

Study 5 *We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, ... of one baptism for the forgiveness of sins*

Prayer of Confession by **John Wesley** (1703-1791)

Forgive them all, O Lord:

our sins of omission and our sins of commission;
the sins of our youth and the sins of our riper years;
the sins of our souls and the sins of our bodies;
our secret and our more open sins;
our sins of ignorance and surprise,
and our more deliberate and presumptuous sins;
the sins we have done to please ourselves
and the sins we have done to please others;
the sins we know and remember,
and the sins we have forgotten;
the sins we have striven to hide from others
and the sins by which we have made others offend;
forgive them, O Lord, forgive them all for his sake,
who died for our sins
and rose for our justification,
and now stands at the right hand to make intercession for us,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Videos:

Although it is not necessary to watch the short video it gives a short introduction to the context of the study. It is available at: <https://ourcommonlife.org.au/6-july-2020/>. The message on Sunday the 28 June was also specifically about Romans 6 and baptism into Christ. It is also available on this link.

Opening Reflections:

- How were you baptised?
- What is your understanding about baptism
- What does your baptism mean to you

Introduction:

We have been looking at a common question: *how* do we experience the Holy Spirit?

- *How, where* does the Holy Spirit touch my life?
- *What* does the Holy Spirit do, how does the Holy Spirit work in the world?
- *Where* can we witness, see evidence of the Holy Spirit's work?
- *Where* does the Holy Spirit create, bring life, as we confess?

We considered in the previous study how the Holy Spirit is experienced in the church – that the Holy Spirit creates, grows, shapes, and protects a church; how the Holy Spirit creates, grows, forms *koinonia* amongst church members. How the Holy Spirit creates life in a church and its members.

However, there is more: The Holy Spirit also creates life more personally, more practically, more specifically – the Holy Spirit creates life in you and me, in person. This is through our baptism.

The Nicene Creed confesses that the Holy Spirit operates through our baptism – through our baptism we are touched, renewed, transformed by the Holy Spirit.

The confession: *We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, ... of one baptism for the forgiveness of sins*, entails the following:

- The *depth of our sin*, our deadness, our sin (sin is not simple, acts or deeds of wrongdoing, it is rather the darkness of our nature, who we are – our lostness, our powerlessness. It is *privatio boni* (deprivation of the good). It is evil interwoven with good. It is evil living like a parasite on the good in us. Therefore it is difficult to isolate, to describe, to identify sin.
- The *sarx* (the flesh) - an expression used by Paul in Romans and other letters, referring to our mortality, our vulnerability, our dependence our self-interest.
- *Evil* – (mis)represented as the angel of the light, the spirit/ideology of the time that sucks in persons, sweeps them along.
- *The law* – sin is also referred to as the law that binds us, enslaves us, holds us captive.
- *Death* – or sin is simply called death.

This is much of what Paul is arguing in **Romans 1-3** (see **Romans 3: 9-18**) and again in **Romans 7:15-24**. The deepest form of our deadness – despite trying we remain an instrument of death, that sows pain and suffering, to ourselves and to others. “*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*” (**Romans 7:24**).

The Holy Spirit, the giver of Life, the Creator Spirit. In contrast to this is the Holy Spirit, the giver of Life, the Creator Spirit.

Baptism – the Bible describes baptism as the symbol, the sign, the seal or our salvation – of passing from death to life; from sin to forgiveness; from bondage to liberation; from old to new; from flesh to the Spirit.

Baptism is referred to in the Bible in various words/metaphors:

- *Bath* of rebirth (Titus 3:5), the *cleansing*, the *sanctification*.
- *Enlightment* – the crossing from darkness to light. (cf Eph 5:8-14)
- *Sealing through the Holy Spirit* – the stamp of dominion of God over us (cf 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:13, 4:30).
- *Death* of the old person and the *resurrection* of the new person (cf 2 Cor 5:17).
- *Laying down* of the old and *putting on* of the new robe, the new life (Eph 4:22-24)
- *Salvation* through the *water* through the resurrection of Christ (cf 1 Peter 3:21)

Baptism - with the different accents and descriptions - is a sign of

- the *passing from death to life*;
- from *death-in-the-power-of-sin* to *life-in-and-through-the Holy Spirit*.

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Scripture: Romans 1:16-18; 2:1, 17-18, 21a; 3:9-10, 21-22; 5:1; 6:1-12; 7:18-24; 8:1-2, 4-6, 10-11, 14-16; 12:1-2.

In baptism death is killed. In baptism death dies. This is the essence of the baptism – of the power, the seriousness, the comfort, the creativity of baptism. This is the message of **Romans 6**.

In **Romans 6** Paul appeals to believers to no longer live in sin, because:

Verse 2 if we died to sin/are dead to sin, how can we longer live in it?

Verse 3 – and those baptised into Christ were baptised into His death

Verse 4 – and baptised together with Christ means we were buried together with Him in His death; and

Verse 4 and raised together with Christ from death, through the glory of the Father;

Verse 4 so that we may live a new life.

Verse 5 United with Christ thought the baptism in His death, we surely will be united with Him in His resurrection;

Verse 6 the sinful persons who we were (past tense) have been crucified (past tense) in the baptism; so that our sinful nature/life has been terminated (past tense) in and through the baptism.

Verse 6/7 we are no longer slaves to sin (present tense) since our baptism – we have been freed from sin.

Verse 8 Repeats that since we have died with Christ we will now live with Christ.

Vers 8/9 Christ died to death and to sin. Neither death, nor sin now has control over Him. It is final. Complete. Christ died and is now for ever dead to sin.

Verse 10 Christ now lives to God.

Verse 11/12 This we *know* of Christ. This we *believe* of ourselves. Sin and death have no hold over us. It is done. Eternal death and judgement is passed. it is over. Now already

Verse 12 And we now live to God, for God in Christ Jesus.

Logolozai (vs 11) – reckoning. This is the reckoning of baptism: we too are dead to sin, and alive to God. Baptism is the lens through which we now look at ourselves, judge ourselves. We now live and behave as baptised persons. No more fear, no more judgement. Already cleansed. Already redeemed. Sealed as God's children.

To be baptised is to be stamped as the dominion of God, to call God "Abba" (Father) – through the work of the Holy Spirit. That is why we confess: *We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, ... of one baptism for the forgiveness of sins,*

Closing Reflections:

- Has your understanding of baptism changed?
- If so, how?
- **Additional thought:** In baptism we encounter an open exchange between heaven and earth: heaven opens its mysteries to be poured out on earth and earth opens to receive them. *This* is what occurred in Christ's baptism: "heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended," as we read in the Gospel. In turn, earth opened and all her waters were impregnated with the power to give new life. Blessed are those who are regenerated through water and the Spirit! (Reflections from Catholic Catechism: <http://corproject.com/cor-thoughts-133-christ-makes-baptism-a-bath-of-rebirth/>).
- **Closing prayer:**