

You and Believer's Baptism

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We've got some fun things [to look at] this morning. I hope you've got your mind really stretched because [I am] going to dump in a lot of information—at least I'm going to try. We've been doing [a] series on the Church, taking a little break from our normal exposition of Luke, and the elders thought it would be good if I addressed some of the basics of the Church—what is the Church, what we are supposed to be doing as the Church, spiritual gifts in the Church, serving the Church, involvement, motives for involvement, and things like that.

This morning we come to the topic of baptism. You would think baptism is a pretty easy topic. I mean, it [seems like it] can't be all that difficult, but it's pretty amazing, when you begin to study it, just how much there is to know about baptism.

One of the fun things to do [as a pastor] is to get together with other pastors and tell baptism stories. [There was one] pastor who went into the baptismal and baptized somebody who displaced a little bit too much water. [The pastor] was wearing waders, and his waders probably had thirty or forty gallons of water in them. Then he needed to get out so he could preach. The problem was [that] he couldn't lift himself out, and he couldn't remove the waders because he was in his underwear under there. So, he had to be drained before being removed [from the baptismal]. Another pastor thought he would save himself some time by not getting wet, [so] he wore waders

only to discover [that] there was a leak in a very inconvenient place so that when he did get out, he was wet all over, and didn't have a change of clothes. I know a pastor who was baptizing a pregnant woman at the beach, and just as he was putting her under, the water started to subside. He looked up when the rogue wave blasted him on top of her, and he was trying to be kind to her by pushing her up, but he didn't know where up was. They just washed up on the beach like a couple of grunion, and figured that counted. So, sometimes when you're dealing with baptism, you experience a lot of things you never [thought] you would.

So that's what we're going to talk about this morning: you and baptism.

Around 1520, when the Reformation was just getting started, there was a movement [of people] called the Anabaptists. At that time, the Bible was getting into the hands of the common people, people were reading it for themselves, and they looked in the Bible, and they discovered, "Hey! The Bible says you have to be a believer and then you get baptized"—novel thought. [The Anabaptists] would then be re-baptized by immersion as believers. Well, of course, this caused some grief because at that time everybody was doing the infant sprinkling thing. What made it worse was [that] there were a lot of different people who came to that conclusion, but some groups were clearly heretics. So, as is often the case, the worst of any group characterizes the whole, and pretty soon everybody hated the Anabaptists because they were all [considered] religious fanatics and heretics.

This led to many Anabaptists' persecutions. According to Mark [Walter's] *New Encyclopedia of Christian Martyrs*, "Many Anabaptists were imprisoned and abused until death. They were mutilated, beheaded, drowned, and burnt at the stake." In Zurich, Switzerland, Ulrich Zwingli, a follower of Calvin, had a big dialogue with [the Anabaptists] about infant baptism and how it should be [done] by sprinkling. [The Anabaptists] just weren't going for it. They said, "Look at the Scriptures." When [Zwingli] couldn't convince them, he then decided to banish them from the city. [The Anabaptists] caused this big demonstration in the streets of Zurich, and cried out that Zwingli was nothing more than a devil with horns and woe to the

city of Zurich for expelling them. This, then, led to a whole series of persecutions between 1527 and 1532, [during which] Anabaptists were most [often] drowned in the river. [Their persecutors] thought that would be a good death for [the] Anabaptist[s]—to bind them hand and feet and throw them into the river so that they would drown. Not only were the Reformers killing the Anabaptists, [but] the Roman Catholic Church in those countries that were controlled by the Roman Catholic Church [was] also [persecuting and killing the Anabaptists]. Both men and women were scourged, burned at the stake, and beheaded, and their places of worship were burnt down. In 1531 alone, there were some 1,000 Anabaptists executed.

According to Philip Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, even Martin Luther forbade Anabaptists to preach in Wittenberg. He tried to get them expelled from the city, and didn't have any problem with the decree that came down that all Anabaptists should be cut down with the sword or burned at the stake. Schaff says:

Throughout the greater part of Upper Germany the persecution raged like a wild chase.... The blood of these poor people flowed like water so that they cried to the Lord for help.... But hundreds of them of all ages and both sexes suffered the pangs of torture without a murmur, despised to buy their lives by recantation, and went to the place of execution joyfully and singing psalms.

Well, it's pretty amazing that these people had in common [with us the belief] that you believe and then you're baptized as a conscious believer in Jesus Christ who wants to make a testimony of his faith [and] they were killed [for it]. Now, granted, some of them were heretics because they believed other things that were wrong, but some of the orthodox Anabaptists then spread out and started Mennonite and Baptist churches in England and America. Those churches then influenced other community churches, independent churches, and that is the heritage of Calvary Bible Church. [Those are] our historical roots in the whole baptism realm.

