

THE ORDINANCES

We believe Christ has given the church three divine ordinances.

The term "ordinances" is used when speaking of Baptism, Feet Washing, and the Lord's Supper. Our understanding of the term "ordinance" comes from two traditions. One relates to the observance of the Passover. Another comes from Paul's instructions to the church at Corinth. The term "ordinance" is used with reference to the memorial observance of the Old Covenant Passover: "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever" (Exodus 12:14 KJV). The Church has historically obeyed Paul's directive to the believers in Corinth, "Now I praise you brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you" (1 Corinthians 11:2 KJV).

We use the term "ordinance" instead of "sacrament." The word "sacrament" is not used because in its historical development it implies the imparting of saving grace. We believe God uniquely blesses members of the family of God as they participate in these special acts of worship (John 13:17). Salvation, however, comes only from believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. H. Forney, an early leader in our church, in *The Philosophical Basis of the Ordinances* (Harrisburg: Central Publishing House, 1906), listed five characteristics necessary for a ceremony to be classified as an ordinance:

- 1) *Divine Authority*. To be an ordinance the practice must have been instituted by Christ. This means he ordered it and observed it.
- 2) *Formal Observance*. A Christian ordinance is a rite. It is a visible ceremony which celebrates deep spiritual truth.
- 3) *Material Elements*. The elements are natural symbols, things tangible, selected by Christ because of their particular power to portray spiritual reality.
- 4) *Redemptive History*. An ordinance must point directly to a great historical fact in Christ's mission to redeem humanity.
- 5) *Spiritual Experience*. An ordinance is expressive of some great fact in our spiritual experience.