

# Baptism, Ordination, and the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:22-43, John 20:19-23

*Halifax: 17 March 2019, 10:30 AM*

## Introduction

Dear congregation, today we have a special service at Covenant Reformed Presbyterian.

- First, we have a baptism—today Colton Sherman, a young adult who did not grow up in a church, comes to Christ to be washed by Him as his Saviour and Lord.
- And then we have the ordination of Ray Silver, a man that God has raised up to serve among us as a ruling elder who comes to be set apart and empowered for office.

These two ordinances side by side, baptism and ordination, give powerful visible testimony to the grace of God at work in His church.

- With baptism, we see Him calling sinners into His kingdom of righteousness, washing away their sins.
- And with ordination, we see how He provides and empowers elders for the spiritual care and oversight of those who enter His kingdom.
- The two go hand in hand and show us what Christ does throughout the whole world in His church.
  - He gathers new sheep into His church and then He provides shepherds to look after them.
  - No one who comes to know Christ as Saviour should be without the care of faithful elders.
  - Seeing God working among us in this way should stir us up to pray for the multiplication of both sheep and shepherds all over the world.

Today I am going to preach about baptism, ordination, and the Holy Spirit.

- The Holy Spirit is frequently mentioned in scripture in connection with both baptism and ordination, so I want to show you how the Spirit is related to these ordinances.

I have chosen two passages for our scripture readings, both which speak of the Holy Spirit.

- Please listen first to Acts 2:22-43.
  - In this passage, Jesus has just poured out the Holy Spirit on His church and this outpouring has been visible with various signs—
    - the sound of rushing wind,
    - the visual display of tongues of fire on the disciples,
    - and the miracle of tongues by which the disciples are praising God in the many different languages of those who are gathered there.
  - With Acts 2:22-43, we have Peter explaining what this is all about to the onlookers and then calling them to repent and be baptised with the promise that they will receive forgiveness and the Holy Spirit.
  - And then 3000 are baptised and enter into the church where they receive the spiritual care that God has provided through His appointed shepherds.
    - The Holy Spirit looms large in all of this. Listen as I read to you...

Acts 2:22-43: “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—<sup>23</sup> Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; <sup>24</sup> whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. <sup>25</sup> For David says concerning Him: ‘I foresaw the LORD always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. <sup>26</sup> Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. <sup>27</sup> For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. <sup>28</sup> You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.’ <sup>29</sup> Men *and* brethren, let *me* speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. <sup>30</sup> Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, <sup>31</sup> he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. <sup>32</sup> This Jesus God

has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. <sup>33</sup> Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. <sup>34</sup> For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: ‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, <sup>35</sup> till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” ’ <sup>36</sup> Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” <sup>37</sup> Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?” <sup>38</sup> Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” <sup>40</sup> And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” <sup>41</sup> Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*. <sup>42</sup> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. <sup>43</sup> Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

May the LORD bless the reading of His holy Word.

Our second reading is from John 20:19-23.

- Here we have not exactly an ordination, but Jesus symbolically showing us that those He sends to shepherd His people are given a special infusion of the Holy Spirit.
  - It shows the relationship of the Holy Spirit to ordained ministry.
- The situation here is that Jesus has just risen from the dead and has come to His disciples... all of them except Thomas, who was absent.
  - In this text, He is calling them to the work of keeping the gates of His church on earth—giving them the authority that still belongs to the elders of the church, to receive those who repent and to remove those who refuse to repent.
  - For this, His disciples will need special help, and Jesus assures them of that help by breathing on them and saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Listen to the word of God...

**John 20:19-23:** Then, the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace *be* with you.”<sup>20</sup> When He had said this, He showed them *His* hands and His side. Then the disciples

were glad when they saw the Lord.<sup>21</sup> So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”<sup>22</sup> And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.<sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained.”

May God bless to us the reading of His holy Word.

So you see that in both the reading having to do with baptism and the reading having to do with ordination, the Holy Spirit is prominent.

