



How God Works in You – Part 3

The Role of Water Baptism

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Well, imagine for a moment you lived in the suburbs of Jerusalem a thousand years before Christ. You trained at least to understand the basics of the Mosaic Law. You understand your sin problem. You are repentant and trusting that God will somehow deal with your sin problem. You've been many times to the temple. You have been for the prescribed pilgrimage feasts. You've brought the prescribed sacrifices, you know, most of the time, at least. You have brought the offerings that you're supposed to provide, the ones that you have, these freewill offerings. They weren't very big but you did them, you know you were supposed to. You kept the dietary restrictions as best you could, as best as you thought you were keeping them. I mean, you did what you should as it relates to that, at least in your efforts.

But if in all of that in the midst of your Jewish life, someone comes up to you and asks you what does all that mean? If you had to say to them after thinking for a minute, "Well, I'm not sure. I don't know, but I'm obedient. I've done what I'm supposed to do." I think you'd have to admit that would be a sad scene, right? It'd be sad to be able to stand back and go I don't know what it all means, but I did it. I think you'd look at that person and you'd say, well, you're just checking the boxes. You're not really engaged with what God would have you take from the experience of all of those things. Checking the boxes either a thousand years before Christ or 2,000 years after Christ is not a good idea. Matter of fact, you're going to miss out on so much of what God would have you take away from the things that he has prescribed.

Now in the Old Testament you had a slew of things that were prescribed for you. They were all the ceremonies of the Levitical law that were embedded in the Mosaic law. And you had to do those things because God asked you to do those things. And as a dutiful Jew, if you did those things, that's good, but there's so much more to it. And in the New Covenant era, since Christ he has taken all that according to the book of Hebrews it says, here's a good word for it, he's made all those ceremonies obsolete. And yet he's left us with two ceremonies. Two ceremonies, which is not a bad word to call them that. There are things that you're doing that you do if you've been a part of this church. We did it just recently. We had the celebration of the Lord's Supper. And, I hope you can look back if you're a professing follower of Christ to a time when you were baptized in water and you can say, well, those are the two ordinances of the Church. And if I stopped you and said, "Well, what does that mean? You took the Lord's Supper last week. What's that all about?" Or if I said your baptismal, "Well, what's the meaning of all of that?" If you said, "Well, I don't know, but I did it, and I'm glad, I'm an obedient Christian." I think you'd have to say that's a sad response. There's so much more for you to gather.

I'm going to ask you to indulge me this weekend and do something a little different. As we work through the books of the Bible we move verse by verse, chapter by chapter through these books. We usually are very carefully taking a section of Scripture and we're using the data from within that text to preach a sermon that's trying to effect the changes in your life that that passage was designed to affect. But sometimes we'll get to a passage like this. And I felt



a little bit of liberty to do this because this particular passage in Acts Chapter 22 has already been recorded by Luke back in Acts Chapter 9, and we've referred to it already. There are some differences as Paul is giving it to a particular audience here, a very hostile Jewish crowd on the Temple Mount. He's being hauled away on the steps of the Antonia's Fortress by the Romans and he stops to address them. He starts to tell the story that we've already learned and we've studied verse by verse in a series I called Amazing Conversions, and we studied it in detail. We looked at the issue of Ananias who enters Paul's testimony here in Acts 22 that we're about to tackle starting in verse 12. And it's not that there's nothing here worth revisiting, there's a lot to revisit. But there is the ordinance of what Jesus left us to do in this passage where Ananias ends up baptizing Paul. We don't have a depiction of the scene itself but we have the setup for it and the statement from Ananias that Paul would be baptized. Of course, at that time he was called Saul of the city of Tarsus.

