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## 7. The Means of Grace, Part 1: Word and Baptism

*It had been a rough day for the two missionaries in Philippi. After Paul and Silas saved a slave girl from an evil spirit, they were angrily accosted by her owners. This led to them being arrested and flogged - a punishment severe enough to kill a man. Exhausted and bleeding, they were finally dumped off at the city jail. Even there the jailor had no pity on his helpless captives. He caused additional discomfort by ordering them to be locked up all night with their feet in the stocks. Yet, despite their troubles, Paul and Silas remained in good spirits, praying and singing hymns and telling their fellow prisoners about their Savior, Jesus.*

*Around midnight a tremendous earthquake shook the prison so violently that the door swung open, and the prisoners' chains were all torn loose. The jailor rushed outside and when he saw the doors open, he fell to his knees in dismay. Under Roman law, any time a prisoner escaped, the jailor paid for it with his life. Resolving that he would rather die quickly now than be publicly executed later, the jailor drew his sword and prepared to commit suicide.*

*Before he could go through with his plan, a voice stopped him in his tracks. It was Paul, calling from the darkness of the jail. "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" Astounded, the jailor called for lights and saw that what Paul said was true. Despite his cruel treatment, the two missionaries had convinced all the other prisoners to stay in their cells - saving their captor's life.*

*The jailor was overcome with emotion. What could possibly cause these two men to show him such kindness? "They must have some connection with God," he thought, and asked them, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas were happy to share the good news that salvation doesn't depend on anything we do. "Simply believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved!" The jailor was so happy to hear the gospel that at that very hour of the night he invited Paul and Silas into his home and dressed their wounds. Afterward, he and his whole family were baptized.*

*This was common practice in the early church. When the head of a household came to faith, he very naturally wanted the rest of his family - very young and old alike - to be adopted into God's family through the waters of baptism.*

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*(adapted from Acts 16:25-40)*

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This lesson focuses on the tool God uses to create faith in human hearts. "The gospel," Paul writes, "is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." We will look especially at how God applies that gospel to our hearts through the sacrament of baptism.

# WHAT ARE THE MEANS OF GRACE?

Review the two main messages of God's Word, and discuss why they are both important.

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*Read Acts 2:22-24, 32-33, 36-41.*

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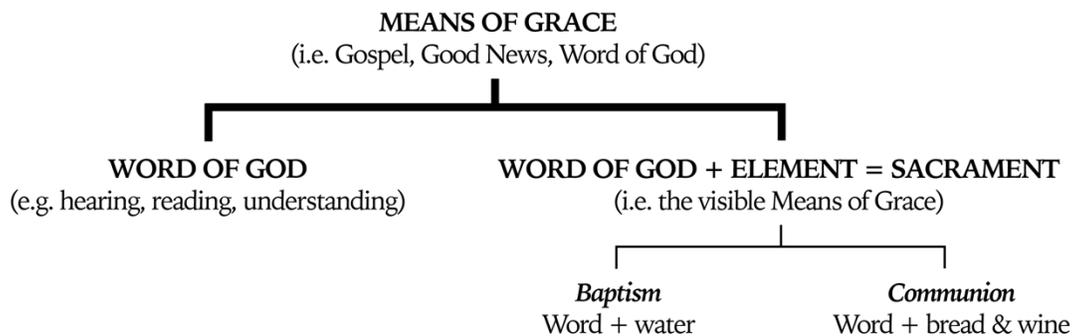
In this Pentecost sermon, the Holy Spirit led Peter to preach both law and gospel. Many people responded to this message. Their response was repentance and faith.

*1 Corinthians 12:3 No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.*

*Romans 10:17 Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.*

Based on the passages we've read so far, it is clear that **the Holy Spirit** is responsible for bringing people to faith. He does it by bringing them into contact with **the gospel of Jesus Christ**.

The following diagram illustrates the different ways that he does this, a.k.a. the **Means of Grace**.