- One reason for this is that although both baptism and ordination are given when people enter into the Christian life or the Christian ministry,
  - They also both represent the *completion* of the call of God in a person’s life.
  - They become something that they were not...
    - with baptism—they become disciples;
    - with ordination—they become elders.
- And of the three persons of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is the one who completes the work of God in calling them—so that they become what they were not.
  - The Father plans or decrees; the Son carries out the decree; and then the Spirit completes it...
    - Consider this order of working of the three persons that is always followed:
      - The Father planned creation, the Son created, the Spirit gives life.
      - With redemption, the Father planned and sent the Son, the Son came and did the work demanded for forgiveness, the Spirit brings us to receive it.
      - With baptism, the Father is the one who chooses us, the Son is the one who calls us to Himself as the word, and the Spirit is the one who transforms us so that we will respond to the call.
      - Likewise, with ordination, the Father chooses ministers, the Son calls them, and the Holy Spirit works in them so that they receive the call.
    - The work of calling in both cases is not complete until the Holy Spirit has done His work.
      - Neither baptism nor ordination speak of the process of calling; both speak of the fulfillment or the completion of the call...
- Nevertheless, as we shall consider today:
  - Both baptism and ordination have to do with a prior work of God’s Spirit (preparing us to answer the call).
  - Both have to do with a present work of His Spirit (effecting the call).
  - And both have to do with a future work of the Holy Spirit (living as called).

**I. Let’s begin by looking at how both baptism and ordination have to do with a prior work of God’s Spirit that brings us to the call of God.**

A. In the case of baptism, there are operations of the Spirit that go before.

1. The blessed Spirit brings us to the word of God.

- In various ways for various people, in the working of His providence, He brings us into connection with the scriptures and those who preach them.
- Sometimes He prepares us through hardships that wake us up to the fact that things are not right between us and God.
  - Or He opens our eyes so that we are gripped with the reality that this world is just a vapour that quickly passes away.
  - Or He causes us to see our sin—how guilty and unworthy we are, maybe when we do something that we thought we would never do—hurting someone or committing some sin.
- But eventually, the Spirit brings us in touch with the Scriptures that not only tell us that have sinned and are under condemnation, but also of the gracious plan of salvation for sinners through Jesus Christ.
  - That Christ has come into the world to establish a kingdom for sinners who are, by Him, made acceptable to God—even righteous.
  - That He makes this kingdom righteous by representing all who enter it...
    - He has paid for their sins on the cross so that they can be forgiven and accepted...
    - And He has fulfilled the righteous requirements that all human beings have before God so that all in the kingdom are accounted righteous.
- The Spirit sends preachers and He brings all who are chosen for salvation into either direct or indirect connection with these preachers so that they hear the good news of salvation.
  - We cannot know this good news unless we receive God's revelation... because it is not a part of nature—it is an act of marvellous grace that we cannot know unless we are told of it.
    - And the Spirit is the one who sends the preachers and brings all the elect into contact with the message they preach.
  - You can see how He did this in Acts 2.
    - He brought those who had come to Jerusalem for Pentecost in touch with Peter who preaches the gospel of Christ to them.
    - Somehow, the Spirit gets the word to us if we are appointed to salvation.

➤ But that is not all that the Spirit does prior to baptism.

2. Among those who heard Peter preach, there were some who responded to God's call and were baptised and some who did not.

- The difference lies in the inward working of the Spirit by which He enables sinners to respond to gospel that is preached.
  - We are all naturally resistant, even to the good news of God's salvation.
  - Because we are sinners in rebellion against God, we don't naturally want to be reconciled to Him.

