

The Commitments of Believer's Baptism

Introducing the personal commitments
and responsibilities associated with baptism
and Christian living

A Guide for Young Christians of All Ages

Gordon Lyons

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(3) ...Don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? (4) We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

(Romans 6:3,4 NIV)

(Before reading these notes, please read Romans chapter 6.)

1. We are full members of God's Church.

Our submission to the Lord in the ordinance of baptism means that we have accepted formally, and now desire to declare publicly, our personal belief in the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf.

Baptism expresses our willingness to be associated with all of God's people in the church universal—the worldwide community or fellowship of true believers. It also expresses our desire to meet with our own local fellowship of believers to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread or the Lord's Supper. In this way, we are showing forth or proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes.

In addition, baptism expresses our desire to renounce the things of this world. From this point on, it should be our earnest resolve to live our lives to please and glorify God. Baptism also indicates our desire to honour God by being of benefit to his church: the church in which we are accepted as a full and participating member.

2. We acknowledge that, as Christ died *for* sin, so we die *to* sin.

In this life, we will never become completely free from sinful thoughts, words or actions. By God's grace, however, and by the power that he gives us, we must determine to have nothing more to do with the mind that takes pleasure in sin. We must be prepared to put off the old self: the self that longs to find enjoyment and satisfaction from the old sinful nature that is still within us. These things have been crucified with Christ. Therefore, we must reckon our sinful nature to be dead, buried and totally unresponsive to sinful desires.

We can't, however, put off or subdue the power of the sinful nature in our own personal strength. We need a person, power and a strength that is greater than what we ourselves possess. The person and power that we need is the person and power of God's Holy Spirit. Since we believed in Christ, the Holy Spirit has been living within us. Only by the exercise of his divine strength and power in our lives, will we be able to live a life that honours and pleases God.

Even now, God's Holy Spirit is at work within our lives. He is the One who is sanctifying us and consecrating our lives to God. He also is the One who is preparing us for God's use and for his service.

By the mighty working of his Holy Spirit within us, the Lord enables us to put to death the things that arise from our old sinful nature. This is what God's Word means when it says that—when we walk (or live) in the Spirit—we will not fulfil the lusts (or excessive and sinful desires) of the flesh. In this context, the 'flesh' means our old sinful nature with all its evil thoughts and tendencies. (Galatians 5:16-26)

Sin, then, must no longer control or dominate our lives. It must no longer rule over us. Once, sin was our master. Now, however, we have been redeemed and our sins have been forgiven. Now, we have become the servants of another Master—the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One whom we now love, serve and obey. Therefore, we must set our hearts on pleasing him—not on pleasing ourselves.

3. Our old lives have been buried with our Saviour.

As typified by immersion in the waters of baptism, our former manner of life has been buried in death with our Lord Jesus Christ. Since we have been raised together with Christ (typified by our rising out of the waters of baptism), the life that we now live we live as new unto him.

Can this new life still be lived like the old one? No, it can't. As far as sin is concerned, we are to count ourselves dead. We are to reckon ourselves dead to the cravings of the old sinful nature. We are to consider ourselves dead to the passions of the flesh. We are to become dead to the world and to its lusts or sinful desires. We are to become dead to self—dead with Christ, and buried with him in the grave.

Although actually still present, the enslaving power of our old sinful nature has been destroyed. It is present—but it must never again take control of our lives. Often, our sinful desires will try to exert themselves. However, they need never again take control of our lives. We are no longer in bondage to our old sinful nature, or to its evil cravings. Christ has made us free. Right now, he is giving us the power that enables us to overcome temptation.

By the Spirit of the living God, we have been made a new creation. We are God's workmanship, and we are holy to the Lord. When, by God's grace, the Spirit of God called us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we were created anew in him. Therefore, we can no longer live to serve sin or please ourselves, but only to serve and please the One who loved us and who redeemed us to his Father with his own precious blood.

In the waters of baptism, we submit and dedicate our lives completely to our Lord and Master. How, then, can we use our lives for any purpose other than that which honours God's holy, majestic and almighty name?

4 We are dead to sin and alive to God.

Through faith in Christ, we have died to the ruling power of sin over our minds and bodies. This does not mean, however, that we will never sin again. Again, it doesn't imply that we will never again harbour in our hearts the desire to sin.

Throughout his or her life on this earth, no one will become completely free from the temptations of their old sinful nature. Anyone who says otherwise is denying the truth of God's Word. According to the apostle John, that person is making God out to be a liar; for

God's Word says that we do still sin—even as believers. (1 John 1:8-10) However, we must not deliberately practise sin under any circumstances.