You may be sitting out there, and you may be thinking to yourself, “Was baptism all that important?” Maybe some of you were sprinkled, and you’re [thinking], “I wonder if I should be baptized again?” Maybe some of you were baptized by immersion as a junior high and now you’ve come to Christ later and wonder if you should get baptized again. Or [you may] wonder if you should be baptized at all because you’re a Christian, you love the Lord, and it’s just a ritual, so why even bother.

These are the kinds of questions we want to look at this morning. I’m sorry that I’m going to have to give you quite a bit of information, but I think it will be good for you to try and sort through all of these things in your mind. [I am also covering this] so you can have a big picture of baptism in the Church. What I mean by “Church” is the greater body of the local church around the world, [as well as] the different denominations.

This morning I’m going to give you three categories of truth about baptism so that you can properly understand it and so you can give God glory by obeying this part of His Word. The first thing I want to do is point out that you need to know the different kinds of baptism mentioned in the Bible. A lot of people make this fatal error when studying baptism: they think that when the Bible says “baptism,” it [is always referring to] water baptism and [that] you can just assume [that] the different texts are referring to [water] baptism. The problem is [that] when you look at the Scriptures, you discover that there are actually several different kinds of baptism—some literal, some figurative—and that there are even several synonyms of certain kinds [of baptism]. This makes trying to figure out what the Bible is talking about a little difficult. And so, this morning, you’re going to have to put on your detective caps and follow along with me as we investigate this [and] do a quick survey [of the different kinds of baptism].

The first place I want you to turn is in Matthew 3, where we are going to look at John the Baptist. [A lot of people don’t know that] in the early years of the gospel, in that first century, baptism was practiced by more than just Christians. It was a rite that Jews and other groups used as a symbol of committing themselves to a certain way, or taking some vow, or something

like that. But here [in Matthew 3], we see John the Baptist coming on the scene. [In] Matthew 3:4–6, Matthew, writing of John the Baptist, says:

Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

Just keep your finger there, [and] I want you to turn over to Acts 19, where we discover a little commentary that Paul makes on John the Baptist when he encounters some interesting people in his travels. [In] Acts 19:[2]–5, [Paul] is talking to some disciples he encounters at Ephesus. Notice what the text says: “He said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ And they said to him, ‘No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’” That is interesting, isn't it? Here you have some “believers” who haven't even heard of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 3: “And he said, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ And they said, ‘Into John's baptism.’” What's interesting is [that] here we have some people who apparently were baptized by John in the Jordan River. Maybe they were traveling through, [and] they were baptized by John for confession of sins [as we saw] in the Matthew text. Here [in Acts 19], we're going to learn a little bit more. They had never heard the full gospel story about Jesus' death, His burial, and His resurrection. They hadn't heard about the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, so they said, “What Holy Spirit? What are you talking about?”

So, Paul then says, in verse[s] 4[–5]: “Paul said, ‘John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.’ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” When you look at this text and you look at Matthew [3] (you can turn back [there]), what you discover is that John the Baptist had a unique baptism just for his time. As the forerunner [to Christ],

he called people to confess their sins, admit to God that they were wrong, and to repent of their sins—turn from their sins—to prepare themselves to believe in the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. So that's one kind of baptism. We call it John's "baptism of repentance."

Now, let's look [in] Matthew 3:11 [at] another kind [of baptism]. It's still in the same context. John the Baptist is speaking and he is telling people about the one he is preparing them to meet, and says, "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." What does that mean—"Holy Spirit and fire"? John 1:32–33 and Acts 1:5 also speak of Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit, and this is the easier of the two phrases to understand. As we looked at the Church and spiritual gifts, we learned from 1 Corinthians 12:13: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." We learned that every believer, upon placing his faith in Jesus Christ, is baptized into the invisible, corporate Body of Christ, and when that happens [the believer] receives the Holy Spirit. That happens to all believers. That is what is called "Spirit baptism."

That phrase [about Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit] is easy, but there's this other [word] "fire" [in Matthew 3:11]. What does it mean to be baptized with fire? Well, there are two good possibilities. One is that fire is used sometimes to speak of cleansing. [For instance,] God is going to burn up the earth and then recreate it; He is going to cleanse the world, [and] pretty much the whole universe is going to pass away, Peter says, with a roar [see 2 Peter 3:10]. Then He is going to re-create the heavens and the earth. So sometimes [the word] "fire" is used of cleansing. Other times it's used of judgment. So the question is: what is it used [for] here? Is John saying, "After me will come one who will give you the Holy Spirit and cleanse you from your sins," which we know is true from other texts, or is he saying, "One comes after me and you're either going to get baptized by the Holy Spirit or you're going to get baptized in the fires of hell"?

