

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

SHORTER CATECHISM

LESSON # 44 (Q4LES5) - APPLICATION OF THE WORD

1. **Prayer**
2. **Bible reading: Romans 10: 1 - 21**
3. **Review:** SC q 87 discusses repentance. We learned that repentance unto life is the second of three saving graces. Once we understand that we are sinners, and that our only hope of salvation is through the mercy of God in Christ, we will be able to truly repent of our sins. Repentance must be a sincere repentance based in an understanding of the sin, and not a repentance based on getting caught. Q 88 covers the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption, which are then covered in detail the final 18 questions of the SC. We learned that the outward means are Christ's ordinances, and that these include the Word, sacraments, and prayer.
4. **Introduction:** In this lesson, we will discuss SC questions 89 and 90. These two questions deal with the application of the first of Christ's ordinances, His Word.

5. Questions & Answers:

Question 89: How is the Word made effectual to salvation?

Answer: 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.

Question 90: How is the Word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation?

Answer: That the Word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation and prayer, receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.

6. The SC, LC, and WCF

- a. SC q 89 and LC q 155 are identical, and their answers are essentially the same, although the LC answer is expanded. The LC equivalent of SC q 90 is a little more difficult to pin down, as it is covered in several questions. While the SC deals with the application of the word in two questions, the LC covers the same, and some additional material in six questions, LC q 155 through 160. The WCF coverage of the application of the Word is covered in Chapter 1, Of the Holy Scripture, p5, and Chapter 21, Of Religious Worship, and the Sabbath Day, paragraph 5.

7. The Word of God

- a. What have we learned about the Word of God, in the SC, to this point?

SC q 2 asks: "What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?". Anyone remember the answer? Ans: "The Word of God, which is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him."

And SC q 3 asks: "What do the scriptures principally teach? Ans: The scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man."

- b. So from these two questions, we learn:
- That God's word is contained in the Old and New Testaments.
 - That God's Word is the **ONLY** rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him..
 - That the scriptures teach us what we are to believe concerning God, and what duties God requires of us.

8. How is the Word made Effectual to Salvation?

- a. What is the moving agent, that makes the Word capable of convincing and converting sinners? The Spirit of God. **(1 Cor 2: 9 - 12** ⁽⁹⁾***But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (10)But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (11)For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him: even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (12)Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.***)
- b. WCF, C1p5 says, *"We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the*

heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts."

- c. How does God require that we use His Word, that the Spirit will make it effectual to our salvation?
- The reading of His Word. (**John 5: 39** "**Search the Scriptures; for in them ye thing ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.**")
 - The preaching of His Word. (**Isaiah 55:3** "**Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.**")
- d. By preaching here, it does not mean that everyone is to go out preaching the Word. It specifies that hearing the Word preached is what is required.
- e. Chapter 21, p 5 of the WCF adds: *The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear; the sound preaching and conscionable hearing of the Word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence; singing of psalms with grace in the heart, as also, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ; are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God:"*
- f. How does the reading and preaching of God's Word make effectual salvation?
- By convincing us. The LC adds: "by enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners;". (**1 Cor 14: 24 – 25** "⁽²⁴⁾**But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convince of all, he is judged of all: ⁽²⁴⁾And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.**")
 - By converting us. The LC adds: "of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them into Christ; of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will." (**Acts 2: 37, 41** "⁽³⁷⁾**Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? ⁽⁴¹⁾Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.**")
- g. How does the Word build up holiness in us?

- It works us into greater conformity of the image of God (does sanctification sound familiar. Sanctification is a saving grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.) **(2 Cor 3:18 “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”)**
- It reprove, corrects and instructs us in righteousness. **(2 Tim 3: 15 – 17 “⁽¹⁵⁾And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is Christ Jesus. ⁽¹⁶⁾All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction for instruction in righteousness: ⁽¹⁷⁾That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”)**
- It is a means of pulling down strongholds in the soul, and more and more subduing all thoughts and affections unto the obedience of God. **(2 Cor 10: 4 – 5 “⁽⁴⁾(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) ⁽⁵⁾Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”)**
- It is a means to strengthen us against the temptations of the devil and the corruption’s of our own hearts. **(Eph 6:13 “Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”)**
- It is a means of establishing in us the truths and ways of God, and to strengthen us against error and seduction. **(Rom 16: 25 “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.”)**

h. How does the Word build up confidence?

- It reveals and holds forth the promise of pardon of our sins, and eternal life, which is our chief comfort. **(Isaiah 40: 1 – 2 “⁽¹⁾Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. ⁽²⁾Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.”)**
- It is a means of conveying to the soul the joy of the Holy Ghost. **(1 Thes 1:6 “And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.”)**

9. The Reading and Preaching of the Word

- a. This question is very similar to question 89. What is the difference. Q89 asks “how the Word is made effectual to salvation?” The answer is the reading and preaching of the Word.

Q90 ask “how the Word is to be preached and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation.”

- b. What is prerequisite to the reading and preaching of the Word, in order to make it effectual to salvation? (SCq90)

- Preparation
- Prayer

- c. How is the Word to be read? (LCq157)

- With a high and reverent esteem of them.
- With a firm persuasion that they are the very word of God
- With a firm persuasion that He only can enable us to understand them.
- With a desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them
- With diligence, application, self-denial, and prayer

- d. LC q 156 asks: “Is the Word of God to be read by all? The answer starts out: “Although all are not to be permitted to read the word publicly to the congregation...”

Many scripture proofs, all from the old testament, such as (**Neh 8:2 “And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.”**)

None of the scripture proof provided in the LC under this question forbid the reading of the gospel by believers in the Church. Need some help from the Pastor on where the various prohibitions (like women) are.

- e. By whom is the Word to be preached (LC q 158)?

The word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved and called to that office. (**Heb 5:4 “And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”**)

This does not mean teach. What is being referred to here is High Priests

- f. What is required of us when we hear the Word preached (LC q 160)?

- That we attend thereto with diligence, preparation and prayer. **(SP available for each point.)**
- That we examine what we hear by the scriptures. **(Acts 17:11 “*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.*”)**
- Receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the word of God. **(1 Thess 2:13 “*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye receive the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*”)**
- Meditate, and confer of it; hide it in your heart, and bring forth the fruit of it in our lives. **(Luke 8:15 “*But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*”)**

10. Summary

- a. The Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, His revealing to us of His will. God’s Spirit, working within us, makes His Word effectual for our salvation. Because it is God’s Word, we should approach it with diligence, preparation and prayer, receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our heart, and practice it in our lives.