What I'd like to do if you would indulge me is I'd like you to turn to a bunch of passages. I mean, like so many passages that you just will be all over your Bibles today. That's why I encourage you, by the way, to bring a device like an iPad or a laptop. Please bring your laptops to church. It would be good for you because especially in a sermon like this we're going to bounce all over the place. It would be good for you to take some notes. It would be good for you to get into your Bible software. If you don't have Bible software, you can always log on to our Wi-Fi here and get to a website that has a Bible. There are plenty of them out there. We use the English Standard Version, esv.org is a good place to go, and you just type in those passages and pull them up automatically so that we can move fast. We don't normally move fast around here, (audience laughing) but we're going to kind of move fast and go to a lot of different places. Because what I want to do is I want to understand the ordinance of water baptism, and I'd like to think it through based on what we see here as a platform and just go all over the place to figure this out.

So if you would do that with me let's read the passage that we're going to be able to cover here today. And in Acts Chapter 22 starting in verse 12, we're going to read through verse 16. And if you want more and you just want to dig into this, what you can do, you can go back to the series in Acts Chapter 9 and you can get a lot of the detail about what's going on in this scene. So let me read it for you here. Verse 12, "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there." That's a little tidbit that he's going to add because he's speaking to the Jews who have claimed that he's speaking against the people of Israel, he's against the Jews, and he's against the law of Moses. So that makes sense he would add that phrase, of course it's true. But he drops that into the testimony here.

Well, anyway, "Ananias came to me." Remember, Paul was blinded on the road to Damascus. He was led in by the hand. He's blind. "And standing by me he said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that very hour I received my sight, and I saw him." That's interesting. Right? He hadn't even seen this guy, he had been talking to Ananias but now he sees him. "And he said," which, of course, God had even revealed to Paul in this scene, "the God of our fathers has appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth, for you'll be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard," which is a lot like Acts Chapter 1. You can't be an apostle without that.



Paul is going to take a special role, I think, with a capital "A" Apostle, and he's going to do this work, and he has to have seen and been instructed by the risen Christ and personally instructed by Christ, which is not just on this brief time of discussion on this road to Damascus, but he's going to go into the northern Arabian desert, just adjacent to Damascus, and he's going to have some experiences with the risen Christ, I would argue, and it's going to be part of his resume, to be an actual, technically capital "A" Apostle.

After all of that, calling him Brother Saul. He's like, okay, "Now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name." Okay, that phrase "rise, be baptized and wash away your sins calling on his name." If we are going to think about the ordinance of water baptism, we would do well to appreciate that experience the way that God intended it to be experienced if we just think through the way that God communicates. God communicates in a particular way in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. But in this case, in the Old Testament, that Ananias now is utilizing phrases and rhetorical devices, and he's using language in a way that God uses language to communicate. So we want to think about the way God communicates with a particular word that relates to, and it would relate to the other ordinance, but we're talking about this ordinance, studying water baptism. And I want to think about this word that describes a kind of way that God communicates and is reflected here in the mouth of Ananias.

The word is "metaphor." Okay, metaphor. We need to get that word in our minds and we need to start to understand the way that God uses metaphors to instruct us. Number one, if you're taking notes, jot this down, "Understand God's Instructive Metaphors." It will all have a bearing on this thing called water baptism which we won't get to for a long time. But let's start with metaphors. Now let's go through the Old Testament to see where Ananias might get this kind of verbiage in his mouth to understand what this deals with. But let's start with the metaphor itself. You're familiar with metaphors because we use them all the time in relation to our Christianity. We talk about our heart, which Christianity has nothing to do with your heart, not your literal heart. Not that anybody uses the word "literal" correctly anymore. You understand that, right? They say, "You literally blew my mind with that sermon." Well, you wouldn't be talking to me right now if I blew your mind with the sermon. You'd be dead. We would call the paramedics. It would be bad. "He was so mean to me in my small group, man, and they literally threw me under the bus." No, they didn't literally throw you under any buses. The buses weren't there. There are no buses that run by the house there at this place. So we use the word literally all wrong.

But I need to try to talk about metaphors, because metaphors are so frequent and so ubiquitous in our language and in the Bible that we don't know we're even using them. But we need to think about what that means. We're taking two conceptual worlds and we're using one to point to the other. One conceptual world can have its own literal definitions but we're not using it in a literal way. We're using this as an abstract. An abstract concept that is not intended to be literally understood to describe something that is real and literal, something that is related to reality, something that is, to use a metaphor in describing a non-metaphor, it is a concrete concept, a concrete reality. And metaphors are a way that we like to talk about a lot of things. Being made in the image of God we enjoy metaphors and metaphors help us



enrich our understanding of something. And so metaphors are used all over the Bible. Let's look at the metaphor that is used here and the four component parts looking first at the Old Testament.