This is one of those perfect opportunities for a rabbit trail. You guys are becoming experts in hermeneutics, right? [You know] Bible study principles, how to study the Bible, the rules of interpretation, and you all know that the king of all interpretation principles is [context]. Yes. That's right. If we don't know what the word "fire" means in [Matthew 3:]11, we can always look at the context. So, let's look at the context. Look at Matthew 3:10 [and] see if you can see how the word "fire" is used. John says, "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." That's pretty clear, isn't it? Look at verse 12. John has just said that Jesus will come and baptize some with the Holy Spirit and some with fire, and then he says: "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Remember [when] we talked about the illustration of the bridge? You're standing on this nice, little concrete walking bridge arching over [a] river. You're standing on top of the bridge, you look upstream and you see the water flowing toward the bridge. You look downstream, you see the water flowing away from the bridge. Even though you can't see through the concrete to the water below, being an intelligent person, you know what direction the water is flowing—the same direction. Why? [It is] because both before and after the bridge it is flowing that way, so it's flowing that way under the bridge, too. And so we know by looking at this [passage in Matthew 3] that the baptism of fire is hell—judgment. Jesus will come and save some and judge others. That's what the context both before and after [Matthew 3:11] tells us. So, now we [know of] a couple more kinds of baptism: Spirit baptism and the baptism of judgment.

Turn over to Mark 10. Here's one of those not-so-stellar texts when James and John, being a little more bold [than maybe some of the other disciples were]—the "sons of thunder" [see Mark 3:17]—decide to see if they can get a guarantee to sit at Jesus' right hand and left in the kingdom

[of heaven]. So, they're asking if that can be the case, and then in Mark 10:38–39, Jesus replies:

But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized."

They shouldn't have said that because we know that [Jesus] is speaking of His death here. In Luke 12:50, Jesus expresses His desire to judge Israel for their sin, but says this: "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!" again referring to His suffering, His agony, crucifixion, and death. In this text [in Mark 10:38–39], baptism is used figuratively to describe being plunged into the Passion Week ending in Jesus' crucifixion and death.

Those are the easy passages. Let's look at a couple harder ones. [Turn to] 1 Peter 3:21. This is the classic text [used by] those who believe in what is called—and here's the nickel word—"baptismal regeneration," which means being saved by baptism. It is a heresy, a form of salvation by works. It's what the Church of Christ teaches, the Roman Catholic Church teaches, [and] what the Orthodox churches teach—that you must be baptized or you can't be saved. In 1 Peter 3:21, we have their champion text, where Peter says, "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you." Just stop there. Divorced from its context, it seems to indicate that baptism saves you. I mean, that's what it says, divorced from its context.

But when we look at it, this [phrase] "corresponding to that," just cries out to make us ask, "Corresponding to what?" We go to the near preceding context, the latter half of verse 20, where we learn in that verse something very interesting. If you go up to verse[s] 18[–19], it's talking about [how] Jesus died and [was] making the proclamation to spirits now in prison

(don't ask me what that is—we talked about that another time). Verse 20 [says]: “Who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.” Corresponding to that.

So, what happened in Noah's time? God spoke to Noah, Noah received the word of God, he placed his faith in the word of God, his family placed their faith in the word of God, they acted on that faith, they built the ark, they got in the ark, [and] they were safe from judgment. “Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you.” So, the [word] “corresponding” is basically saying, using the same illustration, or the same principle, the same analogy, “baptism now saves you.” And he clarifies, when you read the rest of the verse: “Not the removal of dirt from the flesh,” so we're not talking about water baptism, “but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” You can even take out those two modifying phrases in the middle, and you can say, “Baptism now saves you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” What he's saying is this: You, as believers, hear the Word of God, the gospel, you place your faith in that, you act on that by trusting in Jesus, and you escape judgment, just as Noah [and his family] did. That's all it's saying. It's not saying water baptism saves you.

Now, if you're thinking, “Well, that's kind of a hard passage,” it's nothing compared to 1 Corinthians 15:29, so turn there. This is a real trial, here. As you get there, just to let you know, 1 Corinthians 15 is the champion text in all the Bible on the resurrection. This is that chapter where Paul tries to fix the Corinthians who were broken in just about every area of doctrine and practice. He's trying to fix them by arguing, [saying], “These people have come to you, and these people have told you that the resurrection has already taken place, and there is no resurrection, and once you die it's over, and there's no resurrection of the dead. They're not right.” He spends the whole chapter arguing against that thought. Keep that in mind because whatever this verse means, it has to relate to the resurrection because it's

talking about the resurrection before and after [this verse], and that's where the stream is flowing.

So we look here in [1 Corinthians 15], and we see verse 29. We're just going to pluck it out of its context, and see what it says: "Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?" That is an interesting text. "Baptism for the dead"? If you go up to any good Mormon, they'll tell you, "Yeah, this is why we baptize people in the temple." You know, Aunt Maple dies an atheist, you become a good Mormon, you want to spring her out of hell, you go into the temple, you get baptized in her place, in proxy. [Did] you ever wonder why the Mormons are really into their genealogy? That's why. They have to find out who's in their line so they can get baptized in proxy for them so they can spring them out of hell for not being baptized when they were living.

