

## Baptism: Romans 6:1-7 & Titus 3:4-7

First we read the Baptist Union's Declaration of Principle. Our church is a member of the Union. It says:

'Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who "died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried, and rose again on the third day".'

The constitution of our church refers to this statement, but also opens up membership for those who are not thus baptised. It says:

'Baptism by immersion upon personal profession of faith is the normal mode of entry into the membership of a Baptist church.

The church shall apply the following Baptismal qualification for Church Membership:

Open membership so that persons seeking membership who have not been baptised in the manner described in the Union's Declaration of Principle may at the discretion of the Church Members' Meeting be accepted for full membership based on their own public profession of faith.'

As a result, in the church we have four types of believers:

Baptised member	Baptised, not member
Non-baptised member	Neither baptised nor member

### Sermon on Romans 6

As Baptists we expect to find baptism everywhere in the New Testament, but that is not so. In his letters Paul only addresses problems in the churches, and apparently there were few problems about baptism. This is likely because the case for baptism was clear: John the Baptist had done it and Jesus had commanded it – so the church did it.

John the Baptist had preached that people needed to repent, confess their sins and be baptised. That is still the order for us. In Matthew 28:19 [I preached on this text a year ago] Jesus commands his followers: make disciples, baptise them and teach them to obey my commands. And so they did. All believers at that time would have been baptised.

We need to repent and become disciples; baptism therefore marks a major transition in our lives. In Titus 3 Paul calls it 'the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit'.

Romans 6 says it in a similar way. In baptism we follow Jesus: he died and we die with him. The deep water into which we are baptised symbolises our death to sin. Jesus rose again – so we come up out of the water. If these things are true for you, you should be baptised! If you have begun a new life with Christ, you ought to be baptised as sign and confession of this. In the New Testament the church consists of those baptised on confession of their faith. Yet being baptised is not a good work – it's the result of amazing grace! It is an act of obedience. So why not accept God's invitation? Why would you not get baptised?

If you are an 'old Baptist' and you know all this, what does this mean for you? Romans 6 focuses on the new life in Christ and Paul's final words in 6:4 are: 'in order that ... we too may live a new life.' Is your lifestyle really renewed by the Holy Spirit? Can people see that you are a baptised believer?