

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Church and Last Things, Session 10, Ordinances of the Church, Government of the Church, Core Teachings about the Church

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This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson and his teaching on the doctrines of the church and last things. This is session 10, Ordinances of the Church, Government of the Church, Core Teachings about the Church, and Service of the Church.

We continue our studies in the doctrine of the church by talking about the ordinances or sacraments of the church.

Jesus, our Lord, has given two ordinances to us as the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper. God ministers to all five of our senses. The word addresses our ears and eyes, and God reinforces the spoken and written word with touch, taste, and smell.

Israel had its annual feast and sacrificial system. The New Testament has the gospel dramatized in the ordinances or holy signs or sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The word ordinance underlines that the Lord Jesus commands the church to observe both practices.

God preaches the gospel to us in baptism, Acts 2:38, and the Lord's Supper, 1 Corinthians 11:26. Baptism. John the Baptist preaches baptism and repentance in preparation for the Messiah, Mark 1:4. Both Jesus and John speak of baptism with the spirit that is to come, and that indeed did come at Pentecost, Luke 3:16, Acts 1:4-5. Jesus teaches baptism as a part of being a disciple and of making disciples, which we saw in Matthew 28:18-20. Paul teaches that baptism identifies someone with the dying and rising of Christ, Romans 6:3-4. He teaches that Christian baptism symbolizes union with Christ in his death and resurrection. Some churches incorrectly believe people must be baptized to be saved.

This is true of churches that teach infant baptism and of some churches that teach believers baptism. For infant baptism both Roman Catholic churches and Lutheran churches teach infant baptism or regeneration. The churches of the so-called Restoration Movement, like Churches of Christ and Christian churches and Disciples of Christ, often teach baptism of believers is necessary for salvation.

But in Paul's mind, preaching the gospel takes priority over the practice of baptism. 1 Corinthians 1:17, Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel. In that context, Paul says, I thank God I did not baptize any of you.

Then he remembered a couple that he had baptized. I cannot conceive of Paul saying, I thank God I did not preach the gospel to any of you. That is incomprehensible.

That is impossible. Am I saying baptism isn't important? No, I think baptism is important. I think it's a sacrament, as a matter of fact. But it does not automatically save.

Views of Baptism. Churches have different views of Christian baptism.

We'll survey Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, and Baptist views. Roman Catholicism baptizes infants and adults who have not been baptized. According to the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, section 12.13. If you don't have the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, you ought to get it. It's an inexpensive paperback. It's official. It has the imprimatur.

It's officially recognized as a universal teaching instrument of the church. It's translated into a bazillion languages. It's everywhere.

It's official. It's in simple English. You need one.

You can help your Roman Catholic friends understand what they believe. According to Catechism, section 12.13, quote through baptism, we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God. We become members of Christ, are incorporated into the church, and made sharers in her mission.

Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the Word. According to the website of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, the LCMS, quote, Lutheranism holds that baptism is a miraculous means of grace. Another is God's word, which is written or spoken through which God creates and strengthens a gift of faith in a person's heart.

Although we do not claim to understand fully how this happens, we believe that when an infant is baptized, God creates faith in the heart of that infant. We believe this because the Bible says infants can believe. Matthew 18.6 and that new birth, regeneration happens in baptism.

John 3:5-7, Titus 3:5-6. Lutherans do not believe that only those baptized as infants receive faith. Faith can also be created in a person's heart by the power of the Holy Spirit working through God's written or spoken word. The LCMS does not believe baptism is absolutely capital letters, necessary for salvation.

I can't let these things go by without commenting. I disagree with Rome that baptism regenerates. I disagree with my Lutheran brothers and sisters who accept as fellow reformational Christians that infants have faith.

I don't baptize infants because they have faith or that baptism saves. I respectfully disagree. Reformed Christianity.

According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 28, the reformed view of baptism is this. Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church but also to be unto him or her a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his engrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ to walk in the newness of life. It's not saying it saves, and it's saying it's a sign and seal.

Biblical language from Romans 4. Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in his church until the end of the world. Not only those who do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized. Although it's a great sin to condemn or neglect this ordinance, grace and salvation are not so inseparably tied, annexed to it as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it or that all those baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.

