

The motivation for baptism

The apostle John declared, 'We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true'. He is the true Light who has come into the world to enlighten every man. When the Son of God gives His life to a new believer, it gives them the ability to see, comprehend and apprehend the amazing reality of being a son of God. It causes their perspective on life to change completely. They begin to see in the way that a son of God sees things, and respond to the issues of life in the way that a son of God responds.

Great joy and enthusiasm are the outcome of the seed of God's divine nature germinating within a person. The Light of life begins to dawn in their heart and they 'exult in the hope of the glory of God'. They have been born of God and become a partaker of the divine nature. They have received the seed of new creation life as a personal possession, and new life has begun to be evident in their lives.

When a new believer has been born as a son of God, they will be motivated to be baptised by the faith in their own regenerated heart, by the life of Christ within them, and by the love of God that has been poured into their heart through the Holy Spirit. For this reason, there are many examples in the Bible where believers were born of God and then immediately baptised. We read in the book of Acts that three thousand people heard the gospel and were baptised on the Day of Pentecost. One of the most vivid examples of someone who wanted to be baptised immediately was the Ethiopian who said to Philip, 'Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptised?'

References:

1Jn 5:20

Rom 5:5

Act 2:41

Act 8:36

2Pe 1:4

Further Study:

Acts 16

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 2

Conflicts and controversies

Baptism is a foundation of the Christian faith. Most Christians recognise that they need to be baptised. However, the purpose and meaning of baptism has been the subject of much religious debate over the centuries. It has often been reduced to an argument about baptismal methods, such as sprinkling with water versus immersion in water, or about different baptismal formulas. In some churches, the primary issue concerning baptism has been the words that are spoken over a person as they are immersed in the water.

The words used for different baptismal formulas are based upon contrasting doctrinal understandings. Yet, this is not the primary reason for the tensions that have arisen. Rather, it is because baptism has become, for many people, a demonstration of their association with a particular doctrine, church group, or even person. We recall, for example, Paul addressing the divisions in the Corinthian church by asking them, ‘Were you baptised in the name of Paul?’

The Scriptures clearly teach that the only reason that baptism is effective in the life of a believer is because of the cross of Christ. The power of the cross, and its daily implications for us, are *removed* from baptism when it is reduced to a formula and viewed as a rite of membership in a church, or even in the body of Christ. When this happens, baptism becomes ‘another law’. It is emptied of its power and effect in our lives. It no longer connects us to the circumcision of Christ with its corresponding suffering, through which we overcome sin by the life and power of God. For this reason, it is important to recognise that baptism is not a position. Rather, it joins us to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ so that both His dying and His living become a daily reality in our lives.

References:

Heb 6:2 Act 2:38
ITi 6:3-6 IPe 3:21
1Co 1:13,17 Rom 6:4

Further Study: Colossians 2

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 3

Three witnesses

The apostle John explained that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit each have a unique *witness, or message*, concerning our salvation. He wrote, 'And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three *agree as one*'. Although the testimonies of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are unique, They all testify concerning the offering of the Son. They are testifying of Their unique contribution to this offering with a view to Their purpose being accomplished. This is to bring many sons to glory.

The offering of the Son was His suffering and death on the cross. The most significant point regarding baptism is that it *joins us to the death of Christ*. In his letter to the Romans, Paul began his discussion on baptism by saying, 'Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus have been baptised into His death?' It is evident that Paul expected every Christian to know this. This is the fundamental meaning of baptism. It joins us to the historical event of the death of Christ.

When we are baptised into Christ, we are uniting ourselves with Christ's offering and identifying ourselves with the unique work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to bring us to glory as sons of God. Paul was clear; there is only one Lord, one faith and one baptism. However, unless we identify ourselves with the three Witnesses who agree in this one offering, our baptism will be little more than an exercise of getting wet. We must, therefore, understand the implications of being baptised into the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and be personally identified with the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit. This is Their unique initiative and contribution to the will of God being accomplished on earth.

References:

I Jn 5:8 1Co 12:13
Rom 6:3 Gal 2:20
Eph 4:5 Heb 9:14

Further Study: Romans 6

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 4

Joined to the historical event

We need to be joined to the historical event of the cross so that the redemptive work of the blood of Christ is effective in our lives. The blood of Christ has only been shed once in the history of the world. It began to be shed in the garden of Gethsemane when His sweat became like great drops or clots of blood. It continued to be shed all the way to the cross. After His physical death, the last of Christ's blood was shed when the soldier pierced His side with a spear. Once His body had been taken down from the cross, the flow of Christ's blood had ceased. It was no longer being poured out. This is an important point. We recall the word of the Lord to Moses, 'The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar'. The blood of Christ has been given to us on the altar of the true tabernacle. The only way the blood can be applied to our lives today is if we personally join the death of Christ in history.

