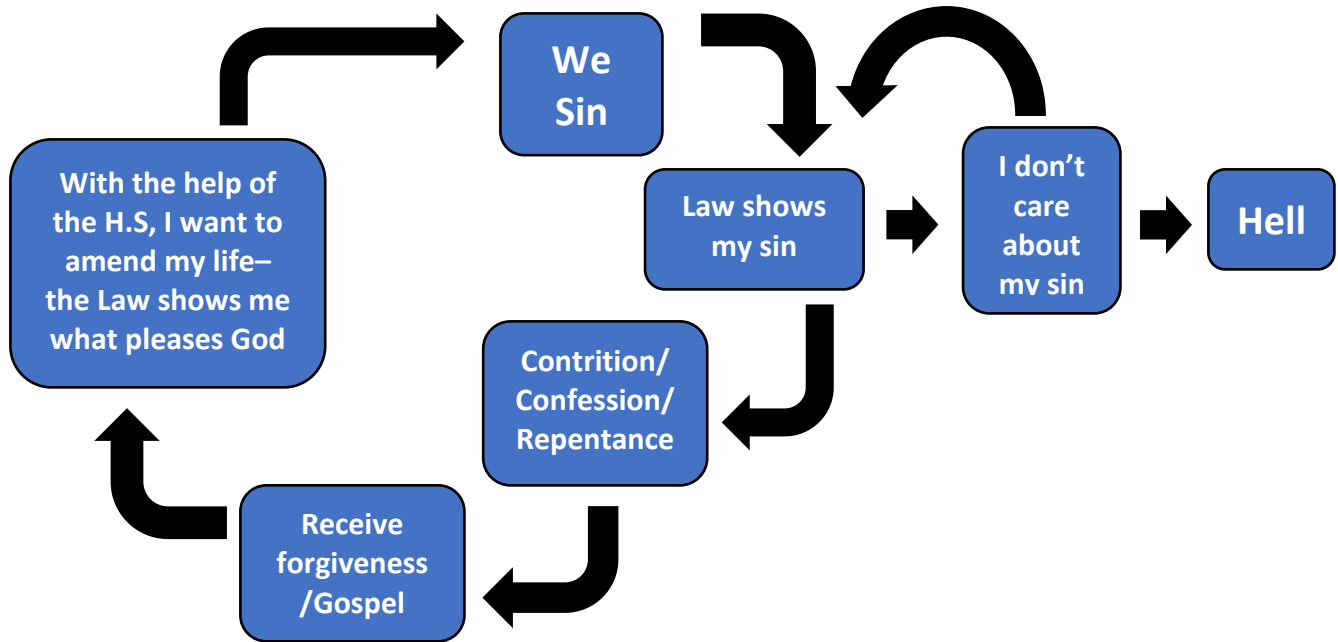


Power for Daily Living

Session 3: Fruit Basket

Review of Lesson 2: Baptismal Exercises

The following diagram depicts the life of repentance we daily observe as Christians.



Introduction

How is your war going? Oh yes, you are at war! Living the baptismal lifestyle is a life of warfare between the Spirit and the flesh.

People are born sinful. You don't have to teach children to sin—it comes naturally! Jesus said it clearly in John 3 to Nicodemus. Look at that section again. Remember this: that which is born of flesh is flesh; that which is born of Spirit is spirit (see John 3:6). In Baptism you are perfectly forgiven. But you are not perfect! Christians sin daily, in thought, in words, and in what they do. Sins are what Christians do. Sin is the condition from which Christians suffer. Forgiveness for the condition, as well as for actual sins, was gained at the cross where Jesus paid the price once and for all. But the war goes on as the Holy Spirit works to transform the Christian through Word and Sacrament.

1. How is that warfare evident in your life? Think about how you are conscious of the struggle between the “flesh and the Spirit” in your own life. Describe that struggle to someone else. Listen to his or her struggle.
2. Someone has said, “satan is not so much interested in getting Christians to do wrong as he is in getting them to think or believe something wrong.” Do you agree? Why or why not? How is the statement true or false in your war?

