

8. Concerning the Christian's Responsibility

A. PBCC Statement

The Christian life is a transformation, in which Christ Himself lives His life through the believer. All believers are still capable of responding to the urges of the flesh, and when they do so they do not please God. They can choose, rather, to rely continually upon the indwelling Holy Spirit's power and love, and thus glorify and please the Father. Believers are to be baptized by water symbolizing their full participation in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[Acts 2:37-39; Rom 6:15-18; 8:1-17; 12:1-2; 2 Cor 3:5-6,18; 5:17; Eph 2:10; 5:3-10]

³⁷Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸And Peter said to them, "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. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." (Acts 2:37-39)

¹⁵What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. (Rom 6:15-18)

¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

¹²So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Rom 8:1-17)

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:1-2)

⁵Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life... ¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord

who is the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:5-6, 18)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Cor 5:17)

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:10)

³But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷Therefore do not associate with them; ⁸for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. (Eph 5:3-10)

B. Discussion

1. Union with Christ

When we come to faith we are united with Christ. The Christian life is dependent upon this relationship. Baptism signifies this as we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection. In the Christian life, Christ lives through us (Gal 2:20) and his Spirit empowers us.

2. Sanctification

The work of making the believer holy. Three stages are often distinguished:

- *positional sanctification*: at the moment of regeneration we are sanctified, set apart by God unto God. This is entirely the work of God.
- *ongoing sanctification*: as Christ dwells in us through the Holy Spirit we are made increasingly holy as we are conformed to the image of God in Christ. There is tremendous debate about the roles of God and the believer in this process; the believer is both passive and active in his sanctification.
 - Catholic view: sanctification is part of justification, as God not only declares but makes one righteous.
 - Holiness view: Christians can so pursue holiness that after the conferral of a “second blessing” they enter a “higher life,” the “victorious Christian life,” a state of sinless perfectionism, in which they no longer sin and are completely consecrated to God; e.g. John Wesley, Nazarenes, Keswick movement.
 - Reformed view: obedience to the law (the “third use of the law”: to suppress sin, to lead to Christ, and to guide believers).
 - antinomian view: after salvation it doesn’t matter what we do (cf. Rom 6).
- *future sanctification*: the completion of the work of conforming us to the image of Christ. Upon death we are glorified and made fit for God’s presence. This is entirely the work of God.

3. Christian Ethics

Old covenant: Torah (Law)

- Basic principle: “‘Be holy as I am holy,’ says the LORD your God.”
- A gracious gift from God
- corporate blessings for obedience, curses for disobedience
- Rabbis enumerated 613 commandments

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- Pharisees, rabbis added a “fence” to protect Torah: the oral law (traditions of the elders), codified c. AD 150 as the Mishnah.
- *bar/bat-mitzvah* (son/daughter of the commandment): initiation, assume responsibility to keep the commandments.
- sacrificial system to atone for non-deliberate sins; many deliberate sins carried death penalty (you shall surely die).
- a yoke which Israel could not bear (Acts 15:10)

Jesus

- came to fulfill Torah (Matt 5:17)
- Torah a custodian/guardian leading to Christ (Gal 3:24-25).
- intensified Torah: “you have heard that it was said...but I say unto you...” (Matt 5:21-48)
- the faithful Israelite who kept Torah (love God, love neighbor), thus fulfilling the old covenant.
- enacted new covenant in his blood:
 - forgiveness of sins
 - gift of the Spirit

New covenant: Holy Spirit

- God's empowering presence. The Spirit, not Torah, provides our ethics.

4. The Law Today

There are multiple views on the relationship between Law and Gospel.⁹

- Lutheran:
 - Stark distinction between Moses & Law and Christ & Gospel. Must first preach Law which condemns our sins under God's wrath, before preaching Gospel of grace and forgiveness in Christ.
 - Luther: God has only two public sermons: Law (Ten Commandments to Israel at Sinai; “do this, don't do that”; what we give God), Gospel (Day of Pentecost; what God has done and gives us).
 - Three uses of the Law: restrain evil, show humanity its evil, guide for Christians.
- Reformed:
 - Calvin, the Reformed standards, e.g. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, ch. 19, “Of the Law of God”
 - God's will is expressed in natural law, revealed in the order of creation and in the moral law. Given in creation ordinances: worship, family, work, social relations.
 - Covenant theology: two basic covenantal structures:
 - Covenant of works: God gave Adam his law.
 - Covenant of grace: two administrations: Law, Gospel, both affirming moral law as perfect rule of righteousness.
 - The moral law is summarized in the Ten Commandments, on two tablets (1-4, 5-10). Ceremonial law applied commandments 1-4; Civil law applied 5-10. Both abrogated in Christ.
 - Moral law, i.e. Decalogue, still applies.
 - Same 3 uses of the law. Third Use of the Law is shorthand for obligation on Christians to keep Ten Commandments.
- Dispensational:
- Theonomy aka Reconstructionism

9. See *Five Views on Law and Gospel*; Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

- God's law = universal, moral demands.
- Tutorship of Mosaic law ref. to ceremonial law (circumcision, priesthood, sacrifice, temple), which has been fulfilled. Civil law still stands, albeit requiring re-contextualization. Civil government should obey and enforce God's law, both the moral content and the civil law with its penal sanctions. Christians should use all lawful means to work toward reconstruction of the legal, judicial and political framework of society.
- New Covenant: Torah has ended; now in age of Spirit.

5. Baptism

Much disagreement on how baptism "works."¹⁰

Sacrament or Ordinance? Christians differ.

- Sacrament: God does something in conjunction with a human act
 - an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace (Augustine).
 - holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ, and His benefits; and to confirm our interest in him... There is, in every sacrament, a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified." (WCF chap. 27 "Of the Sacraments)
- Ordinance: a human act, in obedience to Christ's ordinance (commandment)

How many sacraments?

Catholic: 7 sacraments (CCC §1113):

- of initiation (into the Church): Baptism, Confirmation/Chrismation, Eucharist
- of healing: Penance (4 stages: contrition, confession, absolution, satisfaction/penance), Anointing of the Sick (Extreme Unction)
- of service: Holy Orders, Matrimony

Protestant: 2: baptism, eucharist.

Scope of baptism

Viewed as a sacrament, Baptism signifies entrance into God's family and union with Christ, but there agreement ceases:

- *believers' baptism*: baptism is for believers upon profession of faith. It does not effect entrance into the invisible Church, nor is it required. Most churches that practice believers' baptism require baptism for admission into the visible church. Many churches that practice believers' baptism view it as an ordinance, not a sacrament.
- *infant baptism* (paedobaptism): believers' children are baptized also, for they are members of the visible Church; but this does not necessarily assume entrance into the invisible church, nor is baptism necessary for entrance into the invisible Church (cf. WCF 25, 28). Baptism is seen as a NT analogue of circumcision.
- *baptismal regeneration*: baptism signifies entrance into the Catholic church which is the same as the universal church. Baptism removes original sin; it confers and is necessary for salvation, which is found in the Church alone. Unbaptized infants who die go to Limbo; their original sin has not been purged, but they have not yet committed personal sins.

10. See John H. Armstrong, ed., *Understanding Four Views on Baptism; Counterpoints* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007). Baptist view (Thomas J. Nettles): symbol of Christ's saving work; Reformed (Richard L. Pratt Jr.): sacrament of the covenant; Lutheran (Robert Kolb): God's baptism act as regenerative; Christian Churches/Churches of Christ (John D. Castelein): Believers' baptism as the biblical occasion of salvation.