

Introduction

Q. 94: How is the word made effectual to salvation?

A. The Spirit of God makes 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.

1. The Effector: The Spirit

- The Father planned salvation (Eph. 1:3-4, 9-11), the Son accomplished salvation (Col. 1:19-20), and the Spirit applies salvation (Tit. 3:4-7).¹
- “[T]he word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). To some, the word is folly. To others, it’s the power of God for salvation. What makes the difference? See 1 Thess. 1:4-5; 1 Cor. 2:4-5, 12-14; Jn. 3:5-8).
- The Spirit makes his ordinances (word & sacrament) effectual—not the ordinances themselves.

2. The Effectual Means: His Word

- Like a doctor with a scalpel and medicine, the Spirit picks up the Word of God and uses it to cut away death, and to give life.
- What does “effectual” mean? When we say the Spirit makes the Word effectual unto salvation, we mean he uses the word to *bring about* salvation.
- What is the Word? How do we encounter this Word?

A. The Reading of the Word to Save

- Why is it an unspeakable gift to have the Word of God written down?
- Reading includes from our own mouth, or from the mouth of another. Private reading (Acts 8:30), reading aloud, and listening to the Word read aloud are important (1 Tim. 4:13; Rev. 1:3).
- When we read God’s Word, we should read it with reverence, because when Scripture speaks, God speaks. “When the Scriptures are read well, half the work of exposition is done.”²

B. Especially the Preaching of the Word to Save

- While God uses the reading of the Word, he *especially* uses the preaching of the Word. See Rom. 10:14-17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 15:1-2.

¹ These are helpful categories, but it is somewhat of a simplification of the Trinitarian Salvation.

² Jim Orrick, *Exposition of the Baptist Catechism*, 376.

- 1 Cor. 1:21, NKJV “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” God has ordained not eloquence, but the proclamation of the cross, to save men. There is no boasting when the instrument the Spirit uses is a message of the crude execution of Christ.
- What are some advantages of preaching that you don’t have with reading?
- Piper says “Preaching is worship.” In preaching, the preacher is encountering God, and ushering in others to encounter God in worship.

3. The Effects: Convincing, Converting, Sanctifying, & Comforting.

A. *Convincing Sinners*

- The Word is used to *convince* sinners. It convinces us of our sin (Rom. 3:20). It convinces us of the coming judgement (Jn 16:8), our need for Christ (Gal. 3:22), that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18:28), that Jesus needed to die and rise (Acts 17:2-3).
- God uses preaching to persuade men (Acts 19:8; 26:28).

B. *Converting Sinners*

- The Spirit *converts* sinners by the Word (James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23-25; Eph 1:13).
- “Throughout history, most of the elect have been called through the preaching of the Word. This is worth special note. While the Lord sometimes uses personal witnessing, radio or television broadcasts, gospel tracts, good books, or internet videos, the vast majority of God’s elect have been called through being in the same room with a holy man of God who is preaching the Word of God.”³

C. *Sanctifying Saints*

- We now switch to the Word’s work in *saints*.
- Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (Jn. 17:17).
- Jesus washes us with the water of his word (Eph. 5:26-27).
- All Scripture is profitable to train us in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16-17).
- We grow up into salvation by the Word (1 Pet. 2:2)

D. *Comforting Saints*

- To comfort is to alleviate distress or grief.
- The Scriptures were given so that the Spirit might comfort us in our sorrows (Rom. 15:4). Reading the Psalms can be a great comfort to the brokenhearted (Ps. 34:18).
- Application: Go to God’s word in despair. Comfort others with the promises of God in their affliction.

³ Jim Orrick, *Exposition of the Baptist Catechism*, 378