Throughout our whole lives, we will need to battle fiercely against every kind of temptation. We must remember, however, that it is not sin to be tempted—no matter how intense the temptation. The Lord Jesus was tempted—and tempted very severely—in all points just as we are. Yet, he never yielded to temptation. He was tempted, but he never sinned. Temptation, therefore, is not sin.

On many occasions, however, we may sin—by yielding to temptation. We may give way to sinful thoughts, words or actions. On these occasions, we have an Advocate (or Defending Counsel) with the Father—Jesus Christ the Righteous. He pleads on our behalf before the bar or throne of God. (1 John 2:1,2)

During this life, therefore, we will not become perfect in the sense of becoming sin-free. Often, we will need to seek the forgiveness of our Father in heaven for having dishonoured him by something that we have thought, said or done. Even so, it must be the greatest desire of our heart and soul not to yield ourselves to the practice of sin. For the spirit of evil cannot share our minds and bodies with the Spirit of Holiness. The Holy Spirit of God lives within our bodies. He sanctifies us, or consecrates us and sets us apart as holy to the Lord. Therefore, instead of yielding to sin, we must yield ourselves instead to our Lord and Master. We must set our whole being on serving him, and in honouring him in everything that we do.

The more deeply involved we become with the things of God, the more difficult it will be for us to become involved with the things of sin. We are being changed into the likeness of Christ—from one degree of glory to another. The life and power of the Spirit within us is gradually transforming our lives, and displacing the old sinful nature. This transforming and healing process is known as sanctification.

In God's sight, we have already been justified or pronounced righteous. We are now considered righteous in the sight of God, through the offering of Christ on our behalf and through our belief and acceptance of the truth. Christ has become to us our wisdom, sanctification and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30). However, sanctification is an ongoing process. At this moment, and for the remainder of our lives, the Holy Spirit continues the work of sanctification and cleansing in our lives.

Our sanctification will be finally completed when we appear faultless and blameless in the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 1:8) Then, we will be fully conformed to the image of God's Son. Then, we will be completely freed from all sin and failure. The Scripture will then be fulfilled which says, *"We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is"*. (1 John 3:2)

5. Pursuing only the aims that God sets for us.

No longer can we live to achieve or satisfy our own aims and purposes in life, if these are not in line with God's intended goals for us. In all our plans, we must seek the will of God. Only then can we succeed in honouring God. For only in total submission and obedience to God's will can we expect to experience God's blessings upon our lives.

In our lives, we might choose to follow our own ambitions and desires. However, if we are pursuing any course that is not in accord with the will of God for our lives, then we are sinning against the Lord. God has already planned the course of our lives right down to the last detail. It is essential, therefore, that we follow God's intended plans, and not our own ambitions.

If, by following God's plan, the Lord grants us success, then this will be a great blessing from the Lord. If, however, we were to achieve success without following God's will for our lives, then this would amount to failure.

In what way would we have failed? We would have failed in our commitment to Christ. We would have failed to honour God in our lives. We may have succeeded admirably in the world, but no amount of worldly success can ever remedy such a failure. If a choice must be made, obedience to God's will is far more important than succeeding in the world—for *success without God is failure*.

God intends us to succeed. However, he intends us to succeed for him. Our ideas of success may not always be the same as the Lord's. Therefore, it is essential that we follow only the course that the Lord has already marked out for us

The Lord reveals his way to us one step at a time. Only by seeking to know and to follow God's appointed way can we be sure that we are on the right road. Only then can we be assured that God will be with us to guide us, and to keep us all along our journey through life. Only then can we be certain of succeeding for God.

When we want to know God's will about something, then we should ask, "Which is the way the Holy Spirit would lead me," or we should say, "Lord, show me what you want me to do." God's way and God's will for us is found through his Word, the Bible; and through his works of providence. We must study God's Word prayerfully, and search it carefully. At the same time, we must ask, seek and knock at every door of opportunity that we believe might be in line with God's will for us. As we search God's Word and try out every possible door of opportunity, the Spirit of God will lead us in the good and the right way.

It is possible that God's way may not be what we had hoped for, planned or expected. However, it will be the one and only way by which it will be safe to go. It will be the Highway of the King, and he will keep his servants there.

6 God has always known us.

Before he created the world, God knew us. Before time began, the Lord had set us apart for himself. He determined that—at the proper time—we should be called to him by his Holy Spirit, and through repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. Throughout our lives, God's almighty hand has been upon us to preserve us in all our ways. By the sovereign grace, love and mercy of God, we have been brought to faith in his Son

All this way the Lord has led us. Now that we have committed ourselves to following the way of the Lord with all our hearts, he will continue to be our constant Guide and the Sustainer of our lives.

