

Means of Grace Lesson #4

Larger Catechism

Q. 155. How is the word made effectual to salvation? The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching 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; of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

Four ways word of God is made effectual to salvation

1. as a means of “enlightening sinners” - God reveals Himself to us by His word and the Scriptures teach us how God relates to man (covenants).
2. as means of “convincing/humbling sinners” - law/gospel found throughout Scripture; one use of the law is to show us our sinfulness/need for savior, to drive us to Christ.
3. as means of “conforming us to his image and subduing us to His will” How will you know what pleases God? By knowing His word.
4. as means of “guarding against temptation and making us holy” Christ rebuked Satan with the word; the word is our defense against the world, our flesh, and the devil.

Two ways the Spirit makes the Word effectual in life of Christian:

1. Reading of word of God
2. Preaching of word of God

Q. 156. Is the Word of God to be read by all? Although all are not to be permitted to read the word publicly to the congregation, yet all sorts of people are bound to read it apart by themselves, and with their families: to which end, the holy Scriptures are to be translated out of the original into vulgar languages.

“Now it appears, that it is the duty of every one to read the word of God, inasmuch as it is given us with this design. If God is pleased, as it were, to send us an epistle from heaven, it is a very great instance of contempt cast on it, as well as on the divine condescension expressed therein, for us to neglect to read it. Does he impart his mind to us herein, and is it not our indispensable duty, to pay the utmost regard thereto?” - Thomas Ridgely

Q. 157. How is the Word of God to be read? The holy Scriptures are to be read with an high and reverent esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very Word of God, and that he only can enable us to understand them; with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them; with diligence, and attention to the matter and scope of them; with meditation, application, self-denial, and prayer.

Q. 158. By whom is the Word of God to be preached? The Word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved and called to that office.

Q. 159. How is the Word of God to be preached by those that are called thereunto? They that are called to labor in the ministry of the word, are to preach sound doctrine, diligently, in season and out of season; plainly, not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God; wisely, applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers; zealously, with fervent love to God and the souls of his people; sincerely, aiming at his glory, and their conversion, edification, and salvation.

Reading word vs preaching word

“the Spirit of God maketh the reading, but *especially* the preaching of the word...”

Benefits of preaching beyond reading

- Minister expounds upon the scriptures

Neh 8:4,5,7,8 So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose... 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up... 7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place... 8 So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.

- Preaching the word involves reproving, rebuking, and exhorting with all long-suffering and doctrine.
- Minister is commissioned by God to preach.
- Minister is equipped to preach

Q. 160. What is required of those that hear the word preached? It is required of those that hear the word preached, that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer; examine what they hear by the Scriptures; receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the Word of God; meditate, and confer of it; hide it in their hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.

- Diligence - careful and persistent work or effort.
- Preparation
- Prayer - pray that God would help you *“receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the Word of God; meditate, and confer of it; hide it in their hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.*