Well, of course, we know that that's not what [this passage in 1 Corinthians] is teaching, because that would contradict a whole army of Scriptures. The question is: What *is* it teaching? Well, there are tons of views—too many to even go through. I'm just going to give you the one I think is best. If you don't like this view, you can sort through the whole truckload of other views, but here it is: The phrase "baptized for the dead" can be translated "baptized on behalf of," or "because of," or "for the sake of." [Usually in Greek, when you see the word "for" it's a translation of this little word "gar," but here [in this verse], the word "huper" is used.] Now, if you understand it [to mean "on behalf of"], then the verse takes on a whole, little different angle. If you look at it that way, what could it be saying? "Otherwise what will those do who are baptized on behalf of the dead?" Well, there are really only two ways you can understand that. One: they're baptized in proxy for those people who have died; or two: they're baptized because of the testimony of those who believed in Christ and were baptized before them.

I think that is why [Paul] goes on to say at the end of the verse: "If the dead are not raised at all," speaking of Christians who have already believed

in Jesus, and been baptized, and have died, if those people are not going to be raised, then “why then are they,” [the] Corinthian believers, “baptized on behalf of them?” This is all Paul is saying: “Listen, Corinthians, here you are, you’re Christians, you’re following in the faith of other people who came before you. They believed in Jesus, they were baptized, they died, and now you are following in their footsteps. You have heard their testimonies, you have believed in Jesus, [so] now why are you believing in Jesus? Why are you being baptized if those people aren’t going to be raised from the dead? It’s foolish because if the Christians who died before you are not raised from the dead, then you’re not going to be raised from the dead.” That’s what I think he’s saying. If you read the context, which we don’t have time to do, you’ll see that that’s probably the best interpretation.

We’ve surveyed a bunch of texts, and now you kind of have “baptism [type] overload,” I’m sure. You’re out there thinking, “OK, OK. We have baptism for repentance—that’s what John did, we don’t need to do that. [We have] baptism of the Holy Spirit, well, Jesus does that when we believe. OK, we have baptism of fire—I don’t want that. I believe. We have baptism into trial and crucifixion. I don’t want that—I’m glad Jesus did [it] for me. Then we have baptism for the dead, which is nothing more than a reference to the Corinthian believers believing in Jesus and being baptized because of the testimony of those who had lived and died in Christ before them, which is nothing more than water baptism,” which is the sixth category, which we haven’t really investigated yet, but we will. Now, I just tell you that because you’re sitting out there, your head is swimming, and you’re thinking, “Man, already my brain is full and we’re not even to the end yet. I mean, is that the hard part?” No. It gets worse. It gets worse than that. We have tangled webs we weave even when we don’t want to practice to deceive.

We’re able to take some very simple Scriptures and really mess them up. This leads us to our second category: Know the disagreements concerning water baptism. Just within this one little area—water baptism—it’s a nightmare. Ever since the Church began—you could say as soon as the apostles died—people started arguing about baptism. There have been so

many fractures, and splits, and “isms,” and schisms because of this it’s just amazing. You give fallen humanity a piece of string, and you [say], “Keep this string straight,” and the next thing you know it’s the Gordian Knot that cannot be untied except being hacked with a sword. You think, “How can this happen?”

Everybody says, “Well, my string is straight,” [but] everyone[’s string] is radically different. The truth is in there somewhere. I would love to state each view, I would love to state the Scriptures that support each view, and the pros and cons for each view, and which view is best and why, but I don’t have time. We’re just going to mention them, and the reason I’m doing this is because I know out here we’ve got some Presbyterians, I know some of you were sprinkled, some of you come from a Roman Catholic background, some of you come from a Baptist background, some of you come from a Mennonite background, or Lutheran background, and you all want me to address your thing. I’m going to address it, but not very well.

All the different disagreements about baptism can really be boiled down into two, or, [depending on] how you look at it, three different categories. So let’s look at these categories. First, there are disagreements over the mode of baptism. How are you actually supposed to do it? You’ve got your sprinklers, you’ve got your pourers, you’ve got your dippers, you’ve got your triple dippers, and your immersers. You’ve got all these different kinds, and you’re thinking, “Man, how did they get that?” I don’t know! I really don’t know how they arrived [at these different ideas]. I can understand some of the history of the Church and how certain things were done, but I can’t see how they got it from the Bible. I mean, to me it seems pretty clear.