So let's get around in our Bible. Let's go to Jeremiah Chapter 2 verse 22. Jeremiah Chapter 2 verse 22. Quickly get there and let me read it for you. Verse 22, "Though you wash yourself with lye," that alkaline based, you know, very harsh soap, "and you use much soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me, declares the Lord." Now he uses a word regarding guilt. We talked about guilt last week, right? Guilt is actually an objective fact, or maybe it was two weeks ago, right? We feel guilt. That's subjective. But guilt is like you've done wrong. He uses now a word that's metaphorical, "a stain of guilt." And then he talks about the fact that you could use all kinds of soap and all kinds of lye, harsh detergents on yourself, and you wouldn't get rid of the stain of your guilt. That's not going to do it. Because we are enriched by the metaphor that sometimes we feel dirty when we do wrong. And you can do something really wrong and take all the showers you want, shampoo yourself, suds yourself, use the scrubby that hurts your skin, do all you want. It is never going to take away your guilt. And he's going to deal with us on a plane in which we understand. And he says, just like you're stained and the washing of yourself is not going to take away the stain of your guilt.

So if we're building some sub-points here, I think an Old Testament category here, number one, here's the metaphor, "Sin stains you." Sin stains. Okay? Now go with me to Ezekiel 36. The hope is if I can't get rid of this myself, can God get rid of this? Well, this is the great promise of what God is going to do. Verse 25 Ezekiel 36. "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness." Is this about hygiene? Is this about having clean clothes? No, it's a metaphor. It's a metaphor that's describing something that has its literal meaning, but it's used in a non-literal way. How do I know that? Because uncleanness is defined, "From all your idols, I will cleanse you." Do you see it now? It's just like a stain of your guilt. Same thing here. The uncleanness, you need to be cleansed from something like idolatry. When you value something above God, when you pursue something above God, when you love something and are dedicated to something and loyal to something above God, whether it's your kids, your career, your pursuit for pleasure, whatever it is, your ego, it's sin. It stains you. But the good news is, in the metaphor God uses, "I'll sprinkle some clean water on you," which we totally identify with because if something gets on your clothing or something gets on something you're using and you want to clean it, you think, if I had some water I could wash this off. Metaphor: sin stains. Secondly, God can cleanse. This is a metaphor. Sin stains, God cleans. Okay?

Zachariah Chapter 13 verse 1. Zachariah Chapter 13 verse 1. If I think about sprinkling, I think, I don't know, there's not a lot of that water to go around. Well the metaphor, let's look at this thinking about a day when we picture the ideal. But here is a picture of God's overabundant grace, his provision. "On that day there will be a fountain open for the house of David, for the inhabitants of Jerusalem," a very populous city, "to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness." So you're dirty. What are we talking about? Dirt? No. Hygiene? No. Your clothes? Nope. Don't care about that. This is a metaphor. The metaphor is, it's like there's this abundant, never-ending fountain, like a spring, like a geyser. And all of this water is



overabundant above any kind of stain you might have. It's like God just provides it and it's going to clean you from your uncleanness, which is all a metaphor. Okay? One more, Isaiah Chapter 1 verse 18. Well, there may be an abundance of water. There may be all of this thing that can wash me but, you know, my sin is really bad. It's like when I had bloody noses as a kid and it stained the pillowcase. It's like, "Oh no, I got to throw that away. It's ruined. Why? Can't I put water on it? Put more water on it. Soak it in water." No, it's so stained it can't be cleaned. Well, he's trying to give us a sense that it doesn't matter how stained you are, it's all a metaphor, you can be cleansed.