The language of sign and seal comes from Romans 4, where we read that Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that comes by faith. Romans 4:11. The meaning of the sign is symbol. It's pretty close to the Baptist idea.

That is, circumcision symbolized cleansing by the cutting away of the foreskin at the root of the propagation of the race. Spiritual circumcision is the cleansing of the heart. Not only was circumcision a sign, it is a seal.

It's a promise of God to do what the sign signifies. The New Testament nowhere explicitly says it, but if circumcision was a sign and seal of grace in the old covenant, then Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs and seals of God's grace in a new covenant. That is, Christian baptism surely symbolizes cleansing.

Acts 22, Ananias told Saul, who became Paul, to be baptized and wash your sins away. Is he saying the actual rite performs it? No, but he's saying it symbolizes, it's a sign of cleansing. The Lord's Supper surely is a sign of participation in Christ.

1 Corinthians 10. Is the cup that we bless not a participation in the blood of Christ? Is the bread that we break not a participation in the body of Christ? Both baptism and the Lord's Supper are also seals. God promises to do what baptism signifies.

He promises to actually join the person to Christ and to cleanse them, take away their sins, to forgive their sins in the Lord's Supper. As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. In the Lord's Supper, God promises to join us to Christ or to already have joined us to Christ, and he symbolizes that, and he promises to do what the ordinance signifies or symbolizes.

The Baptist view of Christian baptism is given in the Baptist Faith and Message of 2000, Article 7. Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It's an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in the newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead.

Being a church ordinance, it is a prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper. A brief comparison is in order. We don't have time to get into all the details of this, but Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism hold that baptism regenerates those being baptized, while the Reformed and Baptist churches do not.

Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed churches baptize infants and adults, while Baptists baptize believers only. Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed churches allow baptism by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, which is rarely done, while Baptists baptize only by immersion. The Lord's Supper.

Jesus gave his church another ordinance. The Lord's Supper. Luke 22:19 and 20 are among the places, and Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22:1, and Corinthians 11 are among the four places where we have the institution of the Lord's Supper.

John's Gospel does not have it. Lord's Supper draws attention to Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf. The practice is retrospective.

It looks back to the cross. It is prospective. It looks forward to Christ's return and proclaims his death until he comes.

In the world to come, there will be no need for either baptism or the Lord's Supper, though we will participate in the wedding supper of the Lamb. Revelation 19:9. Augustine taught that in the Lord's Supper, the risen Christ preaches to all of our senses. It is the word made visible, as it were.

Calvin followed Augustine in this. In the Lord's Supper, we touch the Gospel as we hold the elements. If you smell the bouquet or have an individual cup, it's good to do it this way: of the Gospel in the wine or grapefruit of the vine.

We taste the Gospel in the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. God, the head of the church, the Lord Jesus, institutes the Supper to graciously; he ceremonializes the

Gospel and administers it to all of our senses. Of course, our ears hear the Gospel as the words of the institution are read, and if we're looking along in the Bible, our eyes see it, and we see the elements that stand for the body and blood of Christ, of course.

So, the Supper is thus a visible word, as Augustine and Calvin taught. It's actually a sensory word appealing to all of our senses. How good of God to not just appeal to our ears.

Luther called in opposing Roman Catholic pilgrimages and so forth, the proper organ of a Christian man, the proper organs are not his feet, as if he goes on pilgrimages to be saved, he'll not his hands as if he has things to offer to God, to accept him. No, the proper organ of a Christian man, Luther says, the proper organs are his ears. He's teaching the passivity of faith.

Salvation is an acoustical experience. Romans 10:17, faith comes by hearing and hearing the word about Christ. He makes his point.

The Lord's Supper appeals to all of our senses. And Christian baptism appeals to more senses, too, as the water is applied to a person. The reformers insisted that a scriptural explanation of the Supper is needed.

If there's no word of institution, there is no Supper. Paul stressed that the Lord's Supper indicates our union with Christ. 1 Corinthians 10, let me not botch it again, but read it right.

Is the cup of blessing that we bless not a participation in the blood of Christ? These are negative statements with a negative particle indicating a positive answer. It is, isn't it? The bread that we break is a participation in the body of Christ, is it not? The Supper speaks of union with Christ. It doesn't create a union with Christ; it strengthens a union with Christ.