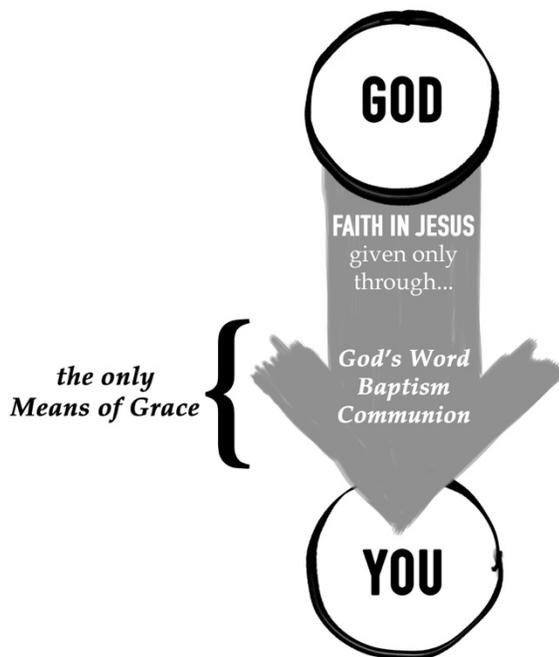
*Illustration: Medicine/Routes of Administration*

In addition to the written or spoken Word, the Holy Spirit also brings people the gospel in two other very special ways. The Lutheran church calls these **sacraments**. We define a sacrament as:

- A sacred act that Jesus commanded
- An act using certain physical elements connected to God's Word
- An act through which God promises to give forgiveness, new life, and salvation

The only two acts that fit this description are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

**NOTE:** Whenever we talk about these two sacred acts called “sacraments,” we need to remember *who is acting!* Both sacraments are purely the work of God, and not the work of man. If we forget this, we stand to lose all the joy and comfort that God wants us to have in both baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The sacraments only work one way: from God to us.



Let’s begin with the sacrament of baptism. . . . .

## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT BAPTISM?

### WHERE IN THE BIBLE DOES JESUS COMMAND BAPTISM?

**Matthew 28:18-20** *Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Jesus says that our mission is to make disciples of all nations. In the original Greek, baptizing and teaching are clearly identified as the *means by which* people are “made disciples.”

**1 Peter 3:20-21** *In (the ark) only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also - not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. . .*

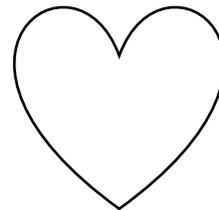
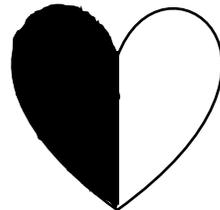
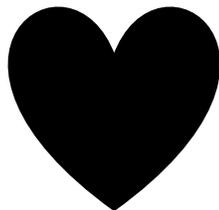
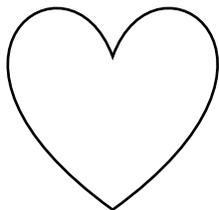
**Acts 2:38** *Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Through baptism God saves us, by forgiving our sins and giving us “the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (As we’ve discussed previously, the Holy Spirit is the one who gives us faith.)

Paul speaks a similar way about baptism in his epistles:

**Galatians 3:26-27** *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

**Romans 6:1-7** *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.*



# WHY DO LUTHERANS BAPTIZE INFANTS?

Read Acts 16:13-15

In both this story and our introductory story about the jailor, converts to Christianity were baptized along with their whole families. No distinction of age is mentioned.

We also know the following truths from God's Word:

**RAPID FIRE!** Listen to Pastor read each passage, and then fill in the blank.

## Psalm 51:5

Children are sinful from \_\_\_\_\_.

## Ezekiel 18:20

Sinful people deserve to \_\_\_\_\_.

## 1 Peter 3:20b-21

Baptism \_\_\_\_\_ people from sin

## Matthew 28:19

Jesus says to baptize "\_\_\_\_\_, " not "just adults"

## Ephesians 2:8-9

Every time a person comes to faith it is a \_\_\_\_\_ - no matter how young or old they are.

## Luke 18:15-17

Jesus says "Let the \_\_\_\_\_ come to me." (The Greek word in this passage is specifically used for infants and unborn children)



## TAKING IT DEEPER...

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### Agree or disagree?

- Babies are too young to understand baptism.
- Babies are too young to believe in Jesus.
- Babies should be baptized as soon as possible.
- Only pastors may perform a baptism.
- If you were baptized as a child in another Christian church but later become a Lutheran, you must be re-baptized.
- If you were baptized as a child, lost your faith, and years later became a Christian again, you must be re-baptized.

**OPTIONAL: Discuss “Frequently Asked Questions About Baptism” and “Is a Person ‘Once Saved, Always Saved?’” - Appendix, p. 89-91**

**Handout: Baptism - is it a work of God or a work of man?**