

Theology Simply Explained — WSC91 “Not Magic, or Mechanics, but Christ by His Spirit Makes Sacraments Effectual”

Pastor walks his children through Westminster Shorter Catechism question 91—especially explaining how the sacraments are made effectual by Christ’s personal, active use of them by His Spirit. So, we must not use them magically as if they have benefit in them, or mechanically as if the benefit is automatically produced by them if we do them well/correctly enough, but in dependence upon Him Who uses the sacraments as means of His grace.

Q91. How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation? **The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive them.**

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Our shorter catechism question this week is number 91. How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation? And the answer is that the sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them. Or in him, that doth administer them. But only by the blessing of Christ. And the working of His Spirit in them that by faith.

Receive them.

There's a danger. In the use of baptism by the Lord's Supper. Just as in the use of reading and prayer and singing. Of thinking that their magical. That. If we use them. Automatically work by themselves. Uh, Regardless of who doesn't regardless of how they're done. Just because they are magic.

This is actually. A. Even more dreadful than it sounds, we know that magic is wicked but I think many people have not stopped to think about. Fly magic is wicked. And the reason magic is wicked. Is because it functions on the assumption. That God does not sovereignly rule or overrule of all things.

And that there is this, underlying Uh, law of magic. Uh, by which That which Uh, we want can be compelled just by Uh, saying the writing cantation or doing the right magical action. So all superstition in religion, works that way. As if. Uh, if there is a God even He can be compelled to give us the result that we want.

Uh, just by our doing whatever the ritual is, But that's Not the case a virtue is not in. Um, baptis the water application of the water itself, or The. Eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup itself. You're not magic, neither are they mechanical As if. God, having designed it?

Um, to accomplish a particular purpose that if we do the thing, well enough, Then by the design that is in it and by how well we do it. That we will. Mechanically, get the benefit. See, there's no magical benefit. There's not a make. There's not a mechanical benefit either.

Um, With the sacraments are not machines, which if we Operate them properly. We will get the grace out of them. Rather, they are means. That God, who works His grace. And particularly Christ, who works as grace. Has appointed and blessed the sacraments. And yes, he has designed them.

So that there is an ordinary way. In which they work. And there's a right way. Of attending upon them and Understanding them and making use of them. But the reason they work is because Christ has blessed them. To work. He has Uh, ordained them and Because, As we do, the things that he has given us to do, in this case, particularly The Supper and baptism.

We do them independence upon Him. And we trust that His Spirit is going to. Produce the effect. Now, the instrument through which has, Spirit produces that effect is faith. This is one of the reasons why when we're at the table and the Lord stays We will often ask that.

God Spirit Christ's Spirit would stir up our faith at the table. Because it is by And through the faith that the Holy Spirit gives us And strengthens in us. That he works. In us. As. We take the Lord's Supper. And fellowship with the Spirit independence, upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so is a It is by the acting of Christ, in giving us a sacrament and the first place and it is by the acting of Christ by His Spirit upon us. And in us, As we? Attend. To the sacrament. Not only in the time of taking them. But also, In reflection upon what we call improving.

Our use of them. Responding to what the Lord has done. Whether in our baptism, Or at the table. So it's not from any virtue in this sacrament itself. And certainly is not by any virtue in the person who administers it. Thankfully. Your benefit. Although, There can be fault in us.

And the way we attend upon Him, and one of the ways He uses The sacrament for our good is, He exposes our lack of faith? Lack of obedience, lack of love. Turns us to Himself again to supply. What is lacking? What is wanting you need to those things? Uh, yet.

It is not by how well it has administered or how well we take it.

It is not by how well it is administered. Or by how well, we take it that the sacrament benefits us. But by the work, Of God. In us. And so, we We look to Him. Remembering of course. That this the scriptures tell us that we can grieve the Spirit.

And we can quench the Spirit. So, There are disobediences. In which? We find ourselves profiting less from the Supper than we should. I don't know how often. Look at The inside back cover. Where it gives instruction for taking the Supper. Well,

But, one of the things, That we that we do is

If we find no present benefit. Then we are to review our preparation to Carrot and carriage app sacrament. And in both of which, of these. If we can approve ourselves to God and our unconsciousness, then we simply wait upon God to produce the fruit. Because just attending well upon the Supper doesn't mean you'll automatically get benefited, but If we see, we have failed to prepare well for it.

Or attend, well upon it. Then we are to be humbled. By the fact that we got no benefit or a little benefit. And attend opponent afterwards, with more care. Intelligence, so that's larger. Catechism 175. Going to do. I encourage you every once in a while to review. Oh, this.

That the instructions. For taking this upper well. Inside back cover.