

## Theology Simply Explained — WSC88 “Christ’s Use of the Means of Grace”

**Pastor walks his children through Westminster Shorter Catechism question 88—especially explaining that since Christ Himself does the work of grace, the only means by which we can hope to obtain grace are the means that He has appointed, and these means must be used always only in dependence upon Him.**

Q88. What are the outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption? **The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are His ordinances, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.**

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This week's catechism question is number 88. What are the outward and ordinary means whereby, christ, communicated to us the benefit of redemption. The answer is the outward. And ordinary means whereby christ communicated to us. The benefits of redemption are. His ordinances especially the word sacraments and prayer. All, which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

Now, one of the Main things to recognize about. This question and answer is that it's acknowledging that Christ is the one who communicates to us the benefits of his redemption. Christ, secured them for us. And now, by hespirit. Uh, christ. Communicates to us. Applies to us. The benefits of redemption.

He pours out his spirit, his spirit as the one. Who does the work in our hearts? His spirit is the one. Who. Exercises, all of the power. And so the means do not have power. In themselves. They are not in, they are not mechanical. So, it's not like jesus has built a grace machine and if we operate it properly, it works by virtue.

Of how the machine functions. They are not magical. Jesus has not given us. Uh, things to do. That compel. The spiritual power. That attends them. They are means. Which means jesus is the one who uses them. And that's how we get the word ordinary. Ordinary means That. Uh, they are ordinances or things that the lord jesus has ordained to use.

Now, when we talk about ordinary things in the world, we're actually recognizing that. All of providence is continuously upheld and sustained by god. Uh, that god, the holy spirit. Actually actively. Um, causes us to function. Uh, things that we would call. Uh, natural laws. Laws of physics and and so forth.

It is because god in his mercy, Uh, does things consistently according to mechanisms that he has ordained in the creation. Uh, but the lord is the one jesus changes things. This is why Advances in science. Uh, only ultimately came Um, Or the advances in science. In the 16th century and following, Only ultimately came as a result of a worldview.

That saw things as reliable because there's a lord who is in control of everything. Interestingly. As man thinks he has gotten smarter and his theorized more. He's talking himself out of Um, Reliability in the scientific realm. That's neither here. Nor there just a reminder that when we say outward and ordinary means we're talking about ways by which christ operates.

Now, if christ gives us Uh, to make disciples. By baptizing and by teaching, And if his spirit whom he pours out, Produces the effect of. Devotion, to the apostles teaching. And to the breaking of bread in the supper. And to prayer. Then we recognize That this is what christ.

Has commanded and this is what christ by his spirit has produced. And therefore, when we When we devote ourselves to word sacraments and prayer, We're devoting ourselves to them not because of how powerful they are in themselves. Not because They are ways that put god in our debt or allow us to squeeze out of god, what we want.

You remember the way the jews thought of what the lord had commanded and the beginning of Isaiah 58? But because the one whom we trust to do it, The one in the one whom we hope will do it. Has given us these things to do. As our part in it.

And so we cannot say that we are trusting him. Unless we are attending upon the word, we cannot say that we are trusting him. Unless we are administering, the sacraments we cannot say that we are trusting him unless we are praying because these are the things that he has told us to do.

And yet as we attend upon the word, we must do. So out of trust and him Not because we think we'll get so theologically smart that will be spiritually better. Or. That we will develop such a habit of using. Uh, the word that that god will be impressed with us or that it will.

Somehow produce spiritual benefit in and of Uh, the habit. By itself. So yes trusting him means attending upon the word and the administration of the sacraments and and prayer set times of prayer and continual prayer. But then when we come to the word we must come to the word by faith in him.

And when we come to the sacraments, we must attend the sacraments trusting in him and hoping in him to use him. And when we come to prayer, We must come to prayer independence upon him. Uh, which means with a submissive spirit and praying, according to his word and so forth.

Now. Much of the rest of the cat, actually, all of the rest of the catechism is going to be dealing with words sacraments and prayer. But just thinking about, What it means that they these are means. Um, And to notice that they are outward and ordinary and therefore there must be That internal interaction with god.

Because only, he is the one who makes them effectual. And this, of course, Means that the only people there effectual for is the elect That god has appointed these means, but our only hope can be in the pleasure. Of his mercy that he would be pleased to save us according to his grace, And so, they're not effectual.

To the Highly skillful, they're not effectual to the highly consistent. We want to be skilful. We want to be consistent because these are things. God has commanded and therefore they're worth doing well, and they're worth doing consistently. But they're effectual to those whom god has determined to save. Whom he has been pleased to save.

And so we do them in entire dependence upon him. And then if we, if he is the one who's making them effectual and he's making them affectal to the elect, then that encourages us much that the in any genuine spiritual benefit that comes Because of, From whom it's coming and because of why it's coming.

We know unto where it's going, it's coming from god. That's coming because We are the elect to me. He is has been pleased to mark out for and begin a work of salvation in us. And therefore, Um, Therefore, we can have every confidence that However, Regardless of, however, little that genuine work has been so far.

By comparison to however much is yet to be done. It is a participation in a work. There's a component of a work that must end and complete salvation. And so little by little day by day, line by line. Um, Lord's day by lord's day. Attending upon these means independence upon him and he making them effectual.

We tempted to be discouraged. Uh, by how much more effect we Uh, wish we could perceive and know and receive. And yet we should remember. That if it's effectual at all, it's because The one who is causing the effect is bringing us all the way. To salvation. So, all of that, is there in this answer, the outward and ordinary means whereby christ communicated to us.

The benefits of redemption are his ordinances, especially The word sacraments and prayer. All, which are made of effectual to the elect. For salvation.