Look at it in Isaiah Chapter 1 verse 18. "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet." It's one thing to get a little bump of a little dirt on your sleeve. But this is like ink, right? This is like blood. Right? "They shall be white as snow," you won't even see it, clean, "though they're red like crimson, they'll be like wool." Like a little tiny lamb that's so bright in the sun you can't even look at it. White like wool. So the picture here is sin stains, God cleans, he's over-abundant in his cleaning. He can clean, clean, clean, clean, clean. Clean not only you from beginning to end, clean all the people. And when it comes to how bad your stain, it doesn't matter how bad your stain is, right? You can be white. So those are the four like component parts of this.

Now let's go to the New Testament. Go to the end of the Bible, Revelation Chapter 3. Revelation Chapter 3. Let's take this metaphor and build a new category here, a New Testament washing metaphor. How does this work? Well, let's just know that metaphor is still repeated and echoed in the New Testament. Revelation Chapter 3, city of Sardis. Jesus is writing these postcards to these churches, this church in Asia Minor. And he says, "Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy." So you wouldn't even need an interpretive key for this. We're so used to the metaphor of dirty (sin), guilt (stain), transgression, clean. God wants to clean. The idea here is oh, there are people in Sardis who haven't soiled their garments. I guess they haven't fallen into whatever sin is on the table that he's thinking about here in the context of this. Well, they haven't sinned because sin is like soiling your garments. Turn to First John Chapter 1. Same thing. So New Testament metaphor, sin stains, same thing. It soils your garments. First John Chapter 1 verse 7. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." There it is again. We're clean.

So we know in the New Testament the same idea. Sin is like a blot, like a stain on your clothing and yet Jesus can wash the stain away, right? Look at verse 9. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We're paralleling now, right? You got sin stains in the New Testament. You've got Jesus, to be specific, can cleanse us. And we've got how complete is this? How overly generous is this, how expansive is this? Well, you can sin and "if you confess your sins, he is faithful and he's righteous and to forgive you and you from all unrighteousness." So it's the same kind of concept of this overabundance of provision of forgiveness. Confession - forgiven, confession - forgiven. Well, the analogy there's cleansed, cleansed, cleaned, cleansed.

Titus Chapter 3. But what if my sin is like scarlet? Do you remember that Titus is written to a pastor named Titus? Right? Paul's writing to Titus. He's the pastor on the island of Crete. We get the word Cretan from this island because they were notoriously bad. And he's trying to say, well, everyone's bad, as a matter of fact, really bad, if you think about it. Look at Titus Chapter 3 verse 3, "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another." If you're building a resume to get a job don't put that on it. Don't say, "That's me. I'm just disobedient. I'm foolish. I'm a slave to various passions and pleasures. I pass my days in malice and envy. I'm hated by others. I'm hating other people." That's terrible. You must be from Crete. You're a Cretan. It's terrible. Right? "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of the works we've done in righteousness," verse 5, "but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." So we don't have the first part of the metaphor. We have the actual listing of sins, a particular set of sins, and it says, wow, that looks really bad. Can God forgive the Cretans? Can God forgive Paul? He even says he's the worst of sinners. Of course we were like that ourselves, but we were washed.

So the washing is so "poured out," it's so abundant in verse 6, "he poured it out richly on us through Christ Jesus our Savior, so being justified by his grace we become heirs to the hope of eternal life." How clean are you? You're clean even if you're a notoriously bad sinner, like a Cretan, or even like Paul himself, a murderer and persecutor of the Church. So it's a lot the same, right? How bad can your sin be? Well, no matter how bad the sin. It can be red like crimson. So sin stains. God cleanses. Blood of Christ cleanses. You have been graciously provided by God. Well, you have that too just with the ease of even confession, sincere confession. Bam bam bam bam bam. And how bad? Well, really bad. God takes bad sins and forgives them. Okay.

I want you to note something I kind of blew past, but let me go to other passages really quickly to make this clear. If I asked about the analogy, the metaphor of washing, I said what's the means of the washing? You might say, well, the means of washing is obvious. I mean, you said it in the Old Testament. You started in Ezekiel 36, right? The washing with water, pure water. Hebrews Chapter 10 verse 22. Hebrews 10:22. Absolutely. All about that. The analogy works best that way because that's what we run to immediately. If we need something clean, we go to water, right? Even dry cleaning, it's all with solvents, liquids, water. There's liquid involved. Verse 22, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." So if I said how in this analogy, this metaphor, does the cleaning take place? Well, in the analogy, the sin blots, God is going to cleanse. What are the means? The means are pure water. Okay?