In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul emphasised the importance and significance of the historical event of the cross. He said that all the sacrifices under the Old Covenant that were offered day after day and year after year, had no capacity to cleanse the conscience or remove sin. In contrast to this, Christ was *offered once* to bear the sins of many. He offered 'one sacrifice for sins for all time'. According to the will of God, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ '*once for all*'. This is why baptism is so important for every Christian. It personally joins us to the 'one offering' of Christ that occurred 'once' for all time.

References:

Luk 22:44 Heb 9:9,28
Joh 19:34 Joh 19:34
Lev 17:11

Further Study:

Hebrews 10

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 5

Three elements to baptism

The apostle Paul counted all things to be loss when compared to the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ. This will be the testimony of every Christian when they personally meet Jesus Christ and are born of God. However, further to this, Paul wanted to be found in Him and know the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings so that he could be conformed to His death. In this way, he identified *three major elements* of baptism. Each element of baptism corresponds to a unique work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The first element that Paul identified was the power of Christ's resurrection. We receive resurrection power from the Father which strengthens us in our mortal bodies so that we can participate in the sufferings of Christ. This is the same resurrection power that strengthened Christ in His mortal body in the garden of Gethsemane. It is the same power that physically raised Christ from the dead. Paul declared, 'If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your *mortal bodies* through His Spirit who dwells in you'.

We are buried with Christ through baptism so that the Father raises us with Christ to walk in newness of life. We know that if we have been united with Christ in the likeness of His death, we will also be united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection. We can know the power of His resurrection while still in our mortality. We are strengthened to endure suffering, find healing, and overcome sin while we are still weak and mortal. Then, in the resurrection at the last day, this is the same power that will raise us and give us an immortal and incorruptible body for the new heavens and new earth.

References:

Php 3:8

Eph 1:19-20

Col 2:12

Rom 8:11-12

Rom 6:4-5

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Acts 8

Proverbs 6

The fellowship of His sufferings

It is helpful to recognise that if we were not Christians, we would not experience the sufferings of Christ. We can see that these are different from the sufferings that everyone in the world experiences as the consequence of sin. Baptism joins us to Christ's death and the fellowship of His sufferings. This means that we are joined to the blood of Christ that was shed for our redemption. Each wound of Christ was a particular point of suffering, but it was also the means by which His blood was shed. It is the blood of Christ that flowed from His wounds which gives us life and redeems us from the death caused by sin.

The sufferings of Christ as a living sacrifice are also called the 'circumcision of Christ'. This was a circumcision made *without hands*. Circumcision made *with hands* was the physical circumcision of an Old Testament Israelite that gave him access to the blessings of the Old Covenant. Circumcision made *without hands* is the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ on the cross, which gives a believer, whether Jew or Gentile, access to the blessings of the New Covenant. The New Covenant was activated when the blood of Christ was shed for all men.

Paul wrote to the Colossians, 'In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made *without hands*, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ'. Our participation in the circumcision of Christ, which is the sufferings of Christ, removes the body of sin in our flesh. The body of sin is our natural inclination and propensity toward sin. It means that our body is controlled by sin. For this reason, the apostle Peter declared, 'Since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin'.

References:

Php 3:10 Col 1:24
Rom 6:10 2Co 13:4
Col 2:11,13 2Co 4:11

Further Study:

1 Peter 4

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 9

Filling up that which is lacking

Paul testified, 'I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, *and* fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church'. Paul was identifying two outcomes of suffering with Christ. In the first instance, he was suffering for the sake of his brethren so that his preaching would be a demonstration of the Spirit and power of God, rather than the wisdom of men. The second implication was that his sufferings were filling up that which was lacking in the afflictions of Christ. Paul was not saying that Christ's sufferings were in any way inadequate. Rather, he was acknowledging that his sufferings were Christ's, and were being given specifically to him at that particular moment in the church age. In this way, the afflictions of Christ that Paul experienced, revealed the life and substance of the new creation at that point in time.