Let’s just talk about this. Imagine you’re a Christian, you’re living in Rome during the times of the Roman persecutions in the AD 60s, [and] Nero is burning Christians at the stake, he’s dipping them in tar, he’s feeding them to wild animals for entertainment, he’s tying them to the tails of bulls and dragging them through the city until they get their heads bashed [in]. He’s just wretched. To become a Christian in a culture like that, you know

that you are putting your life on the line. When you say, “I am a Christian,” and get baptized, you’re basically saying, “Kill me.” All the people knew that. At that time, people who wouldn’t get baptized weren’t considered Christians. You didn’t even call yourself a Christian unless you were willing to make a public demonstration that you were a follower of Jesus. And so, when we look at the Scriptures and we see these statements about being baptized, realize that during those times, during the Roman persecutions, when you became a Christian, you always got baptized, and you always put your life on the line.

Well, because people were being executed for their faith in Christ, the Christians, then, went underground—literally. They went underground into what are called the catacombs. They’re still there—if you go to Rome you can still visit them. It’s a whole labyrinth of tunnels, and in these tunnels are underground burial chambers that scrawl around, and in the walls of the tunnels are niches and in the floors there are holes dug out, and that’s where people were buried. The Christians, because these areas were considered holy sites, [and] a lot of Romans were too superstitious to go down there because of the spirits, would go down there to worship because it was the only place they could worship in peace without being bothered. There was a problem, though, because down there in the catacombs, there weren’t a lot of lakes and rivers. People would want to be baptized, so what [did they] do? Well, since [they didn’t] have [access to] any rivers down there, [or] lakes, or Jacuzzis, then [they decided to] just sprinkle them, or pour some water on their heads, and surely that will be good enough in that situation. That is probably the root of where sprinkling and pouring began to come about as Christians, because of their circumstances, had to follow that [method].

In addition to that, there were people who would come to the Lord, and let’s say [that person was] ninety-eight years old, on his deathbed, and he wanted to be baptized. Are you going to take somebody like that, carry him down, and plunge him into the icy waters of [some river]? No. [If] somebody’s feeble, somebody’s sick, what are you going to do? You would

sprinkle them, or pour water on them because it was convenient; it was practical, though not instructed by the Scriptures. Well, by the seventeenth century, as the English Reformation was just getting started in full force in England, the Catholic Church had pretty much convinced everybody that not only were you to be sprinkled, but you were to be sprinkled as an infant, and you had to be sprinkled by the Catholic Church or you couldn't go to heaven. That is, [they believed in] baptismal regeneration—that salvation is by baptism. Well, of course, this is not what the Scriptures teach.

At this time, the translators of the King James version, which was finished in 1611, had this nightmare because they were trying to please the king, and the king [said], “OK, I want you to [make] a new translation. I want it to be nice. I don't want to offend anybody.”

So, they were thinking, “How are we going to translate this word? Do we [mis]translate the word “baptizo” [as] “sprinkle” and offend all the Baptists and all the people who believe in immersion?” At that time, there were a lot of people who knew Greek, and they knew that “baptizo” meant to “submerge, sink under, plunge into.” “Or,” [the translators wondered], “should we translate it ‘immerse’ and then offend all the Roman Catholics who practice sprinkling, and all those in the Reformed Church who practice sprinkling or pouring?” So, then they said, “OK, this is what we'll do, we'll just transliterate the word from Greek into English, make a new English word and call it “baptize,” and everybody can decide for themselves.” See? They were very politically correct. That is basically why the word “baptize” appears in your Bible instead of “immerse,” which is what should be there.

Now, these two modes of baptism, sprinkling and immersion, ruled the day—mostly sprinkling. For instance, in the Westminster Confession, which was written by the Puritans during this time—[around] 1650—reads: “Dipping of the person into the water,” that is, immersion, “is not necessary; but Baptism is rightly administered by pouring, or sprinkling water upon the person,” which is interesting because the Scriptures never say that. I have one study Bible in my office, [a] first edition, [and it] has a topical Bible index. It has “baptism,” and then under baptism, a subcategory of “in-

fant baptism,” and it has a reference there [that] is pretty interesting. That reference is Proverbs 30:[6], which says, “Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.” That is the only reference on infant baptism or sprinkling.

[Next], you have baptism by immersion. That is, you take somebody [and] you plunge him in[to the water]. The word “baptism” literally means “to plunge under.” It was used, for instance, when they wanted to dye cloth. [Did] you ever do tie-dye or something [similar] at school? You get your shirt and wad it up, and put some rubber bands on it, and throw it in the dye. [Do] you just leave it sitting on the top? No, you get a stick and you plunge [the shirt] underneath [the surface]. That’s what it means, “to submerge into.” So, the reason we practice baptism by immersion is threefold. [First], it is because that’s what the word “baptizo” means. Second, baptism by immersion is what symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ—the person dies with Christ, is buried, and then rises again to walk in newness of life. And third, [we practice it] because that’s what we see modeled in the Scriptures.

