized John the Baptist's commission to baptize as derived immediately from heaven.
  - (b) In his own submission to John's baptism, Christ gave testimony to the binding obligation of the ordinance.
  - (c) In continuing the practice of baptism through his disciples and in enjoining it upon them as part of a work which was to last to the end of the world . . . Christ manifestly adopted and appointed baptism as the invariable law of his church.
  - (d) The analogy of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper also leads to the conclusion that baptism is to be observed as an authoritative memorial of Christ and his truth, until his second coming.
  - (e) There is no intimation whatever that the command of baptism is limited, or to be limited, in its application, -- that it has been or ever is to be repealed; and, until some evidence of such limitation or repeal is produced, the statute must be regarded as universally binding.

-- Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology*,  
Volume III, pp. 931-933.

b. The Reformed View

"The distinction between the necessity of precept and the necessity of means, is obvious and important. No one would be willing to say, without qualification, that it is unnecessary to obey an explicit command of Christ. And as He has commanded his disciples to baptize all who are received as members of his Church, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and required his disciples stately to commemorate his death by the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the strongest moral obligation rests upon his people to obey these commands.

By the necessity of means is usually understood an absolute necessity, a '*sine qua non*'. In this sense food is a necessity of life; light is necessary to the exercise of vision; the Word is necessary to the exercise of faith, for It is its object, the thing which is to be believed; and faith is, on the part of adults, necessary to salvation, for it is the act of receiving the grace of God offered in the Bible. . . .

The question between the Reformed on the one hand, and Lutherans and Romanists on the other, is in which of these senses are the sacraments necessary. According to the Reformed they have the necessity of precept. The use of them is enjoined as a duty; but they are not necessary means of salvation. Men may be saved without them.