In the period of the church age in which we live, we are also filling up that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ. When people observe our lives as we suffer with Christ, they are beholding the new creation that Christ was forming on the cross. Furthermore, having been reconciled to God through Christ, we are now living by new creation life. Significantly, we are able to share this life with others. Paul explained that the word of reconciliation was committed to us. As we preach this word to our friends and neighbours, they can also be reconciled to God and included as part of the new creation. As people across the whole church age are joined to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings by the Spirit of the Father, new creation is being fully manifest on the earth in every generation.

References:

Col 1:24 2Co 5:17-19
1Co 2:4-5 Gal 6:15
2Co 12:9-10 Eph 2:10

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 1

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 10

Clothed with Christ

The third element of baptism is that we are clothed with Christ's priesthood and anointed with His name. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul explained, 'For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ'. The priesthood of Christ is given to every member of His body when they are baptised. When a person is baptised into Christ's name, they clothe themselves with His priesthood and receive the anointing of His name which enables them to minister the life of God to others as part of a kingdom of priests.

On the Day of Pentecost, the whole church received the anointing of Christ's name when they were baptised into the name given to Christ. This baptism joined the church to Christ's priesthood and offering, making them a kingdom of priests to God. The name above every name that has been given to Christ is not a formula. It is an anointing that makes us a kingdom of priests to our God and Father. We are reminded of the words of the wise man, 'Your name is like purified oil poured out'. The apostle John declared, 'You have an anointing from the Holy One'. The psalmist likened this anointing upon Christ and His body as oil that is coming down upon the head, to the beard and all the way to the hem of the garment.

Further to this, when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, His *fire* ignited the oil of Christ's anointing. John the Baptist prophesied of this time when he said that Christ, 'will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire'. The flame of Yahweh, the light of the sevenfold Spirit of God, sat upon the heads of one hundred and twenty disciples who were representatives of the inauguration of the new lampstand church in Jerusalem.

References:

Son 1:3
 1Jn 2:20
 Isa 61:10
 Psa 133:1-3
 Act 2:1-4
 Luk 3:16

Further Study:

Galatians 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 11

The body of sin

In his letter to the Romans, Paul began his discussion on the subject of baptism by saying, ‘What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?’ He emphatically answered his own question, ‘May it never be!’ When we first come to the Father through Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and justified on the merits of the blood of Christ that has been shed for us. However, the forgiveness of sins is only the beginning of the gospel. Baptism joins us to the death of Christ so that sin is removed and remitted, or sent away. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter declared, ‘Repent and each one of you be baptised for the *remission* of sins’. This is the second aspect of our deliverance from sin. Baptism joins us to a process through which our propensity to sin can be removed from us.

Paul explains how baptism deals with the weakness of our flesh and our propensity to sin, in chapters six, seven, and eight of the book of Romans. It is helpful to view these three chapters as part of one integrated discussion. In chapter six, he describes our propensity to sin as the ‘body of sin’. The body of sin is the body that is controlled by sin. In chapter seven, he refers to ‘the body of this death’ because the body controlled by sin is dead. In chapter eight, he says that ‘the body is dead because of sin’. These are three different ways of stating the same dilemma or problem. The problem that confronts every Christian is the propensity to sin that resides in their flesh. In chapter seven of the book of Romans, Paul used himself as a representative example to illustrate the problem that every Christian must overcome. He said, ‘I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh’.

References:

Rom 6:1 -2,6
Act 2:38
Rom 7:18,24
Rom 8:10
Col 2:11
Rom 8:13

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Mark 7

Proverbs 12

An evil present in me

We know that no person has the capacity to fulfil the will of God by the strength of their own flesh. However, more than this, there is a principle that is present in the flesh of every person that actively wars against their capacity to do the will of God, no matter how much they want to serve Him. Paul said, 'I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good'. The evil that is present in the flesh of every man is called the 'other law'.

Paul summarised the problem by saying, 'I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a *different law* in the members of my body waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members'. A person who is joyfully agreeing with the law of God in the inner man has evidently been born as a son of God. They have had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and received His life into their heart. Jesus likened such a person to stony ground.

When a person is born of God, their spirit is alive because they have received the life of Christ. However, until they have been personally identified with the death of Christ, their mortal body is still dead because of sin. If a person's body is dead because of sin, it means that they have no capacity to present their body as a living sacrifice. They have no capacity for priestly service in the kingdom of God. The problem is not the capacity of the life that they have received in the inner man and nor is it their desire or motivation to serve God. The problem is the other law that is still at work in the members of their mortal body.