For instance, Mark 1:5, which we already alluded to, talks about [how] the people were coming from Judea and around Jerusalem to be baptized by John *in* the Jordan. Verse 9 of Mark 1 says that Jesus went to be baptized by John *in* the Jordan—not *by* the Jordan, *up to the bank* of the Jordan, *next to* the Jordan, but *in* the Jordan. John 3:23, speaking of John the Baptist “baptizing in Aenon near Salim,” says that he was baptizing there “because there was much water.” Now, you have to ask yourself: If sprinkling is the proper mode, then why would John baptize near a place where “there was much water”? You could take out a lot of people with a gallon of water if you sprinkle, and quite a few if you poured half a cup on each one. Obviously, they were immersed.

We see in Matthew 3:16 Jesus’ baptism. He goes out, He sees John, He walks out into the river, John puts Him under, and it says, “After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water.” He was in the water [and] He came up out of the water—immersion. In Acts 8:38, after

Philip evangelized the Ethiopian eunuch, they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him after they went down into the water. So, baptism by immersion is arguably what the Scriptures teach because it's what the word ["baptizo"] means, it matches the symbolism, and it's what the examples in Scripture teach. So that's why we teach it.

Now, there are some among what are called "Plymouth Brethren," who believe in what is called "triune immersion." Sometimes they're referred to as "triple dippers." You know how [in] the Great Commission Jesus says, "I want you to make disciples, baptizing in" what? "The name of the Father, Son, [and] Holy Spirit." OK? So [that's how they get the concept of] triune immersion. It's understandable why they believe that. Also, there's this early Church document called the *Didache*, written about AD 100, and in the *Didache*, it talks about baptizing. [It says that] if you baptize somebody, make sure you baptize them in living, or running water, and if you don't have that, in cold water, and if you don't have that, in warm water, if you don't have that, then sprinkle them, pouring water over them three times—once each in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. By inference, [the "triple dippers"] say, "Well, that's how they must have baptized, too." So those are the two primary reasons why they practice triune immersion, or triple immersion, or once for each name of the Triune God.

Why don't we do that? I will if you want. If you say, "I want to go under three times," I'll put you under three. But the reason we don't is this: When Jesus gave the Great Commission, and He [said], "Go therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the *name* of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" [see Matthew 28:19], that word "name" is singular. We learned last week about composite singulars, so we know all about that. It's a singular, and so being a singular, all He's saying is, "Baptize them in the one name of the Triune God," so that's why we do it [once], and because the Scriptures never model triple dunking. If you were triple dunked it's not that big a deal. It also doesn't quite match the symbolism, where Jesus died, was buried, and rose again, and so, you're kind of having the Father die, [be] buried, [and rise] again, the Spirit die, [be] buried, [and rise] again,

[and Jesus die, be buried, and rise again]. But you could say, “Well, they’re all one, and they’re all three, and they’re the same God, and so if Jesus did it the others did it.” There are arguments in that way. Anyway, that’s just a minor type of baptism by immersion.

That’s the whole history about sprinkling, and dipping, and dunking, and triple dunking. Now, what about the purpose of baptism? I want you to know, [this] could go on for a long time, but I’m just going to give you the basic, general camps. There are those who think that the purpose of baptism is to save people. [The Church of Christ teaches that you have to be baptized in order to be saved.] The Roman Catholic Church, [and] Eastern orthodox churches teach it as the foremost of the sacraments. Sacraments are these seven rituals—religious rites—you have to do in order to be saved. For instance, Pope Eugene IV, who became pope in 1431, decreed concerning baptism:

Holy Baptism holds the first place among the sacraments, because it is the door of the spiritual life; for by it we are made members of Christ and incorporated with the Church. . . . [He then goes on to say in this document:] The effect of this sacrament is the remission of all sin, original and actual; likewise of all punishment which is due for sin.

So that’s what the Roman Catholic Church believes. You are baptized to be saved, and when you are, it places you in the Church, and it causes you to have your sins forgiven, which is interesting because [according to the Catholics] then you have to go to Purgatory to have your sins forgiven, but that’s a whole [different] topic. The Roman Catholic Church later, at the Council of Trent, clarified their position in opposition of those who believe what we believe, saying that anybody who teaches that baptism is not necessary for salvation is to be anathematized, or considered a heretic, and damned to hell. So this is the huge schism that has happened.

Then we have the Reformed denominations, those who followed in the line of Luther, and Calvin, and the Presbyterians, who baptize infants by

sprinkling or pouring, but who don't believe that it saves you. There's this whole mess of groups, and each one baptizes in a different way. John Calvin taught that water baptism was a symbol of the believer being incorporated into the covenant of works, which is never mentioned in the Bible. They kind of form these covenants out of whole bunches of Scriptures that never say they're a covenant. They teach this covenant system that all the promises, like the Abrahamic covenant, and the Davidic covenant, [and the new covenant are] all lumped together into one "covenant of grace"—the gracious promises of God. [They believe, as a part of this covenant system, that baptism] was actually a parallelism [to], or replacement for, Old Testament circumcision.

