**Scripture Reading:** Lord’s Day 25 #1

**Singing:** 349:1-4 – 333:1-4 -- 359:1-2 – 1:1-5

**How to receive and strengthen saving faith? (1)**

I. Use God’s ordained means II. Look to God’s ordained Mediator

**I. God works/strengthens saving faith by using His ordained means**

A. God is our *Almighty Creator*:

 1. God used *no means* to create the world (Ps. 33:6)

 2. Yet after His creation He works *through the means*

 a. most of us have *whole-heartedly* embraced in our daily living

 b. are we also embracing this for our spiritual living?

 3. Meaning of the phrase *‘means of grace*

 a. grace: *all undeserved blessings*

 b. means: *specific activities – instruments – ceremonies*

B. How does God work through us *using the means of grace*?

C. What are the *means of grace* God has ordained me to apply myself to?

1. Hearing of the Word of God preached: Roman 10:17

 a. God uses *preaching of Word* to make alive unregenerate heart

 ● Ezek. 37 (valley dry bones)

● Eph 1:13: *after they* ***heard*** *word of truth, they believed*

● 1 Cor. 1:21: *it pleases Gods by foolishness of preaching*

 *to save them that believe*

● 1 Peter 1:23: *born again by the Word of God*

b. God uses *preaching also* to ‘build up His saints’

 ● Acts 20:32: *word of grace able to build you up*

 ● 2 Tim. 3:16: *Scripture to instruct, correct, reproof*

 ● Heb. 4:1-3

e. this hearing isn’t only *in sermons delivered by office-bearers*

 2. The use of sacraments

a. sacraments don’t work but confirms or strengthens faith present

b. they are *tokens or signs and seals* of the spoken promises

 ♦ Calvin: sacraments are not to establish Sacred Word but

to establish us in faith of His Word as our faith is so feeble and unless propped up on all sides and sustained, it trembles, wavers, totters, and at last gives way.

D. Are there other *activities* (means of communication His grace) the Holy

 Spirit uses within the life of church to bring blessings to His people? *…*

 1. Prayer: Acts 4:31-32

 a. personal prayer but also corporate prayer as church

 2. Fellowship with each other

 a. Acts 2:42: *they ‘addicted’ themselves to the Word and fellowship*

 b. Hebrews 10:24-25: *this activity is Christ’s command*

● we need to *consider each other with the eye to profit*

 ● Biblical sharing is the *office* of all believers Rom. 15:14

 & 1 Thess. 5:14-15 & Col. 3:16

**Reflection:** Let’s part with reminding ourselves of …

1. No means without the blessing of Holy Spirit will be *source of*

 *working or strengthening faith*

2. Most of the means of grace *are always in connection* with the

 assembling of God’s people together

**The means of grace are not the channels of grace owned by the church leadership.**

**Instead they are the channels of grace owned by the Holy Spirit**

**to bless us in the use of them.**