
Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: River]** Good morning! I used a local picture for the slides today, our very own Susquehanna River, which I now know how to spell for the first time. Let's pray...

- † Both the apostle John and Jesus apparently were fond of word play. Twice later in our narrative, we will see Jesus refer to "living water" when he is playing off the presence of water where he is teaching. In Greek, "living water" could mean flowing water, which is part of the word play.
 - It's interesting that writings like the Didache reveal that the early church favored baptizing in flowing, or "living," water, though a pool would do in a pinch, and in really trying times – like negative twenty wind chill factor – they would allow pouring water over a person's head; indoors, one presumes.
 - If I remember correctly, they also preferred the flowing water to be cold, perhaps because Proverbs speaks to the refreshing value of cold water. Coming from Florida, I prefer the water to be between eighty and eighty five degrees: not very refreshing, but not too shocking either!

- † Last week, we heard John the Baptist testify that God the Father had told him that Jesus was the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist had been baptizing people in water, but he said Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit.
 - What does it mean to baptize with the Holy Spirit? How does this happen? When does this happen? Some people think you have to ask for this, is that true? When you are baptized in the Holy Spirit, will you fall on the ground and start clucking like a chicken or barking like a dog?
 - For that matter, what is the significance of baptizing with water? Why should we get water baptized and by whom? And how does this relate to being in the church today? These are the things we want to investigate this morning.

Baptism in the Spirit

- † **[Slide 2: Romans 8.9]** I hope you are ready to turn some pages in your Bible. I have not provided a devotion this week, but I did include an insert in your bulletin, which will allow you to answer some questions as we go through the sermon.

- † First, let's consider the issue of the Holy Spirit indwelling believers. Let me assure you, that if you are a Christian, then you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you.
 - Let's look at what Paul wrote to the church in Rome. Turn in your Bibles to Romans 8.9 NIV: "You [believers in Rome], however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ."
 - Paul says if you do not have the Holy Spirit indwelling within you, then you do not belong to Christ, you are not really saved as a Christian. If you have ever studied logic, you know that this implies that if you do belong to Christ, if you are saved and a Christian, then you do have the Holy Spirit indwelling you. So every believer has the Holy Spirit indwelling him or her.

- † **[Slide 3: 1 Corinthians 6.19]** Let's look at another verse. Flip forward a few pages to 1 Corinthians 6.19 NET: "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?"

- Paul was writing to the Corinthians to address their multiple sin issues, so this shows that even wayward Christians or those young in their faith have the Holy Spirit indwelling them. We conclude without question that all believers in Christ have the Holy Spirit indwelling them.
- † **[Slide 4: John verses]** Second, let's consider the issue of the Holy Spirit regenerating believers to new life. When we come to faith in the gospel of Christ, we are saved by God's grace. Grace is unmerited favor, so we are saved without deserving it, as God inspires us to believe in his offer of salvation through Christ.
- In the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us and regenerates us spiritually. As we will see Jesus describe it later in the gospel of John, this is the moment we are "born again"!
 - Turn to John 1.12. We saw two weeks ago that the apostle John says that Christ gives believers the capability to become God's children: John 1.12 [NET]: "But to all who have received him [Christ] – those who believe in his name – he has given the right to become God's children..."
 - Now flip to John 3.3. This is Jesus speaking [NASB]; he says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."
 - This spiritual rebirth is our regeneration by the Holy Spirit: he makes us alive spiritually, so we can be in an intimate relationship with God as his children.
 - **[Slide 5: 1 Peter 1.3]** Turn now to 1 Peter 1.3. Peter clearly wrote that God causes believers to be born again into faith [ESV]: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..."
 - So our being born again spiritually is an act of God, through the Holy Spirit's regeneration.
- † **[Slide 6: 1 Corinthians 12.13]** Now third, let's consider this matter of baptism in the Holy Spirit. At the moment of regeneration, at the moment of salvation, at the moment of coming to true faith in Christ, at this moment Christ baptizes you in the Holy Spirit.
- Turn in your Bible to 1 Corinthians 12.13. I want to remind you that Paul was writing to a group suffering from many sin issues. NET: "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Whether Jews or Greeks or slaves or free, we were all made to drink of the one Spirit."
 - **[Slide 7: Grudem]** I want to read to you something theologian Wayne Grudem wrote about this verse. You might not have heard of Grudem, but he is an influential theologian of our day. He wrote that Paul says "all the Corinthians were baptized in the Holy Spirit and the result was that they became members of the body of Christ... 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit,' therefore, must refer to the activity of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the Christian life when he gives us new spiritual life (in regeneration) and cleanses us... In this way 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' refers to all that the Holy Spirit does at the beginning of our Christian lives." [*Systematic Theology*, 768]
 - Christ baptizes us with the Holy Spirit, which means the Holy Spirit brings you into the body of Christ through regeneration and his indwelling.
- † **[Slide 8: Ephesians 1.13-14]** Baptism is an identification: if Christ baptizes you in the Spirit, then you are identified in God's eyes with Christ, as one of his own. This is true for every believer, and is part of the process of being born again.
- When you experience the indwelling, regenerating, and baptism in the Spirit, this serves to assure you that you are identified with Christ and thus saved forever. The Bible calls this your down payment on your inheritance, and an official seal that you are saved.