Provided we remain obedient to the Lord in all things, then he will surely pour out his blessings upon our lives. However, if we should disobey the Lord in anything, then he will discipline us as a father or mother disciplines the children they love. Parents who care for their sons or daughters will not continue to favour their children when they persistently disobey. The parents will never cease to love their children—but they may withhold the good that they had intended to do for them. The father or mother is more than willing to do all the good they can for their beloved children, but the children must first repent and obey their parents' will.

So it is with our Father in heaven. God is treating us as his own children—children whom he loves dearly. If we want to experience our heavenly Father's blessings on our lives, then—at all times—we must remain obedient to his will. If we obey God wholeheartedly in everything, then he will be with us to bless us for the remainder of our lives. He will never

leave us. He will never forsake us. We are precious and honoured in his sight, and he loves us.

7. We are raised with Christ, and for Christ we now live.

By the symbolic act of baptism, we are recognising that our old lives have been put to death with Christ and have been buried in the grave. We arise from the waters of baptism, publicly declaring our intention to live a new life in union with the resurrected, exalted and glorified Lord Jesus. From now on, therefore, we must live our lives as though new—for the honour and glory of him who loved us and made us his own.

This 'newness of life' should be a life separated to God as holy. In body and mind, our lives should be set apart or consecrated to the use of him to whom we rightfully belong. We must let him train and equip us for whatever form and place of service he has already purposed and planned for us.

In whatever situation the Lord places us—whether for a short, long or indefinite period—we must be ready and willing to work there for him. We are now seeking to obey his will. Therefore, we should live our whole lives to the honour and glory of his name.

If we are in employment, then the kind of work that we do must never bring dishonour on the name of the Lord. We ourselves must honour the Lord by doing our work to the best of our ability, and in such a way as pleases our employer. However, we must realise that while it is our duty and responsibility to please our employer, we have a prior duty and responsibility to please and honour God. In whatever work we do, we are serving the Lord Christ. From this it follows that we must do our work in such a manner as brings praise and glory to God's name. Similarly, in our work, we must never make use of any practice that does not fully honour the Lord, nor must we become involved in anything of a questionable nature.

We must never let men persuade us to do something of which the Lord would not approve. We must never engage in any practice at work which would bring dishonour to God's name, or which would discredit our testimony as a Christian. We are the Lord's servants—not the servants of any man. We must have nothing to do with dubious or doubtful practices. We are God's children. When necessary, God's children must stand their ground to honour their Lord and Master.

8. We are raised to a life of active service.

In baptism, we have surrendered ourselves completely to the Lordship of Christ. We have been formally accepted as a full member of the church of God: the Body of which Christ is Head. Let us be prepared, therefore, to work together in harmony with every other member of the same Body—the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us use whatever gifts, talents or abilities the Holy Spirit gives us to help build up the church to the honour and glory of God's name.

We should let everyone see clearly the reality and the depth of our commitment to God. Wherever we are, we should let people see by how we live, and by what we say and do, that Christ lives and rules within our hearts and lives.

We mustn't set our hearts on the things of this world. Rather, we should seek those things which are above. We should pursue the things of the Spirit. We should set our minds on the things of heaven. These are the matters that are important in the sight of God. If we seek the things of the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, God will fully enable us to deal with all the necessary things of earth. If God comes first in our lives, he will provide us with everything we really need.

9. We are soldiers of the Cross

At this moment, we are being trained to take our place in a spiritual war. Sooner or later, we must expect to fight to defend our Captain's cause; that is, the cause of Christ and his Gospel. However, we will not be fighting merely against a human enemy of flesh and blood. We will be fighting primarily against the spiritual forces of evil that are under the control of Satan. (Ephesians 6:10-18)

At some time or another, all the weapons that Satan and world possesses will be lined up against us. They will be engaged by Satan—the enemy of souls—in an attempt to force us to yield our ground, and to compromise our faith.

When the devil attacks us, we must firmly stand our ground. Although it may seem that no one else stands with us, yet we mustn't be afraid to stand alone. God is faithful. He will stand by our side to protect us and to accomplish all that he has planned for us throughout our lives. Our God is able to deliver us, and no one in all creation is able to thwart or hinder the Lord's intentions for our lives.

