

# Week Six

Quarter 3

Means of Grace Within a Church

# How Many Means of Grace Are Available to Us? (1)

- Definition – any activities within the fellowship of the church that God uses to give more grace to Christians
  - All blessings we experience in life are ultimately undeserved, all of grace
  - There certain means though which the Holy Spirit works to convey blessings in a special way into the life of a believer within the fellowship of the church to all believers
- Other studies may include:
  - Preaching of the Word, baptism, and communion
  - Others add wisdom of the body
- Grudem takes a broad perspective on this topic

# How Many Means of Grace Are Available to Us? (2)

1. Teaching of the Word
2. Baptism
3. The 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 individuals

# Seven “Sacraments” in Roman Catholic Teaching

1. Baptism
  2. Confirmation
  3. Eucharist (communion)
  4. Penance
  5. Extreme unction (last rites)
  6. Holy orders (ordination to the priesthood)
  7. Matrimony
- Note that they teach that such grace is imparted whether or not there is subjective faith by either the minister or the recipient where
  - Protestants hold that God only imparts grace when there is faith on the part of the persons administering or receiving these means

# Teaching of the Word (1)

- The gospel is the “power of God for salvation” (Rom 1:16)
- The preaching of Christ is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24)
- “You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Pet 1:23)
- The Word of God is
  - “able to build you up” (Acts 20:32)
  - profitable “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16)
  - is a “lamp” to our feet and a “light” to our path (Ps 119:105)

# Teaching of the Word (2)

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,  
And do not return there without watering the earth  
And making it bear and sprout,  
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;  
So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;  
It will not return to Me empty,  
Without accomplishing what I desire,  
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”

(Isa 55:10-11)

# Baptism

- It is commanded in Matt 28:19
  - Obedience brings God's favor
  - Naturally, it follows that being baptized would release a measure of God's blessing
- It is an outward sign of faith
- There is some linkage between being baptized and the working of the Holy Spirit
- Two errors
  - There is no magical property in the act of baptism itself
  - “We must not react so strongly to this error that we say that there is no spiritual benefit at all that comes from baptism, that the Holy Spirit does not work through it and that it is merely symbolic” (pg 954)
- More to come in Chapter 49

# The Lord's Supper

- The Lord's Supper is “a fellowship with Christ, in His presence and at His table” (pg 955)
- Two errors
  - There is no automatic or magical benefit coming from sharing in the Lord's Supper, whether a person participates in faith or not (pg 955)
  - We must also avoid the mistake of overreacting to the Roman Catholic teaching and maintaining that the Lord's Supper is merely symbolic
- “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Cor 10:16)
- “There is a spiritual union among believers and with the Lord that is strengthened and solidified at the Lord's supper, and it is not to be taken lightly” (pg 955)
- More to come in Chapter 50

# Prayer

- We are to pray corporately as well as individually
  - “they lifted their voices together to God” in prayer (Acts 4:24-30)
  - “And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31)
  - When Peter was put into prison, “earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church” (Acts 12:5)
- “The more the genuine fellowship of a church increases, the more there ought to be continual prayer for one another within the church, and the more genuine spiritual blessing from the Holy Spirit may be expected to flow through the church” (pg 956)

# Worship (1)

- Genuine worship is worship “in spirit” (John 4:23; Phil 3:3)
- “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting...[that] the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’” (Acts 13:2)
- “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8)
- “Through genuine congregational worship God will very often bring great blessing, both individually and corporately, to His people” (pg 957)

# Worship (2)

“in unison when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the LORD saying, ‘He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting,’ then the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.” (1 Chron 5:13-14)

# Church Discipline

- Church discipline is a means to improve purity
- Blessings are not given unless
  - The Holy Spirit convicts him or her of sin and brings about a “godly grief” that “produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret” (2 Cor 7:10)
  - The Holy Spirit is active in the other members’ lives when they become aware of the process
- “It would be healthy for the church to begin to think of church discipline not as an onerous burden placed upon it by the Lord, but as a genuine ‘means of grace’ by which great blessing can come to the church” (pg 957)