References:

Rom 7:21-23 Rom 12:1
Mat 13:20-21 Heb 4:15
Rom 8:10

Further Study:

2 Corinthians 4

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 13

My law and the law of sin

The other law describes a person's self-centeredness and perceived right to self-determine and go their own way. As a consequence of the fall, this law is active in the flesh of every living person. It manifests itself in a person's innate desire to preserve their own life, independence, freedom and right to choose what they will do and how they will live. The other law will manifest itself in the life of a believer in their desire to serve God their own way. Regardless of a person's commitment to serve God, Paul explained that the other law will make them a prisoner of the law of sin that is also at work in the members of their body.

The law of sin describes the deception and consequences of sin that have been evident in the world since the fall of man. When God gave Adam and Eve a command in the garden of Eden, Satan took the opportunity to bring an alternate word. Satan knew that disobedience to God would lead to death. However, he deceived Eve into thinking that she could disobey God and find life. For this reason, Jesus called him the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning. When Adam sinned by disobeying God, the whole of the human race was cut off from the life of God. The result was death.

The operation of the law of sin leading to death, has continued in every generation. When the law covenant was given to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai, it did not remedy the problem. The law was holy and the commandments were holy, righteous and good. The law revealed the true nature of sin and its harmful consequences. However, because it had no capacity to deal with man's propensity to sin, it only served to perpetuate the problem. It bound the people by covenant to the consequences of their sin and disobedience.

References:

Gen 3:4-5
Joh 8:44
Rom 5:12

Rom 7:7,12
2Co 5:14
Rom 14:7-9

Further Study:

James 4

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 16

Redeemed from bondage

Speaking as a member of the Jewish nation that had been married or joined by covenant to the law, Paul said, 'We know the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin'. From a New Covenant perspective, we know the power of the law of sin has been broken by the offering of Jesus Christ on the cross. We read in Romans chapter eight, 'For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh'.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, the sin of the whole world was laid upon the Son by the Father. As a consequence of drinking this cup of sin, He was dead to God with all of mankind. By this means, He joined Himself to our death which was as a consequence of our sin. As He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary, He was coming back from this death. When He declared, 'It is finished', He had come back from the death of sin.

The power of sin had been broken and the curse of the law had been removed. In Christ, law was at peace because all things had been reconciled in His fleshly body by His atoning work. He had put to death the enmity of competing laws. Christ was able to do this because of the harmonising capacity of His obedience. In Christ, the curse of the Law, which is its judging capacity, is no longer operating. Christ has redeemed us by His blood so that we are no longer sold into bondage to sin. We now have the opportunity to choose whom we will serve.

References:

Rom 7:14 Gal 3:13
Rom 8:3 Heb 7:18-19
Mat 26:26-31 Rom 6:14,16

Further Study:

Ephesians 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 17

The remedy to the problem

When we choose to serve Christ, sin is no longer our master. However, if we do not relinquish control of our own life by personally joining the death of Christ, the other law within our members will lead us back into captivity to the law of sin and death. This is a wretched position because we will be torn between serving two masters. We will be trying to serve the law of God with our mind, but we will be serving the law of sin in our flesh. This will mean that we have no capacity to fulfil the will of God in our flesh. And more than this, our own conscience will condemn us because of our failure to do so. It was this dilemma that prompted Paul to cry out, 'O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?'

The remedy to the problem is baptism because it means that we are personally joined to Jesus Christ who has been raised from the dead. Baptism is the remedy because it joins us to the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. These are two distinct elements of baptism, and both are necessary for dealing with sin. It is possible for us to participate in the sufferings of Christ and serve God while we are still in the flesh, because the Spirit of God dwells in us. It is the Spirit of God the Father that gives strength to our mortal bodies so that we can participate in the fellowship of His sufferings. It is these two elements of baptism working together that enable us to overcome sin, present our body as a living sacrifice and begin to bear fruit to God.

References:

Rom 7:4,24-25 2Ti 1:8-11
 Php 3:10 Joh 8:36
 Rom 8:2,11 2Co 3:6

Further Study:

Romans 5

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 18

No condemnation

The apostle Paul declared that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because we have been redeemed by His blood from the curse of the law. The judgement of the law that condemned us to spend eternity in the lake of fire has been removed. It has been commuted to a fellowship in Christ's sufferings as the discipline of God upon us for our salvation. However, more than this, as we participate in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, the blood is cleansing our conscience from dead works. His blood is redeeming us from the death that is caused by sin. It is giving us the capacity for obedience, thus bringing us into peace so that we no longer have to live with the wretched discrepancy between our aspiration to serve God, and its resulting condemnation because of our incapacity to do so.

