



Ask questions
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Understanding Worship: How God Makes Us Christian

CLASS 3: How We Are Being Saved

The *ordo salutis* (order of salvation, ref. *Rom. 8:28-30*):

Election, *2 Thess. 2:13, Eph. 1:3-4*

Calling, *Rom. 10:14-15*

Regeneration, *John 3:3-8*

Justification, *Jam. 1:18, 1 Pet. 1:23*

Adoption, *Rom. 8:15*

Sanctification, *1 Thess. 5:23-24*

Perseverance, *1 John 2:19*

Glorification, *1 Cor. 15:12-14, Rom. 8:23-25, 30*

Describe God’s “ordinary means of grace”

How is “the preaching of the Word of God the Word of God?”

What are the “keys of the kingdom?”

How does the corporate worship service function in God’s economy?

Recommended reading:

Primary

Michael Joe Matossian, “The Church and the Mediation of Grace: A Reformed Perspective on Ordained Ministry and the Threefold Office of Christ” Ph.D. diss. (Marquette University, 2012); https://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/236/

Supporting

J. Mark Beach, “The Real Presence of Christ in the Preaching of the Gospel: Luther and Calvin on the Nature of Preaching” *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, Vol. 10 (1999)

Michael Horton, “Union and Communion: Calvin’s Theology of Word and Sacrament” *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (2009)

Belgic Confession, Article 30

We believe that this true church must be governed according to the spiritual order which our Lord has taught us in his Word. [What does that mean? That there are local practices that God has instituted for his church to guide the faith of his people.] There should be ministers or pastors to preach the word of God and to administer the sacraments. There should also be elders and deacons who, together with the pastors, form the council of the church. By these means, they preserve true religion.

Canons of Dort, art. 17, God’s Use of Means in Regeneration.

Just as the almighty work by which God brings forth and sustains our natural life does not rule out but requires the use of means, by which God, according to his infinite wisdom and goodness, has wished to exercise that divine power, so also the aforementioned supernatural work by which God regenerates us in no way rules out or cancels the use of the gospel, which God in great wisdom has appointed to be the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul. For this reason, the apostles and the teachers who followed them taught the people in a godly manner about this grace of God, to give God the glory and to humble all pride, and yet did not neglect meanwhile to keep the people, by means of the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the administration of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline. So even today it is out of the question that the teachers or those taught in the church should presume to test God by separating what God in his good pleasure has wished to be closely joined together. For grace is bestowed through admonitions, and the more readily we perform our duty, the more lustrous the benefit of God working in us usually is, and the better that work advances. To God alone, both for the means and for their saving fruit and effectiveness, all glory is owed forever.

Westminster Confession of Faith, c. 25

2. The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law) consists of all those, throughout the world, that profess the true religion, and of their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

3. Unto this catholic visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world: and doth by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto.

Abraham Kuyper, *On the Church*

We can also distinguish between what occurs within the ministry of the word and outside the ministry of the word. What is spoken outside the ministry of the word in evangelism or small group may have 3 profitable results, but it is not ministry. When the same preacher speaks at an evangelism event in the morning, And in a public assembly of believers at night, and he delivers the same speech, then the former is unofficial outside the ministry, and only the latter is ministry of the word. Ministry of the word does not necessarily take place when a preacher speaks, but only when an ordained person proclaims the word as ambassadors of Christ in the assembly of believers within the framework defined by the consistory, and the name of King Jesus invested with authority. So this ministry of the word is absolutely not limited to preaching in the narrow sense. Within the ministry of the word, the catechism can be explained to the assembly of believers, and within the ministry of the word,

discipline must be maintained, all of these. First, ministry in the ordinary assembly of believers with the proclamation of the Word, exposition of the catechism, administration of the sacraments, prayers, songs of praise, and alms. Second, instruction in catechism classes. Third, home visiting for admonition, rebuke, and consolation. Fourth, the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline. All of these together constitute the one encompassing ministry of the Word, for whose purpose Christ desires that the institution of his visible Church be maintained.

Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics: Ecclesiology, the Means of Grace*

The individual believer cannot remain by himself. The work of the application of the merits of the mediator also has a communal side. The church shows through this proclamation of the word that it understands and exercises its calling as the mother of believers. The ministry of the word is the means ordained by God to maintain the church and continue it. A church that would abandon this ministry, at least in its fundamental elements, would cease to be the mother of believers. It strikes at the sign and seal for the continuation of God's covenant. To abandon this ministry is equivalent to endangering the continuity of the church.... The ministry of Holy Scripture: This happens through the ministers of the word. They speak on the basis of the word and from the word and so open or shut the kingdom of heaven. This is a declarative power that then is only valid before God when it agrees with Scripture and when the situation to which it is applied is in fact as one assumes it to be. Consequently, there is a distinction in this power between mere scriptural interpretation by a private member and the official ministry of the word. God or Christ speaks to the congregation through the latter, through such who are called by him to that end.

Westminster Confession of Faith, c. 8. *Of Christ the Mediator*

To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same;^a making intercession for them,^b and revealing unto them, in and by the Word, the mysteries of salvation;^c effectually persuading them by his Spirit to believe and obey; and governing their hearts by his Word and Spirit;^d overcoming all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom, in such manner and ways as are most consonant to his wonderful and unsearchable dispensation.^e

Refs: a. John 6:37, 39; 10:15-16. • b. Rom 8:34; 1 John 2:1-2. • c. John 15:13, 15; 17:6; Eph 1:7-9. • d. John 14:16; 17:17; Rom 8:9, 14; 15:18-19; 2 Cor 4:13; Heb 12:2. • e. Psa 110:1; Mal 4:2-3; 1 Cor 15:25-26; Col 2:15.

Michael Joe Matossian, *The Church and the Mediation of Grace*

This perpetual and ongoing priestly function does not require that Christ repeatedly offer himself a sacrifice for sin. Rather, it is in the efficacy of his completed work that he now intercedes on behalf of his people that engages in other aspects of the priestly ministry. This means that the priestly office is not unoccupied, as Turretin explains. Therefore, although the act of sacrifice ceased on earth, the priesthood is not on that account unoccupied, since a priest is not ordained only for offering. but also for interceding and executing other functions. ... The priesthood of all believers is most manifest when the church gathers publicly for worship in order to fulfill the Petrine mandate of 1 Peter 2:4-10. That royal priesthood is called together to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ and to proclaim together the excellencies of the One who has called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light. Throughout this section of 1 Peter, the emphasis falls on priestly activity engaged in corporately and jointly rather than as discrete and separate individuals. For the very reason that individuals ought to be viewed from the perspective of their union with the church body as a whole, office in the church can be seen as a way to share in the priestly work of Christ that is given to the church and not as an intrusion on the equality of all believers. Officers of the church are one of the ways that Christ's priesthood is manifested and effected within the corporate body of the church. Jesus ministers through his appointees. There is no conflict between a corporate priesthood and individuals whom God chooses to use for accomplishing his ends, whether through individual ordained ministers or through the corporate priesthood, it is still Christ. By the instrumentality of his Holy Spirit, who is at work in and among his people, ministers of Christ, the pastoral office, are used by Christ to bring his grace to bear upon the world and his people. This does not militate against the privilege of every Christian in union with Christ, but it recognized God's own chosen system to apply his grace.

Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 83

Q83: What are the keys of the kingdom?

A. The preaching of the holy gospel and Christian discipline toward repentance. Both of them open the kingdom of heaven to believers and close it to unbelievers.¹

Refs: 1 Matt. 16:19; John 20:22-23

Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 84

Q84: How does preaching the holy gospel open and close the kingdom of heaven?

A. According to the command of Christ, The kingdom of heaven is opened by proclaiming and publicly declaring to all believers, each and every one, that, as often as they accept the gospel promise in true faith, God, because of Christ's merit, truly forgives all their sins. The kingdom of heaven is closed, however, by proclaiming and publicly declaring to unbelievers and hypocrites that, as long as they do not repent, the wrath of God and eternal condemnation rest on them. God's judgment, both in this life and in the life to come, is based on this gospel testimony.