We, however, must equip ourselves with the whole armour of God. We must take the sword of the Spirit—the Word of God—and use it against the enemy. We must stand by the teachings of God's Word. We must stand—and never give way. If battles are to be fought and won for Christ, then we must never compromise the teaching of his Word.

We must fight the good fight of the faith—for to this we have been called. We must stand our ground resolutely against all opposition. We must hold our position for the Captain of our salvation. We must advance in our Captain's name, fearing no one and favouring none.

We are the soldiers of the Cross. We are the children of the King of kings. Though all power in heaven and on earth should attempt to shake us from God's almighty grasp, yet none shall ever prevail to overcome. We are the Lord's. No one and nothing in all creation is able to snatch us from our heavenly Father's hand: not now, and not ever. We are the Lord's—for time and for eternity. We are greatly loved and greatly treasured. We are God's own children, and we are close to the heart of our Father in heaven.

10. We are God's Temple

Our body is the temple of God—and the temple of God is holy. It is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit within us. Our body has been redeemed by Christ's atoning blood. Now, it belongs to the Lord Jesus. By his Holy Spirit, our body is being sanctified and dedicated to God.

We mustn't abuse our body, because it is God's holy temple. Instead, we must set our body apart for the Lord. We must take proper care of it. We must keep it as a pure and fit dwelling place for the presence of the Holy Spirit—the One who sanctifies us. We are not our own. We were bought at a price. Therefore, we must honour God with our body. (1 Corinthians 3:16,17; 6:19,20; 2 Corinthians 6:16 - 7:1)

Our mind and soul also is dedicated to God. Therefore, we must be careful about what we think in our hearts. We should let all our thoughts be yielded to the Lord, so that he may sanctify us in body and soul (including our mind). We should let Christ rule supremely within our hearts. We should let him guide and control our wills by his Holy Spirit of Truth.

Our whole being is the Lord's own possession. We must let him possess, therefore, that which belongs to him by the price of his own blood.

11. We are a people apart.

Every day, we will meet non-Christian people. However, we must not set our hearts on the things of this world, nor must we seek our lasting friendships there.

Under no circumstances should we compromise our faith in order to keep the friendship of a non-Christian boy or girl, man or woman. We must stand by the teaching of God's Word, and by the principles of our faith. However, in doing so, we must never give the impression that we are better than, or more righteous than others. Rather, we should stand by our faith because we really care for those who don't know the Saviour, and because we want to help them come to acknowledge the truth as it is in Jesus.

We are Christ's representatives. We must stand firmly and confidently for our Lord and Master. We must represent his name, and demonstrate his cause—the Gospel of salvation through faith in him. We must let those who don't know him, see in us something of Christ's love for sinners.

To show forth the love of Christ effectively, we must be seen and known by the world as a man or woman apart. The world must know by our conduct that our life is different from theirs—and this should cause them to ask why this is so. Let us, then, stand by our Christian beliefs and principles—but let us do so from a heart of love.

12. Telling others what we know.

Our fellowship is with the Lord, and with his people. It is with them that our closest and most permanent friendships and relationships should be formed. Yet, we must remember that while we remain in the world, we should be a witness to the world. We must have nothing to do with sinful or doubtful practices. Even so, we must never turn our backs on sinners—for of such were we all.

Our Lord—the Lord of all glory—is perfect in holiness. Yet, when he came into this world, Christ did not associate with the 'righteous.' He associated with sinners. Christ did not die for the righteous. He died for sinners. He came, and he suffered and died for those who were without God and without hope in the world. It was for sinners that Christ was nailed to the tree. (Romans 5:6-8)

The Lord Jesus took no part in people's sin—nor must we. However, his love for a lost world compelled him to die in the sinner's place, bearing on himself God's terrible judgment against sin.

Because of what Christ has done at Calvary, every truly repentant and believing sinner can be justified—or pronounced righteous—through faith in the Son of God. Everyone who hears the call of God and who comes to Christ will be accepted by him. None shall ever be turned away. (John 6:37; 1 Peter 1:2)

But how shall they believe the Gospel unless they hear? How shall they know the way to God, unless someone tells them? Who shall tell them, unless it is us?

We have come to know God's ways. We have also come to know the one and only way to God, through repentance and faith in his Son. Let us never be ashamed, therefore, to tell others about what we know. (2 Timothy 1:6-14)

13. We are to teach

The Lord Jesus commissioned his disciples to go into all the world to teach. So must we. We are in the world, but we are in the world to teach—or to witness to others about what

Christ has done. The witness that we bear to others (not only by word, but also by our daily lives and conduct) should show forth clearly our personal faith in the living Son of God. Our manner of life and speech should be such that people can see clearly in us the truth of the glorious Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Is our manner of life and speech glorifying to God?

