

Chapter 48: Means of Grace Within the Church

What are the different activities within the life of the church that God uses to bring blessing to us?
What do we miss if we neglect involvement in a local church?

Means of Grace: definition:

Any activities within the fellowship of the church that God uses to give more grace to Christians.

A. How Many Means of Grace Are Available to Us? Historically . . .

1. Preaching of the Word
2. Baptism
3. Lord's Supper [and Charles Hodge viewed prayer as a fourth means of grace]

A longer list of the "means of grace" (or: ways God uses to bring additional blessing to us) available to believers within the Church:

1. Teaching of the Word
2. Baptism
3. Lord's Supper
4. Prayer for one another
5. Worship
6. Church Discipline
7. Giving
8. Spiritual Gifts
9. Fellowship
10. Evangelism
11. Personal Ministry to Others

Roman Catholic Church: (sacraments)

* Available to people within the church, as supervised and/or performed by the priests of the church.

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation
3. Eucharist [what we call the Lord's Supper or communion]
4. Penance
5. Extreme Unction (last rites)
6. Holy Orders (ordination)
7. Matrimony

Means of Grace:

Roman Catholic view:

- "Means of salvation" that make people more fit to receive justification from God
- Impart grace whether or not there is subjective faith on the part of the minister or the recipient
the sacraments work *ex opere operato* ("by the work performed")

Protestant view:

- Provide additional blessings within the Christian life, and does not add anything to our "fitness" to receive justification from God (we are justified by faith, not works)

B. Discussion of Specific Means:

1. Teaching of the Word: The instrument God uses to impart spiritual life and salvation
Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:23-24; 1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Tim. 3:15-16; Acts 20:32; Matthew 4:4; Psalm 119:105; 2 Peter 1:19; Isaiah 55:10-11; Jeremiah 23:29; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12
2. Baptism: This public confession of Jesus as Savior brings joy and blessing to a believer
Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38-39; Col. 2:12
3. The Lord's Supper: Fellowship with Christ, in his presence and at his table
1 Cor. 10:16-17; 1 Cor 10:21; 1 Cor. 11:29-30; John 6:55-56
4. Prayer
Acts 4:24; Acts 4:31; Acts 12:5; Eph. 6:18; Heb. 4:16
5. Worship
John 4:23-24; Acts 13:2; 2 Chronides 5:13-14; James 4:8; 2 Chronides 20:18-23
6. Church Discipline: A means by which the purity of the church is advanced and holiness is encouraged
2 Cor. 7:10; 1 Cor. 5:4; 1 Tim. 5:20
7. Giving: Not an unpleasant obligation, but a rich means of grace within the church

Acts 8:20; 2 Cor. 8:5; 2 Cor. 9:6-12

8. Spiritual Gifts

1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 14:12

9. Fellowship

Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24-25; John 15:12; Acts 2:46-47

10. Evangelism

Acts 2:4 Acts 2:14-36: Acts 4:8 Acts 4:31 Acts 9:17

11. Personal ministry from one individual to another (can take many forms!)

→Words of Encouragement:

Col. 3:16:

→Giving to Assist the Material Needs of a Brother/Sister:

James 2:16; 1 John 3:17

→Anointing with oil:

Mark 6:13; James 5:14

→Laying on Hands as the Most Common Method Jesus and Paul Used to Pray for People:

Luke 4:40; Matthew 9:18; Mark 5:23; Acts 28:8

People Also Sought to Touch Jesus

Mark 8:22; Luke 6:19; Mark 10:16

Laying on Hands to Bring Healing:

Mark 6:2; Acts 14:3; Acts 19:11-12

God's mighty hand of power is needed:

Acts 4:29-30

To Equip for Service or Ministry:

Acts 6:6; Acts 13:3

Laying on Hands for New Believers to Receive the New Covenant power of the Holy Spirit:

Acts 8:17; Acts 9:17; Acts 19:6

Laying on Hands to Impart Spiritual Gifts:

1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Timothy 5:22

A "foundational" doctrine (Hebrews 6:1-2)

12. Should Foot washing Be Practiced As a Means of Grace Within the Church? (John 13:14)

- 1.) Foot washing does not symbolize the redemptive-historical event of Christ's death and resurrection (as baptism and the Lord's Supper does).
- 2.) Baptism and the Lord's Supper were symbolic actions, but when Jesus washed the disciples' feet it was clearly functional, in that it met an ordinary human need.
- 3.) Baptism and the Lord's Supper are appropriate symbols of beginning and continuing in the Christian life, but no such symbolism attaches to foot washing.
- 4.) To make foot washing an ordinance like baptism and the Lord's Supper reduces it to a symbol – and if it is a symbol, then Jesus' words command us only to perform a symbol, and the real force of Jesus' command (to act in humility and love) is lost.
- 5.) Where as the epistles give evidence that baptism and the Lord's Supper were continuing ordinances observed by the NT churches, there is no evidence that the apostles or the early church observed footwashing as an ordinance.
- 6.) There is a simple and straightforward explanation for Jesus' command: he is telling his disciples to take lowly tasks in serving one another. We need not look for additional meaning.

C. Conclusions.

- * When any of the means of grace are carried out in faith and obedience, we should eagerly expect and look for evidence that the Holy Spirit is actually ministering to people at the same time as these actions are being done.
- * We ought not neglect to "meet together" (Heb. 10:25), but also look forward eagerly to any assembly of believers in which any of these means would occur, expecting that God will bring blessing from each of these means!
- * All of these means of grace occur within the fellowship of the church. Those who neglect the fellowship of the church willfully cut themselves off from all of these means of grace, and thereby cut themselves off from most of the ordinary means that the Holy Spirit uses to bring blessing to his people.

To order CD's e-mail Trent Poling ctpoling@msn.com or talk to Trent in the sound booth before or after class. Trent also has electronic copies of these outlines starting in about June, 2005, and the outlines are posted on the web site www.christianessentialsbc.com