- Let's look at a passage that shows this to be true: turn in your bible to Ephesians 1.13-14 NET: "And when you heard the word of truth (the gospel of your salvation)— when you believed in Christ— you were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit, who is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of his glory."
- † **[Slide 9: summary]** There is confusion about the baptism in the Spirit in some Christian circles, especially in Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Holiness churches, which believe in a second blessing by the Spirit after you come to faith. In seminary, I researched this question, and concluded that their beliefs on this issue are misinterpretations both of scripture and of their experiences.
- Certainly many people experience a consecrating moment after conversion, a moment when they truly give all of themselves to Christ and thus experience an increase in spiritual empowerment. I had one of those experiences myself seventeen years ago. But that is not a baptism in the Spirit, or *by* the Spirit as they like to say; rather it is a milestone step on the path we call progressive sanctification; that is, the path of transformation to be like Christ.
 - Ideally, a new believer gives himself over completely to Christ, but quite often we find that as we journey in faith we come to opportunities to further commit to following Christ, to really living for him instead of seeking him to bless us. These are not moments of baptism in the Spirit, but of commitment, of consecration, by you.
 - Charismatic, Pentecostal, and Holiness churches teach that you need their version of baptism of the Spirit after conversion to empower you to Christian life and service. The reality is that you receive this empowerment at conversion to Christianity. The problem is never whether you have enough of the Spirit, it is whether the Spirit has enough of you. If you want to experience the empowerment of the indwelling Spirit, all you need do is submit to Christ and yield to the Spirit, so that you are indeed obeying the commands of Christ given in scripture.
- † I have many charismatic, Pentecostal, and Holiness friends. I love their passion for God. They have a passion for worship, a passion for evangelism and missions, and a desire to yield to the Spirit which I hope will grow in this church. But they usually are weak in doctrine, and so I find them often to be in error in how they interpret the Bible and how they use the Bible to interpret life.
- Regarding Spirit baptism, they misinterpret some events in Acts, because they do not see the historical, dispensational, significance of these events. After Jesus ascended to Heaven, the Spirit came upon the Jewish believers in this new way for the first time on a specific day, and Jesus had told them to wait together to experience this. Subsequently, God made a point of showing these Jewish believers that the Samaritans and Gentiles also would receive salvation and thus the baptism in the Spirit in the same way.
 - And again, God demonstrated that now that Christ had come, died, and was resurrected, it was no longer sufficient to believe only in the promise that he *would* come, but one had to believe that he *had* come, that *Jesus* was the Christ. Because these groups don't see the true significance of these events, they misinterpret them to mean there is a Spirit baptism after coming to faith.
- † In summary, our biblically based belief is that, as you come to faith in Christ, Christ baptizes you in the Holy Spirit, and thus the Holy Spirit comes to dwell inside you, to regenerate you spiritually, and to bring you into membership of the body of Christ, also known as the church.

Baptism in water

- † **[Slide 10: Matthew 3]** In contrast to Jesus, John the Baptist was baptizing in water. Why? Turn to Matthew 3. Over the past two weeks, I have been telling you what John the Baptist's message was, but let's see it for ourselves in scripture.