The truth of our character, as seen in our behaviour, should be like a shining light to the world. Christ should shine forth from our lives in such a way that those who see that light in us will trace it back to its Source. Those who look upon our lives should be able to see in us the One who is the Light of the world. Through what we say and do, they should be led to acknowledge that Christ is indeed the Lord and Master of our lives.

Does our behaviour prove that Christ is the Lord and Master of our lives?

God has given us light to know the way, and to show the way. Therefore, we must let our light shine, so that it may be clearly seen whose we are and whom we serve.

14. Studying the Word, and praying in The Spirit

We mustn't allow the light that is in us to become dimmed for lack of spiritual power. If we want to keep an electric light burning, then a generator has to be kept turning to provide the necessary power. So it is with us. If we would be an effective light for our Lord, then we must remain constantly connected to the Source of power.

Therefore, we must let the Holy Spirit fill and control our lives. We must let him constantly re-energise our hearts and minds through the serious and diligent study of God's Word—the Bible. A quick reading of God's Word every day will never be enough to train us in the ways of the Lord. We must study God's Word. We must take time—make time—to spend time with God.

Not only must we spend time studying the Word, but we must also spend time in prayer. Only through the mighty power of prayer will we come to a proper appreciation of God's will for our lives. Only as we spend time with our Father in heaven will God be able to make known his purposes for our lives. Let us, therefore, pray constantly to our Father in heaven. Let us pray in the Spirit. In the power of the Spirit, let Christ rule in our hearts. In this way, everyone whom we are able to speak to about Christ will know the touch of the Spirit's power upon his or her own individual heart and life.

Let us be often in the presence of the Lord: for only insofar as the ways of God are known to us, will we be able to make them known to others.

15. Holding fast the truth of The Word

Let us stand fast in our faith, and in our sure confidence in the living Word of God. God's Word can never fail. It can never change. It can never be wrong.

In their original manuscripts, the Scriptures were entirely free from error. The original writings were the inspired Word of God. Today, however, these original documents are no longer available. We are now dependent on copies of the originals, and on various different versions that have been translated from these copies.

In the text of these copies or versions, some minor errors can sometimes be detected. Usually, these have been caused by a copyist's or a translator's mistake. However, all of these errors are insignificant, and none of them has any effect upon the fundamental doctrines of our faith. With the exception of the minor errors referred to, our translation of the Bible is completely reliable. It is still the inspired, inerrant and authoritative Word of God.

In all matters that are fundamental to our faith the Bible is totally accurate, and wholly to be believed. We must hold our ground upon its complete truthfulness and upon its total trustworthiness. We must stand completely assured of the absolute certainty of the fulfillment of every purpose and promise of God. We must entertain no doubts regarding the total reliability of God's written Word, nor regarding its final and absolute authority in all matters connected with life in general and godly living in particular.

The Word of God contains everything necessary for us to know about concerning our faith. It also teaches us how to put our faith into practice. Men may dispute what God's Word teaches, but what is man that he should presume to know better than his Maker?

We must not be misled by the sometimes apparently compelling reasoning and teaching of men. Men and women may be very well instructed in certain fields of learning. However, unless they have been truly born again of God's Holy Spirit, the most learned people in the world are still completely blind to spiritual truths. For all their learning, they remain in a state of spiritual darkness. Indeed, they are spiritually dead. Let us, therefore, stand by the Word of God. Let us believe what God's Word teaches us, and let us not be misled by the persuasive—but nonetheless foolish or mistaken—ideas of men.

We must be careful, however, to interpret God's Word in the right way. We must never take a single verse out of context, or in isolation, in order to support a particular teaching or point of view. The correct way to interpret God's Word is to compare all related Scriptures with one another, keeping each passage in its correct context. Provided we are careful to compare Scripture with Scripture, the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth.

Let us, then, stand by the absolute and unchanging truths of God's Word, and not by the uncertain and fluctuating opinions of men. Let us hold fast to the teaching of the Bible, and let us teach these truths without compromise to others.

16. Committed to Christ.

In committing ourselves to baptism, we have committed ourselves to live by the Word of God. We have committed ourselves to live our whole lives to please and honour the One who loves us, and who has made us his own. We have committed ourselves to Christ our Redeemer, and we have acknowledged that he is our Lord and Master—the One to whom we now wholly belong.

Are we prepared to follow our Sovereign Lord and Master with all our heart and soul?

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

(Galatians 2:20 NIV)