- But the Spirit works in those that God has appointed to salvation so that when the word is preached,
    - we hear of sin and we come to see that indeed we are sinners...we see that we have been wrong and we detest ourselves, and we see that we are guilty before God.
    - You see that in our reading in Acts in a very striking way...
      - In verse 2:37 after Peter tells them that they have sinned, it says: **Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?”**
  - But even then, there are two very different responses.
    - Some get angry and gnash their teeth like they did when Stephen preached and they were cut to the heart...
      - but others cry out to God for mercy as these in Acts 2:37 did.
    - And then, the Holy Spirit works all the more so that they are not only cut to the heart and cry out for mercy, but, as verse 41 says, gladly receive the word of God that promises forgiveness to us through Christ.
      - Peter here calls them to **“repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,”** and he urges them to **“be saved from this perverse generation.”**
      - And then in verse 41, it says that **those who gladly received his word were baptised.**
        - The Spirit did the work to prepare them to receive the call.
3. But how do we know that that their responding is dependent on the work of the Spirit?
- Because the Scriptures testify to us that the new birth by the Holy Spirit is essential. The Spirit is the one who changes our hearts from rebellion to obedience and submission.
    - As we read in Ezekiel 36:26-27, the Lord said, **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.**
    - We obey the call of God and come to Christ for salvation that we may henceforth live for God.
      - Again, as in Acts 2:41, **those who gladly received His word were baptised.**
- B. There is also a call of the Holy Spirit prior to and leading up to ordination.
1. The Spirit begins by giving gifts of shepherding to a man and He gives him a burden for God’s people.
    - The man begins to see more and more the excellence of Christ and of walking with Him, and he begins to be burdened for others... that they would walk with Him.
    - And soon he is praying for them and beginning to encourage them to walk with God and to seek Him.

- And as he does, the Holy Spirit gives him the ability to admonish and to lead, and an increasing spirit of prayer and supplication.
  - He gives him more and more wisdom and discernment so that he is able to provide helpful and effective counsel.
- The Holy Spirit thus burdens the man with a desire to serve the church and he equips the man...bringing him to the call of leadership.
2. And then the Holy Spirit works in the people so that they want the man to be their shepherd...
    - The elders in the church also see that the man has been raised up and are willing to lay hands on him to ordain him to office.
    - It is not a mysterious call, it is a working of the Holy Spirit to gift a man so that he is received by the people and is equipped to serve them.
  3. That this is the work of the Holy Spirit is shown, for example, in the simple statement of Paul in Acts 20:28 where he says to the elders at Ephesus:
    - **Acts 20:28: “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”**
    - It is the Holy Spirit who *makes* overseers... all the gifts that God gives to His people for service in the body are attributed to the Holy Spirit.

TRANS> So you see that there is a work of the Holy Spirit leading up to baptism and leading up to ordination.

## **II. But there is also a work of the Holy Spirit that we look for at that time of both baptism and ordination. Let’s look at that.**

- A. In the case of baptism, we are looking to the Lord to cleanse us so we can be His disciples.
  1. The adult who comes to be baptised has had the prior work of the Spirit and has seen that he is a desperate sinner... guilty and in bondage to sin...
    - a. And he comes to God and says, “Wash me, Saviour, or I die!”
      - He knows he is defiled, he knows that he cannot wash away his sin, he knows that he cannot change his heart.
      - If he is to be accepted of God, he must be washed.
    - b. You can see how Peter called those who saw their need of cleansing to come and get it—to come and be washed by Christ.
      - In Acts 2:38, his answer to their “what shall we do?” was: **“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”**
      - Once they did, they went from being outside of Christ to being His disciples who were cleansed, forgiven, and no longer under the dominion of sin, because of Christ.
  2. Baptism is the symbol of what happens to you when you come to Christ.
    - The Holy Spirit is the one who baptises you—washes you.

- His work is called the new birth, it is called the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, it is called passing from death into life, coming from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom light, being translated from bondage to Satan to service to Christ, from desperate guilt to full forgiveness.
  - It is called the taking away of the stony heart and the giving of a heart of flesh. It is called coming to Christ crucified for eternal life.
3. What does the Spirit do to accomplish this cleansing?
- The Spirit accomplishes this cleansing of this washing by uniting us to Jesus Christ in faith.
    - He is the one who works faith in us by transforming us so that we see our need for Christ and come to Him.
      - We come to Him by faith, and we are cleansed... forever.
      - And soon as the Spirit creates that union, as soon as we believe, we are cleansed forever—fully forgiven, and no longer under the dominion of sin.
    - We are thenceforth the disciples of Jesus Christ—now washed.