- Matthew 3.1-2, 5-6 NET: “In those days John the Baptist came into the wilderness of Judea proclaiming, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near’ ... Then people from Jerusalem, as well as all Judea and all the region around the Jordan, were going out to him, and he was baptizing them in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.”
 - So John was calling on the people to repent, to return to their covenant relationship with God. The people had responsibilities under the Mosaic Covenant, to worship in particular ways, to trust God, and to obey the Law of God. John the Baptist called on them to confess their sins – that is, to confess their ways of not walking with God – and thus to get right with God again.
 - Christians should learn from John’s water baptism. We are under a different covenant with God, one which Jesus and the prophets before him called the New Covenant, but we are in a covenant with God, we are God’s representative people in this time period, and we owe God everything, so we should confess our sins, we should repent [which means to turn away from sin and embrace God’s ways as revealed in scripture], and thus be cleansed and in right relationship with God.
 - **[Slide 11: 1 John 1.9-10]** Turn in your Bible to 1 John 1.9-10 NET: “But if we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned [i.e. if we do not confess], we make him [out to be] a liar and his word is not in us.” So we can learn from John’s water baptism, even though we are under a different covenant and the Messiah has already come.
- † **[Slide 12: Matthew 28.18-20]** Christian water baptism is a little different in nature. This is a rite for new believers in Christ, not for those who already believed but have strayed.
- New believers who come to faith in that moment repent of seeing themselves as self-righteous, to now see themselves as unrighteous and in need of a savior, they repent of their lack of faith, to now put their faith in Christ, in God’s gospel promise of salvation by grace through faith.
- † Jesus commanded his disciples to start the church ordinance of baptizing all new believers in water.
- Turn to Matthew 28.18-20 NET: “Then Jesus came up and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”
 - Therefore, we know that all people should receive water baptism when they come to faith and that this is an important activity for the church to administer.
 - Those of you who have not received water baptism should not be afraid. You might have heard that we hold you down longer if you have been more sinful, but that’s just an unfounded rumor. In my vast experience of having baptized one person, nobody came up coughing out water yet!
 - I received the Roman Catholic Church’s infant baptism when I was a baby. Growing up, I was in a Presbyterian Church that also believed in infant baptism, so I was not baptized when I accepted the gospel as a teenager. When I was thirty, I felt a conviction by the Spirit that I should honor the scriptural teaching by getting a true baptism by immersion as a believer. So a pastor took me out to Siesta Key Beach one summer afternoon, and dunked me in the waves. It was an important day of inner surrender and obedience, as well as of outward testimony to my faith.
- † **[Slide 13: Matthew trinity]** As we consider the significance of water baptism, the first point is that water baptism involves a confession of faith in the Triune God. As we just read that Jesus commanded, the church baptizes new believers in the name of God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but this is not merely ceremonial. Rather, the one being baptized confesses faith in each

member of the Triune Godhead, in response to questions from the pastor baptizing. Thus the believer outwardly confesses what he/she already has believed inwardly.

- † **[Slide 14: Romans 6.1-10]** The second point is that water baptism symbolizes our unity with Christ in his death to sin and in his resurrection to new life with God the Father. Let's look at a lengthy passage on this in Romans 6.
- Romans 6.1-10 NET: "What shall we say then? Are we to remain in sin so that grace may increase? Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too may live a new life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be united in the likeness of his resurrection. **[Slide 15: Romans 6 continued]** We know that our old man [our old way of living] was crucified with him so that the body of sin would no longer dominate us, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. (For someone who has died has been freed from sin.) Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that since Christ has been raised from the dead, he is never going to die again; death no longer has mastery over him. For the death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God."
 - So in water baptism, we are identified with Christ, this being the believer's public confession of faith in, and dependence on, Christ's work for him. This is an identification with Christ to the world that symbolizes the identification with Christ to God that has already happened with baptism in the Spirit.
- † **[Slide 16: 1 Peter 3.21]** The third point is that water baptism also is a commitment to repenting from a life of sin and into a life of following Christ in submission and obedience. When Jesus said to baptize people in Matthew 28, he said we should follow that up by teaching them to obey him.
- It is easy to see from scripture like what we just read in Romans 6, that believers are called to make this shift in lifestyle that reflects their shift at salvation from dwelling in darkness to dwelling in light. While the new believer will not be very mature in walk at the time of baptism, it is important to make a commitment.
 - Turn in your Bible to 1 Peter 3.21 [NASB]: "Corresponding to that [the waters of Noah's Ark], baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ..."
 - In the early church, conversion [through an inward expression of faith] and baptism [an outward expression of faith] were so closely linked, that baptism was sometimes used to represent the entire conversion process. Peter made clear that it was not the dunking process itself that saved, but the appeal to God for cleansing from sin.
 - We do not expect people coming to faith to repent of all their sins that moment – salvation is by faith alone – but the decision to get baptized in water reflects a growing understanding in the new disciple that faith in Christ's deliverance implies a need to submit to Christ's lordship.
 - Spirit baptism cleanses us in God's eyes, in water baptism we pledge to live as the cleansed.
- † **[Slide 17: Ephesians 4.4-6]** The fourth point is that water baptism symbolizes our unity with each other as the body of Christ.
- Turn in your Bible to Ephesians 4.4-6 [NET]: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you too were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

- Now turn to Galatians 3.26-28 [NET]: “For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female— for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”
- Thus in water baptism, we are identified with each other as the church; the mystical Spirit baptism that occurs at salvation unites us spiritually, and water baptism, as a symbol of that unity, formally unites us in practice. Thus the believer should be ready to commit to the church, just as the church commits to the believer.