Refs: Matt. 16:19; John 3:31-36; 20:21-23

Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter 18, Of The Ministers of The Church, Their Institution and Duties

GOD USES MINISTERS IN THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH. God has always used ministers for the gathering or establishing of a Church for himself, and for the governing and preservation of the same; and still he does, and always will, use them so long as the Church remains on earth. Therefore, the first beginning, institution, and office of ministers is a most ancient arrangement of God himself, and not a new one of men.

INSTITUTION AND ORIGIN OF MINISTERS. It is true that God can, by his power, without any means join to himself a Church from among men; but he preferred to deal with men by the ministry of men. Therefore ministers are to be regarded, not as ministers by themselves alone, but as the ministers of God, inasmuch as God effects the salvation of men through them.

Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter 17, Of The Catholic and Holy Church of God, and of the One Only Head of the Church

OUTSIDE THE CHURCH OF GOD THERE IS NO SALVATION. But we esteem fellowship with the true Church of Christ so highly that we deny that those can live before God who do not stand in fellowship with the true Church of God, but separate themselves from it. For as there was no salvation outside Noah's ark when the world perished in flood; so we believe that there is no certain salvation outside Christ, who offers himself to be enjoyed by the elect in the Church; and hence we teach that those who wish to live ought not to be separated from the true Church of Christ.

THE CHURCH IS NOT BOUND TO ITS SIGNS. Nevertheless, by the signs [of the true Church] mentioned above, we do not so narrowly restrict the Church as to teach that all those are outside the Church who either do not participate in the sacraments, at least not willingly and through contempt, but rather, being forced by necessity, unwillingly abstain from them or are deprived of them; or in whom faith sometimes fails, though it is not entirely extinguished and does not wholly cease; or in whom imperfections and errors due to weakness are found. For we know that God had some friends in the world outside the commonwealth of Israel. We know what befell the people of God in the captivity of Babylon, where they were deprived of their sacrifices for seventy years. We know what happened to St. Peter, who denied his Master, and what is wont to happen daily to God's elect and faithful people who go astray and are weak. We know, moreover, what kind of churches the churches in Galatia and Corinth were in the apostles' time, in which the apostle found fault with many serious offenses; yet he calls them holy churches of Christ (I Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:2).

Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter 1, Of The Holy Scripture Being the True Word of God

THE PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD IS THE WORD OF GOD. Wherefore when this Word of God is now preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very Word of God is proclaimed, and received by the faithful; and that neither any other Word of God is to be invented nor is to be expected from heaven: and that now the Word itself which is preached is to be regarded, not the minister that preaches; for even if he be evil and a sinner, nevertheless the Word of God remains still true and good. Neither do we think that therefore the outward preaching is to be thought as fruitless because the instruction in true religion depends on the inward illumination of the Spirit, or because it is written "And no longer shall each

man teach his neighbor..., for they shall all know me" (Jer. 31:34), And "Neither he who plants nor he that waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (I Cor. 3:7). For although "No one can come to Christ unless he be drawn by the Father" (John 6:44), And unless the Holy Spirit inwardly illumines him, yet we know that it is surely the will of God that his Word should be preached outwardly also. God could indeed, by his Holy Spirit, or by the ministry of an angel, without the ministry of St. Peter, have taught Cornelius in the Acts; but, nevertheless, he refers him to Peter, of whom the angel speaking says, "He shall tell you what you ought to do."

INWARD ILLUMINATION DOES NOT ELIMINATE EXTERNAL PREACHING. For he that illuminates inwardly by giving men the Holy Spirit, the same one, by way of commandment, said unto his disciples, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). And so in Phillippi, Paul preached the word outwardly to Lydia, a seller of purple goods; but the Lord inwardly opened the woman's heart (Acts 16:14). And the same Paul, after a beautiful development of his thought, in Romans 10:17 at length comes to the conclusion, "So faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God by the preaching of Christ." At the same time we recognize that God can illuminate whom and when he will, Even without the external ministry, for that is in his power; but we speak of the usual way of instructing men, delivered unto us from God, both by commandment and examples.

Westminster Larger Catechism, Q&A 155

Q. 155. How is the word made effectual to salvation?

A. The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but *especially the preaching* [emphasis mine] of the word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; or building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

Westminster Larger Catechism, Q&A 163

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