In the Old Testament, males eight days old were circumcised as an outward sign of an inward heart commitment they were to make later in life as adults. So, Calvin's reasoning was [that] baptism replaces Old Testament circumcision in that now we need to baptize—sprinkle, pour—infants as infants so that later on they can make an inward commitment to this outward act. See how it just works so smoothly? The problem is [that] the Bible never says that. But the primary text they use is Colossians 2:11–12, where Paul says: "And in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." He [is saying]: "You, upon coming to faith in Jesus, were not circumcised physically, but spiritually. Your heart was cleansed inside by your faith in Christ."

He goes on to say in verse 12: "Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." And so, [those who believe in the covenant system] say, "See? Circumcision and baptism are in the same context. [Baptism is] a replacement [for circumcision]." But that's not what it says. It doesn't say it's a replacement. Infants are not mentioned, sprinkling [and] pouring are not mentioned. If you want to say there is a parallelism there, it's there saying that yes, in a figurative way, not in a physical way, you are to cleanse your heart. If you look in Deuteronomy 10[:16],

it talks about [how] they were to circumcise their hearts, that is, repent of their sins. So, yeah, we are to repent of our sin and be baptized, so that's really the only parallelism that happens.

So why do we teach what we teach, and what do we teach at Calvary Bible Church? Turn to Romans 6:3–4. This text is not talking about water baptism. So you're [wondering], "Why are we going there?" [It is] because it's talking about Spirit baptism, but Paul explains the symbolism of baptism so that we can understand what baptism symbolizes from this text on Spirit baptism, which applies both to Spirit baptism and water baptism. Look in Romans 6:3[-4], and notice what Paul says here:

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

His whole point here is that when you place your faith in Christ, you are figuratively placed by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. You become crucified with Christ, as [Paul] says in Galatians [2:20], you die with Christ, and just as Christ was raised, you are raised with Him to walk in newness of life. In other words, when you come to faith in Christ, you're put in the Church, so start living a different life. OK? We teach [that] baptism is: 1) an act of obedience, because God commands it; 2) a public profession of one's faith and commitment to follow Christ; 3) a symbolic act of being united with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection, and to do so to walk in newness of life. That's what we teach and why we teach it.

There is another little category of disagreement, which is just going to take a minute, and [it] is: who should be baptized? There are four possibilities: believers, unbelievers, those who know what they're doing, and those who don't. That's it. Sounds simple, doesn't it? If you baptize infants, they're not believers, and they don't know what they're doing. OK?

So, the question is: Should we be baptizing? This is a little bit of historical information, but it's really helpful to understand this. Before the Puritans came along, which was in the middle of the 1600s, societies around the world didn't believe in having diversity. They believed in united societies, they didn't believe in what is called "composite societies." So, you didn't get to be a Lutheran, and you a Buddhist, and you an atheist, and you an agnostic. You couldn't do that. You either submitted to the state religion, or [they were] going to kill you. So, when different rulers took over, they would force people to "convert," as if you could save somebody by force.

That would be good, right? We could go up to people on the street, get a gun out, and say, "Repent or you're going to die."

And then they'd [say], "I repent."

[We could say], "You don't have to worry anymore, you're going to live even if you die," and we could walk away, and just save people left and right. It doesn't work that way. But, because they [misunderstood] because of what the Roman Catholic Church taught, people thought that if you could get somebody to be baptized, then you could save them. They wanted unified societies so it was either convert to our religion or die. [This is] very similar to what you see going on in Islam today. Because of this, many people were "baptized" as infants because they couldn't even protest. See that? You just get a baby and you baptize him and, "OK, you're of this brand and you can't change it, man, we've got you right out of the womb." So, that is why infant baptism was practiced for the most part—because it allowed united countries to be united under one national religion. Of course, the Puritans came along and blew that all apart, and said, "No, we need to give people freedom and not burn people because they don't believe."

There are several texts in the book of Acts, such as Acts 16:14–15, where the Lord opens [the] heart [of Lydia, the seller of purple fabrics], she believes, is baptized, and her whole family [as well]. Or Acts 16:31, 34, [where] the Philippian jailer believes and is baptized, and his whole family [as well]. [People who believe in infant baptism] say, "Ah ha! See? Right there: infants." Where? The text says that those people believed and were

baptized, and their families believed and were baptized. It never mentions infants, but that is the closest text you can find—a text of silence. There are no Scriptures that talk about baptizing infants, or sprinkling, or pouring.

Now we come to the third category, which is nothing more than questions people have about baptism. These are just practical things that will help you because you're out there, and you're thinking, "What am I supposed to do about this?" [First]: Why should Christians be baptized? We've figured it out: because Jesus said so. That's it. Jesus tells you to be baptized, so that works.