It harkens back to our initial faith, believing in Jesus, by which we are joined to him by grace through faith union. That's vertical union. The very next verse speaks of horizontal union and how the Corinthians needed it because of their abuses at the Supper, which Paul corrects, tries to correct in the next chapter, First Corinthians 11.

Because there's one bread, apparently, the Corinthians used a common loaf. It's permissible, but not commanded for us to do the same. I suppose with a big church you'd need multiple common loaves, but it would come to you, you'd break off a piece and you'd pass it on.

That's what they did. Because there's one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Union with Christ most profoundly speaks. The Lord's Supper most profoundly speaks of union with Christ.

It has other meanings, too, but that's its most profound meaning. Secondly, we should unite with one another as we partake in the elements communally. It is a corporate sacrament not to be done privately, for example, in our homes.

The Supper calls for our faith and love. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, God was visiting some of the Corinthian believers with weakness, sickness, and even death. The euphemism of sleep is used.

He's not condemning them. In so doing, Paul says, God is giving us fatherly discipline, is the word he uses, so that we won't be condemned by the world. The Corinthian believers who are being slain by the Lord for their violation of the unity of the church at the Lord's Supper, bringing their big meals when the person next to them, the poor person, has nothing, and going ahead and eating and not waiting for the other person.

God didn't condemn them, but in a few cases, at least, he took lives to warn the others. The meal has come down to us by a number of names. It's a Eucharist or Thanksgiving.

The noun Eucharist isn't used. Jesus gave thanks is repeatedly used. 1 Corinthians 11:24, having given thanks, he broke the bread and said, this is my body.

It's a communion, an invigoration of union with Christ, as we saw in First Corinthians 10, 16. The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body? The cup that we drink is not a participation in the blood of Christ. Positive answers are expected. It is the Lord's table, a metonymy, First Corinthians 10, 21, for the Lord's Supper that's served on the table.

Metonymy is a figure of speech whereby two things are closely associated, so one stands for the other. If you heard in the news, a message came from the White House today. You're not thinking of a building. You're thinking of the office of the Presidency of the United States.

That's a metonymy. Or, pardon me if you're in other cities, but the Cardinals made a trade today for a couple of big bats and two strong arms, which means hitters and pitchers. Not just literally, arms and bats.

It's the Lord's Supper, the meal instituted by Christ that honors him. Turning the Passover meal into the sign and seal of the covenant of grace, the ongoing sign and seal of the covenant of grace in the New Testament. The Lord's Supper.

Views of the Lord's Supper. Four views of the Lord's Supper predominate. Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Zwingli, Reformed, and Zwinglian.

The Roman Catholic view of the Supper is called transubstantiation. Roman Catholic theology, when priests are ordained, they receive the authority to offer Christ in the sacrifice of the Mass. That is what a priest does.

The main officiant, a minister in a Roman Catholic Church, is not the preacher of the word. That is a Reformation idea. The main minister in the Roman Catholic Church is a priest who supposedly offers Christ in the sacrifice of the Mass.

On the Catholic Church it doesn't say, come hear the Gospel preached at three o'clock or eleven o'clock. It says, time for the Masses. That's what the main ceremony is.

The person who does it is a priest. He specifically is ordained and given sacramental power to offer Christ in the sacrifice of the Mass. Roman Catholic Church teaches that when the priest consecrates the elements, they miraculously become the body and blood of Christ.

Their outward appearance does not change. This is the theology of Thomas Aquinas using Aristotelian categories of essence or substance and accidents. The accidents are the external features.

Some of the accidents in this pulpit are its exact shape, color, and size. It could still be a pulpit if it were smaller, if it were purple, or if it were designed differently. I've seen beautiful glass ones, for example, or plastic ones.

There are ornate crow's nests way up in the air you climb upstairs to get to. They're still pulpits, and they're identifiable as such because their essence or substance is pulpit-ness. According to Rome, the accidents, the outward appearance of the bread, and the wine remain bread and wine, and the substance is changed.

It's a transubstantiation that occurs miraculously. The outward appearance of the bread and the wine do not change, does not change, but miraculously the invisible essence of the elements changes into Christ's body and blood. The priest offers a non-bloody sacrifice of Christ to God in the mass.