The sufferings of Christ that cleanse our conscience from dead works and the enmity that these works cause, are our personal participation in the circumcision of Christ from day to day. It is the circumcision of Christ made without hands that removes the body of sin from our flesh. The body of sin is not just the circumcision of a small portion of our flesh that needs to be removed so that the remainder of our flesh is free to serve God. We are reminded of the words of Paul, 'For I know that *nothing* good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh'. The body of sin is our propensity to sin that resides within the entirety of our flesh. The circumcision of Christ needs to touch every part of our flesh. We experience suffering in the whole of our flesh so that we can cease from sin and live the rest of our time in the flesh for the will of God.

References:

JRom 8:1

Heb 9:14

Col 2:11

Rom 7:18

1Pe 4:1

1Co 11:32

Further Study:

Hebrews 9

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 19

The law of the Spirit of life

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus enabled Him to lay down His life and endure the sufferings of the cross. This same Spirit and power is now operative in our flesh. It sets us free from the law of sin and death, because it joins us to the circumcision of Christ. It enables our obedience, giving us capacity to join the sufferings of Christ so that the body of sin is removed. This means that we are no longer controlled by the other law. We are no longer under any obligation to walk according to the flesh. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus raises us to walk in newness of life. It gives power to our flesh so that the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us as we walk according to Spirit.

Walking in newness of life will be our testimony as Christians, as long as we continue to set our mind on the things of the Spirit and walk according to the Spirit. If we set our mind on the things of the flesh, we will regress to a carnal way of living. This will lead us back into captivity to the law of sin and death. Paul said, 'The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so'. We note that this is a worse situation than the believer who delights in the law of God in their inner man, but has no capacity to do the will of God in their flesh. If we have received the capacity to do the will of God, but revert to setting our mind on the flesh, then we will end up being hostile to God.

References:

Rom 7:22-23

Rom 6:4

Joh 6:63

1Co 15:45

Gal 2:19

Gal 5:1

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Romans 8

Proverbs 20

The mind set on the flesh

If we have been baptised into Christ, we have the capacity to live the rest of our lives in the flesh for the will of God. God has given us everything we need to live a successful Christian life. If a person *rejects* the provision of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, they will end up in a *more wretched* position than the believer who wants to do the will of God but is unable to do so because of the other law in their members. This is because, having received a knowledge of the truth and access to the Spirit of life, they *choose* instead to live according to the flesh. Paul called this, *sinning wilfully*.

Paul said that a person who deliberately sinned was trampling the Son of God underfoot, counting the blood of the covenant as a common thing, and insulting the Spirit of grace. If we set our mind on the things of the flesh, we will develop a carnal mind that is *hostile* toward God. Paul addressed the Galatians concerning this problem when he said, 'Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain – if indeed it was in vain?'

Paul wrote to the Colossians, 'If you have been raised up with Christ, *keep seeking* the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things of the earth.' This is a most important point! The greatest temptation we face as Christians is the temptation to set our mind on the things of the flesh in the midst of trials, persecutions, and suffering.

References:

1Pe 4:2
Heb 10:26,29
Rom 8:7

Gal 3:3-4
Mat 6:20
2Co 4:18

Further Study: Colossians 3

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 23

Overcoming temptation

Jesus Christ has overcome the world and every temptation. At every stage of His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, He was confronted by specific temptations and He overcame them all by maintaining His obedience to the Father's will.

It was in the garden of Gethsemane that Jesus said to His disciples, 'Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak'. When we are being tempted to exercise our own law because of our sufferings, our first response should be to humble ourselves and go to prayer. We join Christ in the context of His prayer in the garden. This is where His blood began to be shed for our redemption. It is also where the throne of grace was. As we pray with Christ, we receive grace to endure the sufferings and allow them to deal with the law within us that is registering offence. By this means, we are being delivered from our propensity to sin and are enabled to perform the will of God in the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Peter encourages us that the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation. This does not mean that He removes us from every difficult situation. It means that He strengthens us by His power so that we can endure the trial or hardship, without succumbing to the temptation of setting our mind on the flesh. This includes enduring hostility against us by sinners, without reacting or becoming offended. God is faithful and provides us with a way of escape in the midst of every temptation. The way of escape is the way of the cross. The Father strengthens us to participate in the sufferings of Christ so that our mind is being renewed. This means we will be able to keep our mind on the things of the Spirit in each specific situation we encounter.