[Second:] Who is qualified to baptize someone else? This is a question people have. [Do] you have to have a clergy card and a white collar [in order to perform a baptism]? [Do] you have to go to seminary to baptize somebody? In the history of the Church, the church leaders [were the ones who] baptized. That's what we see happening in Church history, but there is no Scripture that says, "Thou shalt be a leader in the Church [in order to perform baptisms]." So, really, since the Scriptures don't say, we can't take a stand on it. We usually have the leaders baptize people here, that's our practice, [but] the Scriptures don't demand that. They do demand that every believer be baptized, so the important part is not who does it but that it is done.

Third, how old do you need to be in order to be baptized? This is a question that comes up. You've got your son or your daughter, maybe he or she is coming into his or her junior high years, and he or she wants to be baptized. Is there a minimum age? The Bible doesn't say, so here are the criteria that we use. [First:] you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you can articulate your faith, you understand the gospel, and you have a changed life, or a transformed life to prove that you've come to Christ. That has to be present. Second, you understand baptism, what it's for, its purpose, and you want to give a public testimony of your faith in Christ. If you've got those two [things] down, we'll put you under in a second.

Fourth, what if I was baptized as an infant and later came to faith, should I be re-baptized? Should that happen? Well, what do the Scriptures say? Believe and be baptized. So, in that instance, yeah.

Here's another one—fifth—what if I was baptized by sprinkling or pouring as an adult, after becoming a Christian, to make a public profession of my faith? Should I be baptized again by immersion? Well, this is something we don't take a stand on. If you were a believer and then were baptized by whatever mode, we would let you use your own conscience to decide whether you should be immersed or not. Obviously, immersion is what the Scriptures teach and model, but throughout Church history many people were sprinkled and gave demonstration of their faith. We just tell you [to] decide on your own on that one.

[Sixth]: What if I was baptized by immersion but only thought I was a believer and then later came to Christ? You thought you were a Christian, you were baptized by immersion, made a public profession of your faith, but then later on you were actually saved, your life was radically changed, and you realized [that] the first time you were baptized the right way, but from a wrong heart—[it] wasn't as a believer. Well, then, the same principle would occur: believe and be baptized. Get baptized as a believer.

Seventh: What if I was baptized as a believer at another church, do I need to be re-baptized in this church? No. Sometimes, certain churches, like the Church of Christ, say [that] if you haven't been baptized *in* a Church of Christ, then you have to be baptized *in* a Church of Christ because that's how you get saved. No, you don't have to do that.

And, finally, what if I am a believer, I've attended church for a long time, but I've just never been baptized, and I don't really want to? Do I even need to answer? If you don't want to obey Jesus, then don't call Him your Lord and Savior. "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" [Luke 6:46]. You need to look at your life, you need to realize you're a sinner, you need to realize that Christ died for you, that He paid the penalty for [your] sins on the cross, that He commands you to repent and believe in Him, to trust only in His work on the cross, His death, His burial,

His resurrection to save you. Repent, get saved, and be baptized because people who don't want to obey the Lord aren't the Lord's. When God saves you, He puts His Spirit within you, and He causes you to want to walk in His way. You never do it perfectly, but if you can sit out there year after year, and say, "I'm not getting baptized," what you're saying is, "I'm not obeying You, Lord." So, get right with the Lord, get baptized.

That's it. Sorry about that—that was quite a bit of information. As you leave here today, and you've been baptized as a believer, you might want to thank God for all those people who died for a certain mode of baptism, the tradition that we follow, the Scriptures that we follow. You might want to thank God that you were not burned at the stake, or drowned in the river because you wanted to give a public demonstration of your faith, or that you had to hide in the catacombs. A lot of people who believed what we teach and what we practice had to suffer because they believed in believer's baptism by immersion. All right, let's pray.

Father, we thank You for a great time this morning. I know this is a lot of information. I pray that each person here would be able to hold on to whatever information that would be profitable for them. Father, if there are people here who don't know You, who have never repented of their sins and placed their faith in Christ Jesus, I pray that they would do that this morning. [That] they would see their need for a Savior, their sinfulness, and Father, flee to the Rock [see 2 Samuel 22:47], the Fortress [see 22:2], the Refuge [see 22:3] of Jesus, and Father, that they would climb into that Ark and be saved from the wrath to come. For those who need to get baptized as believers, I pray that they would seriously take steps to obey you in that area. And for those who have not been baptized and were thinking that they wouldn't, Father, may you change their minds, either by saving them, or, Father, just by transformation because of Your Word. And, Father, for the rest of us who have been baptized, may we glorify You, and praise You, and thank You for those men, for those women, those children, for those people who stood up for the truth and did what was right, even against great opposition. We praise You, and thank You for all that You've taught

us. May we honor You by keeping Your Word. We pray this in Christ's name, Amen.

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