

Academy: The Ordinances Intro notes

Goal: To develop a greater affection for God and his means by unpacking what these rituals are, what they do, and why they are such a precious gift of grace to us from our Father above.

- Knowing what they are helps us understand how we are to approach and handle them.
- Knowing what they do helps us understand how God is working in us.
- Knowing that they are precious gifts should move our hearts in worship.

God Communicates:

- Special Revelation
 - knowledge that God conveys by direct supernatural instruction, namely scripture.
- General Revelation is the knowledge of God that is imprinted on all things made.
 - “For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” Romans 1:20 ESV
 - “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.” Psalm 19:1-2 ESV
- Special Revelation as Primary
 - “It should be borne in mind, however, that, while the Word can exist and is also complete without the sacraments, the sacraments are never complete without the Word.” ~ Louis Berkhoff
 - “They do not precede the Word but follow it; they have not the power to grant a particular grace which cannot be given by the Word nor be accepted by faith...” ~ Herman Bavinck

Definitions:

- Ordinance
 - an authoritative order or a solemn prescription.
 - Used interchangeably
 - This was preferred because it emphasized what Christ had specifically commanded to be carried out.
- Means of Grace
 - “The means of grace are those conduits through which Christ alters, modifies, adjusts, changes, transforms, and develops souls on the earth.” ~ Richard Barcellos
- Sacraments
 - The Latin word “Sacramentum” was used in the Latin translation of the bible called “The Vulgate” as a translation of the Greek word *mysterion* (mystery).

- “of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the **mystery** hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.” Colossians 1:26 ESV
 - “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the **mysteries** of God.” 1 Corinthians 4:1 ESV
- Historic Reformed definition
 - *“A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, in which by sensible signs the grace of God in Christ, and the benefits of the covenant of grace, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers, and these, in turn, give expression to their faith and allegiance to God.” ~ Louis Berkhof*
 - *“A testimony of divine favor towards us, confirmed by an external sign, with a corresponding attestation of our faith toward him.” ~ John Calvin*
 - The spiritual realities and the physical means are meant to be distinguished, but not removed or conflated.
 - “So neither ought our confidence to be fixed on the sacraments, nor ought the glory of God to be transferred to them, but passing beyond them all, our faith and confession should rise to him who is the Author of the sacraments and of all things.” ~ John Calvin