

Means of Grace Lesson #1

What is the problem with gimmicks/stunts in corporate worship?

- 1) God has not commanded these “stunts” to be included in corporate worship, therefore they are forbidden. Stunts/gimmicks violate the regulative principle of worship.
- 2) These stunts take the place of those elements God *has* commanded be included in worship, including the means of grace.

The regulative principle essentially states: If God wants _____, then it’s unacceptable to give Him _____.

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q. 88. 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.

What is meant by the term “means”?

- “Means” - *an action or system by which a result is brought about; a method.*
- “Means” is that thing which gets us our intended result.
- When it comes to WSC 88, what is the intended result? The benefits of redemption.

What are the “benefits of redemption?”

Q. 32. What benefits do they that are effectually called partake of in this life? They that are effectually called do in this life partake of justification, adoption and sanctification, and the several benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them.

Q. 36. What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption and sanctification? The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption and sanctification, are, assurance of God’s love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.

What is meant by the term “outward”?

- “Outward” vs “inward”
- If the word, sacraments, and prayer are the outward means, what is the inward means by which God gives us His benefits of redemption? The Holy Spirit working in our hearts.
- Outward is visible/tangible; inward is invisible/supernatural

What is meant by the term “ordinary”?

- The word, sacraments, and prayer are the ordinary, or standard, way God gives us His benefits of redemption, or gives us grace.
- Can grace be administered apart from Word, sacraments, and prayer? The Holy Spirit may do as He will. He is not bound. BUT He has made promises to meet us in and by Word and sacrament. This is God’s ordinary, or standard, or prescribed means for giving grace to His people.

What is meant by the term, “His ordinances”?

- “ordinance” - *an authoritative order, or decree.*
- The Word, sacraments, and prayer are God’s ordinances. They are prescribed by the Creator and instituted by Him therefore they are expected of us, the creature.

“What we are to understand by the ordinances which are here styled outward and ordinary means of grace? The first idea contained in them is that they are religious duties prescribed by God as an instituted method in which he will be worshipped by his creatures but that which more especially denominates them to be ordinances is the promise which he has annexed to them of his special presence and the encouragement that he has given to his people in attending on them to hope for those blessings that accompany salvation.” - Thomas Ridgley

- The Word, sacraments, and prayer are God’s ordinances because they are His prescribed promises that He will meet us in them and we will find grace.

What is meant by the phrase, “made effectual to the elect for salvation”?

- “Effectual” - *successful in producing a desired or intended result; effective.*
- The means of grace are successful in producing the intended result of salvation in the life of the Christian.
- What is the reformed understanding of “salvation”? Do we understand salvation as a one time act?
- The work of salvation by the Spirit of Christ is not complete until our glorification when the Lord returns and we live in incorruptible bodies. We are saved now, but this work of salvation is not yet complete. We are being sanctified by God until that glorious Day. And the means by which God does this is by His prescribed ordinances - the means of grace.

Westminster Confession of Faith

3.6 As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation.

17:3 Nevertheless, they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and, for a time, continue therein: whereby they incur God’s displeasure, and grieve His Holy Spirit, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.

18:3 This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be a partaker of it: yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto...

“This is one more reason why these are called “ordinary” means. They are mundane and unimpressive by themselves, and to all appearances. Yet they have the promise attached; and the ministers of Word and sacrament are appointed to their “ordinary” (constant, repetitive, regular) presentation. I know of no other avenue by which to bless my flock with God’s gift of himself to them other than the means for which he has ordained me an administrator.” Rev. Bruce Buchanan