# Giving

- There is no automatic or mechanical bestowing of benefits to those who give
- Must be done
  - In faith
  - Out of commitment to Christ
  - Love for people
- The Macedonians who “first...gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God” (2 Cor 8:5)
- “for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7)
- “he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Cor 9:6)
- “You will be enriched in every way for the great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God” (2 Cor 9:11)

# Spiritual Gifts

- “As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Pet 4:10)
- Paul commands the Corinthians to use the gifts to “strive to excel in building up the church” (1 Cor 14:12)
- “We should recognize that the different spiritual gifts in the church are all means by which the Holy Spirit brings blessing through individual Christians” (pg 958)

# Fellowship

- The early church “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42)
- “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb 10:24-25)
- This is better realized if we overcome an excessive focus on ordained clergy as the primary dispensers of grace within the church

# Evangelism

- There is a frequent connection between proclaiming the gospel and being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:3, 14-36; 4:8, 31; 9:17, 20; 13:9, 52)
- It is a means of grace as “saving grace” is proclaimed to the unsaved
- It is also a means of grace as believers experience more of the Holy Spirit’s presence and blessing in their own lives
- Sometimes this is done corporately (evangelistic events or campaigns) or individually

# Personal Ministry to Individuals

- This means of grace operates when one or more Christians within the church take time to minister, in various ways, to very specific needs of another individual in the church (pg 959)
- This takes different forms
  - Words of encouragement or exhortation or wise counsel (Col 3:16; Eph 4:29; James 5:20; Heb 10:24-25)
  - Giving to assist the material needs of a brother or sister (James 2:16; 1 John 3:17; Acts 4:34; Gal 2:10)
  - Anointing with oil (Mark 6:13; James 5:14)
  - Laying on of hands (see next slide)

# Laying on of Hands (1)

- This was the most common method that Jesus used to pray for people
  - Luke 4:40; Matt 8:3; Mark 1:41; 6:5; 8:23-25; Luke 5:13; 13:13
- Jesus was specifically asked to lay hands on a sick person
  - Matt 9:18; Mark 5:23
  - Paul did the same in Acts 28:8
  - In other cases, Jesus simply “touched” someone to heal them
    - Mark 8:22; Matt 14:35-36; Luke 6:19; Matt 9:20-22, 25; 20:34; Mark 1:31; 5:41; 9:27; Luke 7:14; 8:51; 22:51
- When Jesus so frequently touched people to bring healing or otherwise bring blessing to them, it is not surprising that people would mention the miracles done by His hands (pg 960)
  - Mark 6:2; Acts 14:3; Acts 19:11; Acts 4:29-30

# Other Purposes for Laying on of Hands

- Empowering or equipping people for some service or ministry
  - Acts 6:6; Acts 13:3
- So that people might receive the new covenant power of the Holy Spirit
  - Acts 8:17; Acts 9:17; Acts 19:6
- To impart some spiritual gift
  - Acts 19:6; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6
- When praying for one another's needs
  - Imitating Jesus' example

# What About Footwashing?

- “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14)
- Rebuttal
  - Baptism and the Lord’s Supper explicitly symbolize redemption – this does not
  - Baptism and the Lord’s Supper were clearly symbolic while footwashing is clearly functional
  - Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are appropriate symbols for the beginning and continuing of the Christian life
  - If footwashing was symbolic, the intent of serving each other is lost
  - There is no historical evidence that footwashing was practice by the first century church but baptism and communion were
  - The Greek clearly shows that Jesus was instructing the disciples to serve each other
- Footwashing is not a means of grace within the church

# Conclusions

- When any of these 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 (pg 962)
- All of these means of grace occur within the fellowship of the church → all believers should be a part a local congregation
- Remember – these are amazing privileges

# Reading For Next Week

- Chapter 49
  - Baptism
    - Homework – questions 1,2,3,4,6