Luther, in view of the Lord's Supper, rejects the Roman Catholic ideas of sacrifice and transubstantiation and instead embraces consubstantiation. The supper is not a priestly sacrifice made to God, but a benefit that he bestows on worshipers. Luther said, it is not a sacrificium going that way, it is a beneficium going this way.

Oh, he was mad. Oh, my word. In communion, according to Lutheran theology, the elements do not change.

Instead, Christ is bodily present with a Latin word, Latin preposition, consubstantiation. Consubstantiation. Substance, essence, with.

His presence, he's bodily present in, with, and under the elements of the bread and wine. Yes. It gets complicated, but there's a certain Christology undergirding this.

Lutherans hold that in his resurrection, the divine attribute of omnipresence was supernaturally transferred from Christ's deity to his humanity. This is a Eucharistic motivation. This enables his body to be everywhere present, including in the elements of communion.

Boy, respectfully, I disagree. There's nothing neither a transubstantiation nor a consubstantiation. The body of Christ is at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

The Holy Spirit takes the benefits of Christ's work and brings them to believing participants in the mass, even as he does in the preaching of the word of God. The sacraments are visible words. The nexus between the glorified Christ and the believing participants is the Holy Spirit.

The Reformed view of the Lord's Supper differs from both the Roman Catholic and Lutheran views. It's sometimes called the doctrine of the real presence of Christ. It rejects both transubstantiation and consubstantiation.

The elements do not change, and Christ's body is in heaven. There is not an impartation of divine attributes to his human nature, and certainly not the other way. Thankfully, Lutheranism doesn't teach that.

Why does it only go one way, this communication of attributes? Instead, the Reformed view holds Christ is present in the supper when the Holy Spirit brings the benefits of the risen Christ from his place at the Father's right hand to believing participants in communion. The Zwinglian view of the supper differs from the other three views. Although it is debatable whether it was actually the view of Ulrich Zwingli, it remains attached to his name.

It's called the memorial view because it emphasizes the Church remembering Christ in his death. The supper is a commemoration that brings to mind Christ's death and its effectiveness in taking away our sins. In distinction from other views it holds, Christ is not present in the supper in a distinctive or supernatural way.

We move from views of the supper to the theology of the supper. We will do the same four views again. Actually, that's not true.

We'll mention them as we go, but we're going to make other points. We're going to draw theological points. Theology of the Lord's Supper.

First, the Lord's Supper follows Jesus' commands. It's an ordinance. The Church observes the Lord's Supper for the same reason it practices Christian baptism.

Jesus commanded his disciples to do so. Matthew is representative of the Gospels. As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, and said, Take, eat.

Take and eat. This is my body. It's a command.

After supper, I gave him the cup. Drink from it, all of you. Eat and drink are commands, not options, not our choices, not the Apostle's idea, Jesus' idea.

Second, the Lord remembers the Lord's death. It's a memorial. On the night he was betrayed, we hear this so often when we have a Lord's Supper.

I don't know why we only read from 1 Corinthians 11. I'd like us to read from all four of the words of institution, alternating them, but that's okay. On the night he was betrayed, Jesus took bread.

When he was given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. Concerning the cup, he said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. It is a memorial. It is a history lesson we remember, although even that is stronger biblically than the words that I am reading to you.

To remember is not merely to think in the mind and rehearse. It is to worship the living Lord who is present with his people in the Holy Supper. Third, the Lord's Supper clarifies Jesus' sacrifice.

It's covenantal. Jesus' death is the sacrifice of the new covenant, as both Jesus and Paul say. It is for the church, observed by the church, taken by believers.

Jesus loves his church and gives himself for it. In the Lord's Supper, he reminds us that as often as we partake of the supper, we proclaim the message that Jesus saves, keeps, and motivates us as his people. Fourth, the Lord's Supper unites Jesus' church.

It's communal. It celebrates Christ's saving work and underlies our union with Christ, underlines our union with Christ, and unity with one another as the community of Jesus. We all partake of the same bread.

Therefore, we who are many are all one body. 1 Corinthians 10:17. It bids us love one another, show deference to one another, and include one another, unlike the Corinthians were doing at there, I should have said this before, at their love feast.

