

Acts 17; Lord's Day 25
FROM WHAT DOES FAITH PROCEED?

- I. Worked by the preaching.
 - A. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17).
 - 1. This is a specific, distinct kind of hearing; it is not just sitting in a worship service.
 - 2. Unless Christ Himself speaks and is heard, faith is impossible.
 - B. To preach is to herald the good news of the gospel.
 - 1. An herald is one who officially brings official announcements from an authority to his subjects.
 - 2. The preacher must be "sent" (Rom. 10:15), which is done by the elders (Acts 13:1-3).
 - C. Preaching is the authoritative proclamation of the gospel by the Church in the service of the Word of God through Christ.
 - 1. The contents of the preaching must be strictly limited to the Scriptures.
 - 2. Christ Himself speaks and is heard (John 5:24; 10:3,4, 27; Rom. 10:14-17; Eph. 4:21; I Thess. 2:13).
 - D. How is the preaching of the Word a means of grace?
 - 1. The Spirit of God makes the preaching an effectual means.
 - 2. The Spirit works an assurance of the truth proclaimed, as a burning (Luke 24:32).
- II. The Holy Spirit confirms faith by the sacraments.
 - A. The sacraments are signs, i.e., visible representations of invisible realities.
 - B. And they are seals, i.e., marks of ownership and authority, guaranteeing what is revealed in the sign.
 - C. How are they signs and seals?
 - 1. They have no power in themselves, but it is only by the Spirit working.
 - 2. They are fingers which point our faith to the content of the preaching, viz., that salvation is only in Christ crucified.
 - 3. The sacraments signify the promise preached and they depend on the preaching for their meaning and content.
- III. The clear implication is that we must use correctly the means God uses to give grace.
 - A. We are bound to use them if we want grace and an increasingly stronger conscious faith.
 - 1. Attend unto it with diligence, preparation, and prayer.
 - 2. Patiently persist in the use of the means God appointed to work these graces in us (Canons I, 16).
 - B. Pray for the preacher and preaching (I Thess. 5:25; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3; Heb 13:18).
 - C. Have the nobility of the Bereans (Acts 17:11).
 - 1. First, "receive the word with all readiness of mind" (Acts 17:11).
 - 2. Second, search the Scriptures to see whether what they heard preached was true; and then believe and heed it.