3. What is your major weapon in the war against the flesh and satan? What do you fall back on for help?

Into the Word

4. Read Ephesians 6:10–18. Describe the “war” as Paul sees it (see especially v. 12). What does his description mean to you?
 - a. What does the apostle Paul suggest you put on? What is the purpose of such “armor”? How would that armor be evident in your life?
 - b. Describe the pieces of armor suggested (vv. 14–17). What does each mean for you? What is the value of each?
 - c. What is the “ultimate” weapon according to verse 17?
 - d. What is the role of prayer in the war? How does that weapon work for you?
5. Going into battle with rulers and authorities of this sinful world can be scary. But it’s part of the baptismal life. The power you have is greater than the power of satan. As a baptized child of God, you are of God because God’s Spirit is in you.
 - a. Read 1 John 4:1–4. State the comfort and assurance you have in your own words (look especially at v. 4).
 - b. Now read Romans 8:31–39. Living the baptismal lifestyle is living in the almighty power of God. How can a Christian live a really victorious life? What would be the evidence of such a life?
 - c. As a sinful human being, you can and will stumble. But God can use stumbling humans in powerful ways! Remember David—he sinned by taking Bathsheba. Abraham lied about Sarah to save his life. Elijah wandered out in the wilderness and asked to die. Peter denied Jesus. What others can you name? Recall how each of these failing people was forgiven and used by God for His purpose again. (Check a Bible dictionary if you have forgotten the details of the accounts.) Discuss what the experiences of these biblical people say to you. What comfort can you find? How does God reveal His forgiveness in these cases?

The Vine and Branches

In John 15:1–27, Jesus pictures Himself as the Vine. We are the branches, and the good we are able to do by the Spirit’s power is the fruit we produce. Baptism brings us into relationship with Jesus, through forgiveness of sins. The Holy Spirit comes to live in us, and we are empowered to produce fruit—acts of Christian living. (refer to the diagram at the beginning and the Holy Spirit’s work)

6. What are some of these acts that spring from your Baptism? List them as a group, and discuss some of them. Is the list the same for everyone? Why or why not?
7. Look at John 15:12. What is the command? When has that command to love been difficult for you? If you are willing, share one of those times.
8. When has God prompted you to do something that is difficult for you? When has it been difficult for you to witness to Jesus or to serve or forgive another? Share your experiences and feelings with the group. How is the struggle evidence that the war still goes on?
9. Another fruit of the Spirit in us is prayer. Look at Romans 8:26–27. What does the text say about the concerns we sometimes have that our prayers sound proper and acceptable? In what sense are our prayers to be childlike?
10. Look at Matthew 7:18–20; 12:33–35; and Luke 6:43–45. Discuss the word of warning you find. How does that warning make us depend even more fully on the forgiveness of Jesus and His power in us?

Fruit of the Spirit

11. The Spirit comes to us in Baptism. He acts through us to produce His works among His people. Read Galatians 5:16–26. What instruction concerning our life in the Spirit do you find in verses 16–18, 24–25? How is life in the Spirit described? How is it contrasted to life in the flesh?
12. Now name the works of the flesh that are listed in verses 19–21a, 26.
13. What warning in verse 21 makes the list of fleshly works very serious? How would you put that warning into your own words?
14. What are the fruit of the Spirit listed in verses 22–23? What does each mean to you? How do you know it when you see it in a fellow Christian?
15. How are you doing in demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit? Do others see those fruit in you? Share some of your insights with others. Why is such a look at self always the occasion for repentance? How can we find encouragement and renewal in the forgiveness we have in Jesus?

Conclusion

What strategies can you and your class generate that would help to promote fruitful living among the people in your church? List some of them. Discuss them. How can you put some into action?

In Closing

Ask volunteers to include some of the following in short closing prayers:

- Thank God for your Baptism.
- Thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit that you received at the time of your Baptism.
- Ask God, in a spirit of repentance, to forgive all the works of the flesh.
- Ask God to give you the strength and power to put down the flesh so that the Spirit can produce an abundance of fruit in your life.

One of the dangers, of course, in discussing the fruit of the faith is that we might get the idea that we are saved by what we do. Salvation is through Christ alone. God's grace offers His free gift of salvation through Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection. But Scripture is also clear that faith without the action is not faith. A good tree will bear fruit.

Prayer: Help me, O God, help me that in true faith I may securely hold the great and saving treasures which You have given me through Baptism! Help me to do this through Your Holy Spirit, whom You have poured out abundantly in Baptism. Help me to nevermore lose the forgiveness of sins and life eternal which You have given me! Amen. (C. M. Zorn, 1846–1928)

Close by singing or reading in unison "All Who Believe and Are Baptized" (*LSB* 601; *CW* 299; *LW* 225; *LBW* 194; *TLH* 301).

All who believe and are baptized
Shall see the Lord's salvation;
Baptized into the death of Christ,
They are a new creation.
Through Christ's redemption they shall stand
Among the glorious, heav'nly band
Of ev'ry tribe and nation.

With one accord, O God, we pray:
Grant us Your Holy Spirit.
Help us in our infirmity
Through Jesus' blood and merit.
Grant us to grow in grace each day
That by this sacrament we may
Eternal life inherit.