Again, this is an option but not commanded in the New Testament. A love feast was a church supper in which the people worshiped the Lord's Supper. The people had a church supper together, an agape, which was called a love feast, and they enjoyed Christian fellowship.

The Corinthians, more than apparently, it looks like really, were celebrating the Lord's Supper at a love feast, at an agape, but they were denying even the meaning of the agape by their rudeness in overlooking the poor and not sharing food with the poor. Not sharing food and not eating together. Fifth, the Lord's Supper broadcasts Jesus' Gospel.

It's missional. As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death. 1 Corinthians 11:26.

The Lord's Supper is a sermon. It proclaims the Gospel. Sixth, the Lord's Supper celebrates Jesus' provision.

It is a participation. We participate in the Lord Jesus. We bring nothing to the table but our sin.

We come and receive. Receive in the saving work of Christ. Receive the generous grace of God, who accepts sinners who believe in Jesus.

The Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice. It is a means of grace, along with the preaching of the word, Christian baptism, and prayer. This means that God has ordained whereby he gives grace to his people.

None of those things automatically give grace, but they are means that God uses to save and strengthen his people. Jesus has already completed his sacrifice. The Lord's Supper testifies to God's provision for his people.

Grace upon grace. And in the Supper, we participate. We receive the grace of God.

Seventh, the Lord's Supper forecasts Jesus' return. It is eschatological. It looks to the future.

For as at its institution Jesus promised, I will not drink from the fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. Matthew 26:29. Paul connects the Supper with Christ's second advent.

Eating the bread and drinking the cup proclaims the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Corinthians 11:26. Lastly, not quite lastly.

Next, the Lord's Supper forecasts the Lord's return. It looks to lastly, penultimately, we consider the government of the church. We also want to consider the ministries of the church.

Christians vary significantly concerning church government, but they share a belief in several common features. Before exploring the commonalities, we'll summarize the various kinds of church government. The Roman Catholic Church is a worldwide hierarchy under the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, based in Vatican City.

Catholicism locates the church's ultimate authority in Peter, whom they regard as the first Pope or representative of Christ on the earth. Authority is transmitted through apostolic succession from the church in Rome. Roman Catholic teaching includes sacerdotalism, which maintains that the power to forgive sins is passed from the Pope to bishops by the laying on of hands.

Bishops also possess much-derived authority and rule over priests and deacons who assist them. The Roman Catholic Church's strength is rooted in its priests serving in local parishes. All of that is according to Roman Catholic sources and theology.

Churches with Episcopal government are governed by bishops, in whom the church locates its authority. One could say Rome is Episcopal, but it's also papal, so we distinguish in that way. Bishops in the Episcopal Anglican Church may be subject to higher-ranking bishops, called archbishops, metropolitans, or patriarchs.

They also meet in synods. Episcopal Church government is not a simple chain of command, and some authority resides in lay church councils. But to summarize, the Roman Catholic Church is governed by bishops.

Presbyterian church government is representative, locating authority in a hierarchy of councils. The lowest level called the session or consistory, is composed of elders who govern a local church. The minister of the church, or teaching elder, is a member of and presides over the session.

The congregation elects lay representatives and ruling elders. The session sends elders to the next level of council, called the presbytery by Presbyterians, or classus by the Reformed. The highest council is the General Assembly, or synod, Presbyterian and Reformed, respectively, to which each presbytery sends representatives.

Congregational church government locates authority in the congregation. The local congregation rules itself and elects its own leaders. These churches may be pastor-led, staff-led, elder-led, or otherwise, but in each case, the congregation retains the final authority.

Local churches may be completely independent or belong to a denomination. If the latter, neither the congregations nor the associations exercise any control over each other other than having the ability to end membership in the association. The associations or conventions are relational and financial networks of like-minded churches that usually exist to promote church health, missions, and theological education.

Churches that traditionally practice congregational church government include Baptists, Congregationalists, and many forms of non-denominational Christianity. We said that the forms of church government are distinctive, and that is true. We also said that they hold certain things in common.

I want to just briefly summarize those. They share certain features. That is, we have emphasized the differences.

We also want to communicate the core teachings of the church. That works fine. So, Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Congregational are forms of government that differ, but they have things in common.

