

## THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

HAVING SEEN WHAT THE SCRIPTURES PRINCIPALLY TEACH US CONCERNING GOD, IT  
FOLLOWS TO CONSIDER WHAT THEY REQUIRE AS THE DUTY OF MAN

QUESTIONS # 155 & 89.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #155. *How is the word made effectual to salvation?*

A. The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of enlightening,<sup>1</sup> convincing, and humbling sinners;<sup>2</sup> of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ;<sup>3</sup> of conforming them to his image,<sup>4</sup> and subduing them to his will;<sup>5</sup> of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions;<sup>6</sup> of building them up in grace,<sup>7</sup> and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.<sup>8</sup>

*(Shorter Catechism)*

Q #89. *How is the Word made effectual to salvation?*

A. The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.<sup>9</sup>

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Question 1—*Who is it that makes the word of God effectual to salvation?*

*Answer*—The Holy Spirit alone makes the word of God effectual to salvation, 1 Pet. 1:22, 23. Contrary to Fanatics, who would separate the work of the Spirit from the word of God, or Rationalistic Fundamentalists, who would separate the word of God from the Spirit, we conceive that the word of God works effectually by the Spirit and the Spirit of God works in and through the word of God, Acts 28:25; Jas. 1:18. It is the Spirit of God who is the life of the word read and preached, and who alone makes that word effectual, Ezek. 37:4, 5.

There are three things in particular wherein the Spirit of God is joined to the word of God to work effectually: 1.) *Sealing*, whereby the Holy Spirit produces in the hearts of believers that firm and lasting conviction concerning the divine and absolute authority of the word of God, Eph. 1:13. This sealing of the word of God quickens the faith of the elect to believe that word, 1 Thess. 2:13. 2.) *Interpretation*, whereby that word of God becomes understandable, 1 Cor. 2:10, 13. This interpretation imparts the right understanding to the elect, Col. 1:9. 3.) *Application*, whereby the word of God is made a principle of living to

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<sup>1</sup> Neh. 8:8; Acts 26:18; Ps. 19:8.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 14:24, 25; 2 Chron. 34:18, 19, 26-28.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 2:37, 41; 8:27-39.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. 3:18.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. 10:4-6; Rom. 6:17.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; Eph. 6:16, 17; Ps. 19:11; 1 Cor. 10:11.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 20:32; 2 Tim. 3:15-17.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. 16:25; 1 Thess. 3:2, 10, 11, 13; Rom. 15:4; 10:13-17; 1:16.

<sup>9</sup> Neh. 8:8; 1 Cor. 14:24, 25; Acts 26:18; Ps. 19:8; Acts 20:32; Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Rom. 10:13-17; 1:16.

the elect, Eph. 6:17. This application effects a living of that word of God whereby it meets the needs of the people of God regardless of the era, nation, church or individual, every saint shall receive a portion of Scripture reserved for him, John 10:35.

*Question 2—How does the Spirit of God make this word effectual?*

*Answer*—The Spirit of God makes the word of God effectual through reading to the convincing of sinners, 2 Kings 22:10, 11. Reading of the word of God is made effectual to the conversion of sinners, Ps. 19:8. It also is an effectual means of bringing comfort to the people of God, Rom. 15:4. It is even made effectual to salvation through faith in Jesus, 2 Tim. 3:15.

Yet, it is especially the preaching of the word of God, which the Spirit makes effectual unto salvation, being the more common means of bringing salvation to sinners, Acts 2:37, 41; 4:4; 11:20, 21. God has chosen this means of preaching, though foolish in the estimation of men, to be that by which he would bring salvation, 1 Cor. 1:21. Furthermore, it is ordinarily through preaching that faith is wrought by the word of God, Rom. 10:17. It is the hearing of faith that appropriates by faith the sure mercies of David, even the work of Christ, Isa. 55:3. So much to be preferred is this hearing that those who refuse it are said to despise their own souls, Prov. 15:32.

*Question 3—What are the ends for which the Spirit makes use of this word read but especially preached?*

*Answer*—The Spirit uses the reading and hearing of the word of God to several ends: 1.) For the enlightening and converting of sinners, Acts 26:17, 18. Men who by nature are darkness are enlightened by the entrance of this word, Ps. 119:130. This imparting of enlightenment, or understanding, is especially accomplished through the preaching and teaching of the word, Neh. 8:8. 2.) For the convincing and humbling of sinners, whereby men are confronted with the nature and desert of sin, 2 Chron. 34:18, 19, 26-28. Again, this is most powerfully accomplished through the preaching of the word, 1 Cor. 14:24, 25. 3.) For driving men out of themselves, seeing that they had no strength or hope in themselves, and drawing them unto Christ, Zech. 12:10. While the reading of the word is, by the Spirit, often made effectual to salvation, Josh. 1:8; it also comes to pass that it drives men to seek understanding, Acts 8:27-30; and this understanding is especially made effectual through the preaching of the word, Acts 8:35-38. 4.) For conforming men to the image of Christ, 2 Cor. 3:18. The Spirit, through the means of the word of God, presents and renews men in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness, Eph. 4:23, 24; Col. 3:10. 5.) For subduing men to the will of Christ, whereby we are made to triumph in spiritual warfare, 2 Cor. 10:4-6. This, too, is most especially accomplished through this word being taught and preached, Rom. 6:17. 6.) For strengthening men against temptations, Mat. 4:4, 7, 10; Eph. 6:16, 17; as well as the corruptions of the flesh, Ps. 19:11; 1 Cor. 10:11. 7.) For building men up in grace, so that they might be sanctified unto all good works, Acts 20:32; 2 Tim. 3:15-17. 8.) For establishing men's hearts in holiness and comfort, Rom. 16:25; 1 Thess. 3:2, 10, 11, 13; whereby they are made joyful through faith unto salvation, Rom. 10:13-17; 1:16.

*Question 4—How is this reading and preaching of the word made effectual to salvation?*

*Answer*—The Spirit makes this reading and hearing of the word effectual to believers only through faith, Heb. 4:2. Those who receive the word of God apart from faith, (in a state of unbelief), cannot enter into that rest which men have only in Christ, Heb. 3:12, 18, 19.