How they relate to the Church

- † **[Slide 18: blank]** You cannot be a legal member of this church if you have not received baptism in the Spirit. Why? Because if you have not received baptism in the Spirit then you are not yet a true believer in the gospel, and thus you are not a part of the body of Christ which is his church.
- † You also cannot be a legal member of this church if you have not received baptism by immersion in water as a believer. Why? One reason is you would be denying the church the right to carry out one of the two ordinances Christ commanded the church carry out.
 - An ordinance is an activity for the gathered local church which was commanded by Christ for the purpose of symbolizing something vital to the faith. When the church practices one of the ordinances together, they are reminded of what Christ has done for them, which strengthens their faith and comforts them. As we saw earlier, Christ gave the Great Commission to the church, which included the command to baptize all believers into the church.
 - A second reason is that water baptism is an essential step of obedience for the individual. If you are not willing to participate in this ordinance, how can we believe you will be faithful to participate in other vital functions of the church? If you are not willing to obey Christ at this fundamental level, how can we believe you will walk with us in faith? If you are not willing to proclaim to the world that you have put your faith in Christ, how can we believe you have?
- † One implication of this is that if you are not willing to partake of the ordinance that brings you into the church, then you should not partake of the other ordinance which is for the church. That means that if you have not received water baptism, then you should not receive communion either. I know several of you have not received water baptism, so you should consider receiving it if you value receiving communion. If you don't value either of these ordinances, then we should talk, because I would see that as a sign of something wrong in your understanding or your faith.
- † We said baptism in the Spirit brings you spiritually into the body of Christ, the church, and water baptism symbolizes that event and brings you experientially into the church.
 - Can it be ok to say that you are in the body of Christ but then not be involved in a local church? I don't think so. You don't have to be in a local church to be a Christian, but as a Christian you are called into fellowship with other believers to live out the sanctified life together. Only together can we accomplish the mission and ministry Christ has given us, and only together can we experience the one-another verses that define the community of believers. In the Bible, the context of all the commands for believers is one of participating in the community of believers.
- † Can it be ok to say that you are in the body of Christ but then refuse to be a member of any local church? This is harder to define scripturally, but my view is it is not. I know some of you disagree, but hear me out. I am not judging you, I just want to explain my position as the pastor.

- First, the apostles and their disciples organized local churches under governance by ordained leaders. Cooperation with those ordained leaders was seen as part of participating in the Christian fellowship. Only with committed members of each local church could the leadership develop new disciples of Christ, protect the doctrine of the church, and develop the ministry offerings of the church. If nobody was committed to the church, the leaders would not be leading anyone.
 - Second, one of the most important aspects of church life is the experience of Christian community. Christian community includes mutual accountability and commitment to obey Christ, which we cannot really have if we are not committed to doing life with each other.
 - Third, participation in the church involves specific rights laid out in scripture, such as the right to affirm the leadership, the right to receive teaching, counsel, encouragement, and training, the right to pursue the ministry specific to you within the support structure of the church, and the right to seek specific other help as described in the New Testament.
 - With these rights come responsibilities, just like in any other type of society. Members of the church commit to helping one another, to praying for one another and the church, to living together the way Christ described sanctified life, to serve each other in the church's ministries, to help promote the gospel and the church, and to give financially so the church can carry on, all under the guidance of the ordained leaders of the church. Without these commitments, we are like a couple afraid to get married, like people on the same street afraid of becoming friends.
- † I know some of you have had bad church membership experiences in the past, and I applaud you for still seeking to be involved here in a limited way. But if you are not willing to commit to us, then why do you expect us to commit to you? If you will not commit to help carry the burden of our responsibilities, then why do you expect to reap the benefits of church involvement?
- I am not demanding that anyone become a member against his or her will, nor am I asking anyone to leave our fellowship. What I am asking is for those of you who are not members to come and talk with me about it. Let's explore together what it means to be a member of this church, and then you can decide whether that is palatable for you.

Application

- † **[Slide 19: application]** We have mentioned four application steps today. Let me reiterate them:
- First, the foundational step is to put your faith in Christ and his deliverance, and thus receive baptism in the Holy Spirit. If you have not done this come talk with me about it. We can pray and study together, so you will clearly understand what you either will believe or reject.
 - Second, if you are a believer and have never experienced baptism by immersion in water as a believer, then sign up to receive this baptism. We can make a special day of it, using another church's indoor baptismal pool and having a celebration afterward.
 - Third, confess your sins to God regularly, and repent of them by trying to live more like Christ, to live like the cleansed person Christ has made you.
 - Fourth, if you are not a member of a local church, then come talk to me about it. Let's pray, study, and talk together, to see if this is something right for you.
- † Let's pray...