First and foremost, Christ is the head of the church. Matthew 16, 18, and 19, Ephesians 5:25-28. As such, he possesses ultimate authority over the church as a whole and over local congregations.

I'm not being naive here. Of course, that is understood in different ways in the four forms of church government that we said. Yet, it is good to point to some commonalities.

Second, the Bible retains authority over the church. This is definitely an evangelical evaluation. See Galatians 1, 8-9.

Third, this is an evangelical summary of core teachings. I am being as kind as possible. Third, Christ expresses his authority through the leadership of the church.

Matthew 18:15-20, Acts 6:3. Fourth, the church has two offices. The first is the pastor, elder, and bishop.

The term pastor denotes care and nurture with the word. 1 Peter 5:1-4. Elder denotes maturity and wisdom.

Titus 1:5-9. A bishop or overseer denotes leadership and administrative abilities. First Timothy 3:1-7.

A qualified pastor is a Christian of sound character who leads his family well, has a good reputation in the community, is able to teach the church. 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Titus 1:5-9.

It is also marked by wisdom, love for others, humility, and self-control. James 3:1-18. Pastors are elders, pastors are slash elders, and they shepherd the church.

1 Peter 5:2. Lead the church. 1 Timothy 3:5. Teach the word. 1 Timothy 3:2. Oppose error. Titus 1:9. Pray for the church's members. James 5:13-15.

And set an example for the others to follow. 1 Peter 5:3. The second office is that of deacon, Philippians 1:1.

Deacon's main responsibilities concern service to the church. The qualifications for deacons, 1 Timothy 3:8-13, are similar to those for pastors without the requirement to be able to teach. Fifth, the spiritually gifted congregations themselves are central to fulfilling the ministries of the church.

Pastors and other leaders teach and lead, but all members of the congregation bear responsibilities and are ministers, too. They're servants. Ephesians 4:12-16.

They actively use their diverse gifts to serve the Lord, the church, and others. We all have spiritual gifts. We're to use them to strengthen the body of Christ.

We receive, and we give and receive; others give and receive. In and through it all, the goal is that God be glorified as he's the giver of gifts, the one empowering the gifts, and the one being praised through the church's increasing health. Finally, decisions in church life should reflect the church's mission, its unity, holiness, truth, and love, and it should reflect the church's nature, its unity, holiness, truth, and love, and its mission, which mission we look at now in order to conclude our study of the doctrine of the church.

The service or mission of the church includes worship, evangelism, edification, and diaconal ministries. The service of the church includes worship. 1 Peter 2, 9-11, we who are not a people have now been called the people of God, that we may proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness to his marvelous light.

In Romans 15, Paul views himself in priestly terms as an offering to God, the Gentiles; it's a really beautiful metaphor as his sacrifice. It's really beautiful. 15:5, that's wrong, 15:15 of Romans.

God gave me grace to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. How's that going to happen? He's an evangelist, and his goal is God being worshiped. I would say the supreme goal of all the service of the church is indeed the worship of God.

Aren't we trying to reach sinners? Yes, we are. And don't we care about their salvation? Yes, we do. But John Piper is right.

We do so that there might be more worshipers of God. That's the ultimate goal. The service of the church includes worship.

This involves prayer and observance of the church's ordinances or sacraments. Secondly, the service of the church involves, includes evangelism. We see it in John 20 when Peter gets a private audience with Jesus and rushes ahead of the others out of the boat to talk to Jesus.

Jesus restores Peter, who has been denied three times. Three times, Jesus makes him confess that he loves Jesus. It's a hard repentance but a good one and a needed one.

And Peter indeed repents. And Jesus gives him a mission. Feed my sheep, tend my lambs.

How's he going to do it? Through the ministry of the word of God, reaching unsaved persons. And through that ministry also involves discipleship. I actually was; I actually was in John 21 there, and that is true.

In John 20, however, toward the end, Jesus explicitly sends the 11, Judas having departed to betray his, Jesus having betrayed his master. The risen Lord says, as the Father has sent me, I'm sending you John 20:21. When he had said that, he breathed on them.

This is recollecting the divine in breathing into Adam, causing him to come alive. Here, Jesus breathes on them and says, receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they're forgiven.