B. It is much the same with ordination.

1. When the elders lay hands on the one who is being ordained to the office of minister, ruling elder, or deacon,
  - that one officially becomes an overseer over the church of Jesus Christ.
  - And in so becoming, he should look for a fullness of gifting for that work that he now enters.
    - His conviction should be that the Lord does not call him and put him into his service unless He also equips him for that service.
    - In 2 Corinthians 3:5-6, Paul says: **Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**
2. So the laying on of hands represents the placing of the man into office as well as the gifting of the Holy Spirit for that service.
  - We pray for the Spirit to give those gifts that are needed at the laying on of hands.
    - Paul describes the gift to Timothy as **1Tim 4:14: the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.**
    - And likewise, in 2 Timothy 1:6 as **the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.**
  - We set them apart to office by laying hands on them...
    - But we trust in God to equip them for that office by His Spirit.

TRANS> So there is a work of the Spirit connected with baptism and ordination both prior to and during the actual ordinance.

### III. Now let us look at the future work of the Holy Spirit.

A. When a disciple is baptised, he is just beginning His service to Christ and He needs the ongoing work of the Spirit within.

1. The gracious Spirit of God has brought him from death to life and has brought about the cleansing of his sin by joining him to Christ and changing him.
  - But he will need the help of the Holy Spirit for every step that he takes.
  - He is now involved in the great work of sanctification, of dying to sin and of rising to walk in newness of life.
    - Romans 6:4 describes this as the outworking of our baptism: **we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**
  - The Spirit does this work in us through the means of grace—through the word, sacraments, and prayer.
    - You can see in Acts 2:42 how it says that those who were baptised did not stop with their baptism, but from that day: **continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.**
2. The disciple is to keep on looking to the Spirit to fill him more and more,
  - a. so that he can grow in Christ and in obedience and service to the Lord and to His church.
    - He wants those wonderful fruits of the Spirit...**love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control** (Gal 5:22-23) to dominate his life.
    - He wants to be done with bitterness and sinful lusts and selfish behaviour—all by the Spirit's work.
  - b. And he will need the Spirit to help him come to a deeper sense of the mercy of God that he has been shown in Christ (Eph 2:14-21).
    - To see the depth and height and breadth and length of the love of Christ.
    - To grow in gratitude for His saving work and in assurance of His work.
    - To grow in hope and assurance of the promise of the glorious return of Christ and of our reception into His glorious house.
    - To have more and more comfort and assurance in the forgiveness of sin.
    - To ever gain a more childlike trust and confidence in God as His Father.
    - And to keep him in the love of God, serving through hard times with faithfulness and sacrifice.

B. So also with ordination. The ongoing work of the Spirit is ever needed after a man is ordained that he might fulfil his ministry.

1. A man would be fool to enter into the ministry of an elder and then rely on his own strength.
  - He is called to admonish others... to put them in mind of the things of God that they often neglect and forget.
  - He is called to lead the church, to make decisions on the session and in the presbytery about church discipline, church policy, doctrine, candidates for ministry, officers for the church.
  - He is to counsel and to teach and to guide, all in accordance with the Scripture.



2. It is no easy task.
  - It will require more wisdom than a man has, more maturity than he has, more patience than he has, more diligence, more love, more holiness, more strength, more effective prayer.
  - Who is sufficient for these things?
    - Only the man who is made sufficient by the Spirit of God!

**Conclusion:**

So seeing how the Spirit works before baptism and ordination, at the time of them, and after them, what does this mean to you?

- It means that you should give thanks for the gracious working of the Spirit in you,
  - in those like Colton, whom God has called and graciously enabled to be His disciples, and in those like Ray, whom the Lord has called to shepherd His church.
- It means that you should give thanks for them and pray for them—
  - that Colton will be given what he needs to be Christ's disciple,
  - and that Ray will be given what he needs to be a ruling elder...
- And it means you should look in hope to God by His Spirit to give these men strength to serve Him in these particular callings until the day of Christ.
  - Jesus promised that His Father would give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him, so let's ask today as we baptise and ordain.