

GTW Winter 2021

Discipleship According to Bonhoeffer

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GTW Content Blog: <https://my.firstprescos.org/growtogether>

Week 5: Baptism

Understanding themes of Union, Conformity, Death and Life

Chapter 9, “Baptism” in *Discipleship*.

Weekly Devo:

1 Peter 3: What do Slaves, Wives, Husbands, and Imprisoned Spirits all have in common? They all appear in (or near) 1 Peter 3 ...

1 Peter 3:8-9

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, **repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called** so that you may inherit a blessing.

1 Peter 3:20b-22

In it (the ark) only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes **baptism** that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It **saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ**, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Chapter 9, *Baptism*

(Death to the Old, Life to the New)

“The Synoptic Christ” versus “The Christ of Paul”:

- The Call of Jesus through his earthly life (Matthew, Mark, Luke)
- The Presence of Jesus through Baptism (Pauline literature)

“What the Synoptics describe as hearing and following the call to discipleship, Paul expresses with the concept of baptism.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 184.

Baptism is:

- something Jesus offers to us
- a paradoxically passive action
- Christ’s claim on us (we become Christ’s possession)¹
- belonging to Christ
- a visible act of obedience
- implies a “break” (“in the strictest sense”)

More on “The Break”:

“I am deprived of my immediate relationship to the given realities of the world, since Christ the mediator and Lord has stepped in between me and the world.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 185.

- is absolute
- causes and requires our death²
- compels us into active participation into the life and worship of the church-community

¹ 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? *You are not your own; you were bought at a price.* Therefore honor God with your bodies.” (emphasis added)

² 1 Peter 2:24, “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”

“This death must be understood in the strictest sense as an event that is suffered... Christ is our death... those who are granted community with Christ must die the grace-filled death of baptism.”

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 185-186.³

Baptism and The Holy Spirit (p. 187)

The Holy Spirit:

- the gift received at baptism⁴
- the way Jesus remains actually present with his people⁵
- gives us a true understanding of Christ’s nature and will⁶
- teaches us and reminds us of the words of Christ⁷
- leads us into all truth⁸
- gives us the ability to walk by the Spirit, “taking confident steps”⁹

“By sending the Holy Spirit into the hearts of those who are baptized, the community with Jesus has in fact become so intimate that the certainty of knowing him is not only preserved, but increased and strengthened.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 187.

³ Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

⁴ Matthew 3:11, “I baptize you with^[a] water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with^[b] the Holy Spirit and fire.

⁵ Matthew 28:20b, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

⁶ 1 Corinthians 2:10, “These are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.”

⁷ John 14:26, “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

⁸ John 16:13, “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”

⁹ Galatians 5:16, “So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”

Final Themes:

- Baptism as a “one time event”
- Baptism as a “daily dying, just as a tree dies whose roots have been cut off.”¹⁰
- Infant Baptism

With regard to infant baptism this means that the sacrament should be administered only where it is certain that the act of salvation already accomplished once and for all *will be repeatedly remembered in faith. And that can only be the case in a living church-community.* Infant baptism without the church-community is not only an abuse of the sacrament. It also betrays a reprehensible thoughtlessness in dealing with the children’s spiritual welfare, for baptism can never be repeated. – Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 189. (emphasis added)

In closing:

Having taken their life from them, (Jesus) now sought to give them a life that was full and complete. And so he gave them his cross. That was the gift of baptism to the first disciples. – Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 189.

Reflection & Growth (Small Group Prompts)¹¹

- How does this teaching on Bonhoeffer’s understanding of baptism square with your current understanding of baptism?
- What does baptism have to do with our union with Christ?

Personal Application: Every week we will have a question(s) aimed directly at helping you grow toward Christ both immediately in the “now,” as well as into the future.

- Through embracing your own baptism, how can you even more “die to sin” and “live for righteousness” this week? (See footnote number 2 above, 1 Peter 2:24)

End your time in prayer, praying that the very Spirit of God would lead each of us in our walk, making us clear light and useful salt to everyone we meet.

¹⁰ C.f. Romans 6:1-18.

¹¹ Strive to square all your main findings with Scripture. In other words, do Bonhoeffer’s conclusions square with the “Kingdom Principles” laid to God’s People throughout all Scripture?

Final Reminders

After this call: Do you have a small group video call to join?

- Next Week: Life Together: The Communal Nature of Discipleship from chapter 1 in *Life Together*

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.
The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me.”

– The Apostle Paul, Galatians 2:20



A scene of martyrdom in “[Silence](#),” (2016) directed by Martin Scorsese, adapted to motion picture from the novel, “[Silence](#)” by Susaku Endo (1923-1996), depicting the persecution of Christians in Seventeenth-century Japan.