If you withhold forgiveness, it is withheld. This, of course, is to be in conjunction with him sending them and providing them with the spirit that they are to, whereby they're to share the gospel with unsaved persons. And that is also reflected in the verses we read in Romans 15.

Paul's ministry is to preach the gospel to the Gentiles so that he might present them as an offering to God. The service of the church includes evangelism. This involves all God-honoring forms of outreach.

Evangelism was also implied in the Great Commission of Matthew 28, 19 to 20 as we saw previously. All God-honoring forms of outreach are involved in this service. It's all service to God.

Worship, evangelism, edification. I love both Paul's and Peter's way of saying it. God is the giver of the spiritual gifts.

They're his gifts. He gives them to us and there's a sense that they become our gifts. We don't deny that, but they're not ours to be kept for ourselves.

They're not ours whereby we try to get praise for ourselves, but rather, 1 Corinthians 12:7, to each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good. God gave us gifts so that we might glorify him by serving others and promoting the common good of the church. How about 14:12? So, with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

That's what we are to do, we're to edify, we're to build others. Recognition may come our way, but it's not our goal and it doesn't matter whether it does or it doesn't. 1 Peter 4, often neglected, wonderfully dovetails with Paul's words.

The spirits are given by the Holy Spirit sovereignly for the common good. Peter says, 1 Peter 4, 10 and 11, as each has received a gift, Peter agrees with Paul, every believer has at least one gift. Use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.

So, so beautiful. God's grace is here viewed as the source of spiritual gifts and we get gifts from God and it's, his grace is variegated. It is multicolored, multichrome and all kinds of gifts come from him, but we're to use whatever we have to serve one another.

1 Peter 4:10. For the common good. 1 Corinthians 12:7. To edify one another.

1 Corinthians 14:12. To serve one another. 1 Peter 4:10.

I get, I get, I get it. Then Peter gives two examples. Whoever speaks as one who speaks the oracles of God, the very words of God, whoever serves as one who serves by the strength that God supplies in order that in everything, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. To that, I can only say amen.

Lastly, oh, I should say the service of the church includes edification. This involves disciple-making and fellowship. Lastly, the service of the church includes worship, evangelism, edification, diaconal ministries, and social action.

Galatians 2, 10. Quite remarkable. Paul goes up and lays his gospel out for the, the, uh, people who were apostles before him, the pillars, James and John, Peter, James and John, and they accept him.

They don't add to his gospel. He's not going up with his hat in his hands, begging for their fruit. No, he goes up as an equal, and they share, and they accept each other.

But 2:10 is remarkable. Surely, anything that they say in this context is very important. That's my point.

2:10 and 2:9. And when James and Cephas, the Aramaic name for Peter and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me to go to the Gentiles, even as they had been given God, God's grace to go to the Jews. They gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me that we should go to the Gentiles as they, to the circumcised. Notice this; they only asked us to remember the poor.

Wow. That is incredible. The very thing I was eager to do.

I mean, this is not something trivial. This is not something, uh, optional. The church has a concern and should have a concern as one of its ministries, the main ministry.

No, I've said from the beginning the main ministry is the worship of God. The service of God also involves evangelism and edification, but a part of the ministry is doing good to all men. Galatians 6, especially those of the household of faith.

Galatians 6, 10. Let us not grow weary of doing good. So then, as we have opportunity, Galatians 6:10, let us do good to everyone, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

James says this is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of God and our father. If you and I didn't know that passage, we would say, oh, worshiping God, winning the lost, preaching the multitudes. He says, keeping yourself unstained by the world and visiting orphans and widows.

Amazing. Or how about 1 John 3:16 to 18. If you see your brother in need and you have the ability and don't do it, how does the love of Christ dwell in you? 1 John 3:16 to 18.

The service of a church includes diaconal ministries. I should have included Acts 6, 1 through 7 as the foundation. And this involves all God-honoring ministries of mercy.

I commend Amy Sherman's book *Restorers of Hope* and Tim Keller's *Ministries of Mercy*. We have spent significant time, actually one half of this course, dealing with the doctrine of the church. In the next half of the course, we will turn our attention to the doctrine of last things.

And I look forward to sharing that with you.

This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson and his teaching on the doctrines of the church and last things. This is session 10, Ordinances of the Church, Government of the Church, Core Teachings about the Church, and Service of the Church.