References:

Joh 16:33

Heb 5:8

Rom 12:2

2Pe 2:9

Heb 12:3

1Co 10:13

Further Study: Matthew 26:36-75

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 24

Members of His body

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul declared that the Father *raised* Christ from the dead and then seated Him at His right hand in heaven. These were two distinct initiatives and actions by the Father. Jesus Christ was physically *raised* from the dead by the power of the Father, with an incorruptible and immortal body. After He spent forty days with His disciples, explaining the kingdom of God to them, He ascended into heaven. The Father *seated* Him at His right hand and gave Him the name above every name. He put all things in subjection under the feet of Christ and made Him the Head of the church, which is His body.

This highlights an important distinction regarding baptism. We are not baptised into the many-membered body of Christ. Baptism joins us to the body of Christ's personal flesh so that we know the fellowship of His sufferings and the power of His resurrection. The Father raises us with Christ to walk in newness of life. Further to this, the Father seats us with Himself, and with Christ, in the heavenly places as members of the body of Christ. Paul explained that God the Father 'has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired'. This is the body of God the Son. He is the immortal Head in heaven and we are members of His body even though we are still in our mortality here on earth.

The love of God was poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit when we were born of God. However, once the Father has placed us into the many-membered body of Christ, we are rooted and grounded in the love of God. We have been joined to other specific members of the body of Christ so that we can live together in first love.

References:

Rom 8:34 Eph 2:6
 Act 1:3,9 ICo 12:18
 Eph 1:20-22 Eph 3:17

Further Study: Philippians 3

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 25

The communion

The event of the Lord's death is proclaimed from week to week as we partake of the bread and wine of the communion. Jesus said that we are to eat and drink the elements of the New Covenant in *remembrance* of Him. Paul said that 'as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you *proclaim* the Lord's death until He comes'. Partaking of the communion is an ongoing expression of our connection to the historical event of Christ's death. We eat and drink the bread and wine of the communion, in faith for *participation* in His offering and His sufferings. Paul said, 'Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing [participation] in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing [participation] in the body of Christ?' We partake of these elements together because we are one body and sharers of the one life of God.

The communion should be a fellowship of giving and receiving in every congregation. When we gather together as members of the body of Christ to minister to one another, we are strengthened by one another with the Spirit and life of God. This is the ministry of the Spirit by which the body of Christ builds itself up in love. The gifts of the Spirit are operative among us for this purpose. They give us illumination and direction, as well as the strength to endure the sufferings that have been prepared for us in the coming week. We leave the communion in the faith that we will know the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. Our faith is that we will participate in both the living and dying of Jesus. By this means, we are ceasing from sin and doing His will in every circumstance we encounter.

References:

1Co 11:24-26

1Co 10:15-17

Eph 4:16

Php 3:10-11

2Co 4:10

Further Study:

1 Corinthians 12

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 26

The baptism of the Holy Spirit

The Father places us in the body, but it is the baptism of the Holy Spirit that makes us active members of the body of Christ. John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptise us with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Immediately before He ascended, Jesus said to His disciples, 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth'. This was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost when Jesus Christ, having ascended on high, poured out the Holy Spirit upon those whom the Father was joining to His body, the church.

The power that is given to us when we are baptised in the Holy Spirit is not the same as the Spirit and power of the Father that strengthens us in our mortality, or the power of the blood of Christ that redeems us from sin. Nor is it the power of the Holy Spirit alone. It is the power of all three Persons in the Godhead. The Bible calls this the power of Eternal Spirit, or the sevenfold Spirit of God.

We know that Jesus Christ has released and redeemed us from our sins and made us a kingdom of priests to His God and Father. The Spirit and power of the Father strengthens our mortality so that we can present our bodies as a living sacrifice and endure the sufferings of Christ in our priestly service. However, we still need the baptism of the Holy Spirit that gives us the anointing or power of the sevenfold Spirit of God, so that we can *function* as priests and minister the life of Christ to one another as members of His body. It is this power that enables us to be effective ministers of the New Covenant in the church and to be witnesses of Christ in the world.

References:

Mat 3:11

Act 1:8

Act 2:1-4,38

Rev 4:5

Isa 11:2

Rev 1:7

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 14

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 27