Ephesians Chapter 5 verses 25 and 26. Ephesians Chapter 5 verses 25 and 26. Here is a text about Christ in the Church, with great application for husbands and wives. And he says in verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and he gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her," that means make her holy, "having cleansed her by the washing of water." Well, there it is. Period. No, but another thing now, "with the word." Okay.



Well, that kind of complicates it. I guess that's like something you pour in with a little detergent. The "word" whatever that means. I guess that must be maybe like First John 1. It's maybe the promise. He's faithful and righteous. He does what he says. So God has to make some declaration. God has to make some kind of promise. So maybe I'm just seeing now the means, how do I get from dirty to clean in the metaphor? Well, there has to be this, in the metaphor, water. But the water now, if I'm going to start to lean toward the realities, I'm going to talk about the promise, the word, the declaration of God, the covenant promise that God makes regarding this cleansing. Okay?

Now you already read this, but let's look at what we read and maybe you caught it when we read it. But First John Chapter 1 verse 7. "We walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the..." water of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. Is what it says? What does it say? No one even got there, right? Did you get there? Blood. Right? If my mom's trying to clean as a kid my old bloody pillowcase, she doesn't say, I know what I'll do I'll soak it in blood. It's not the way to clean a stain. If you got a crimson stain don't use blood on it. It doesn't make any sense. We don't put ink on something that's stained. So we're moving toward reality because we know there's something that took Christ to a cross, but it's now seen as it's like, what's the agency? Water. Water cleans things. Well God's going to clean you with water. Oh, but water and a promise. And I guess, really, if you think about it, the agency is going to clean you with blood. You can see the metaphor starting to stretch now, right?

Titus Chapter 3 verse 5. We read that one. Did you catch this? "He saved us, not because of the works we've done in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration," he's going to make you new, "and renewal." What kind of renewal? What does he wash you with here? "Of the Holy Spirit." Okay, now the metaphor is all over the map now. How do you make the dirty clean in this analogy, sinners made righteous? Well, water. That's a picture. Water and the word. Water now is out of it and word is out. Now it's blood, make you clean with blood. And now you got to be washed by the Spirit. Okay. You can see we're in an analogy that is so basic of sin stains, God cleanses. What's the means of that? Regardless of how generous it is or how complete it is, or how it takes out the worst of stains. What are the means? Well, it's used variously in Scripture - water, water and word, blood, the Spirit. But we get the analogy. Sin makes us feel dirty. God's going to make us clean. He's got a way to make us clean. All of that is an analogy.

One more analogy, and it's a word that is an analogy. We need to understand it as an analogy, and it's found all over the Bible. It's the word that I explain every time we have a baptism up here and I'm in the tank and I give you my five-minute spiel and I make you all ask which one. With that little speech I try to every time make clear to you that when we say the word "baptism," we're saying a Greek word that is not translated. We're just uttering the basic syllables of an ancient Koine Greek word. If we were to translate it, we'd have to say "put into," or "placed into." So when I ask, does being placed into do x, y, or z you say which one because you don't even know what I'm talking about. The word itself is used in a way in Scripture that is part of the metaphor of going from dirty to clean. So I need to talk about the concept of being "placed into" whether the word is in the text or not. When the word is



employed, it often is employed this way in some sense or another, and sometimes it's just the concept of being placed into.

Let me show you one. Go to Zechariah Chapter 3. Zechariah Chapter 3. Zechariah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, the last three books of the Old Testament post-exilic after the Babylonian captivity. Where we've gone to restore the city, the temple, the walls. And we've got to now get the priesthood in place. And the priest here, the high priest at this time, after the Babylonian captivity, is a guy named Joshua. Joshua, the high priest. He's not Moses' understudy. He's not the guy from the book of Joshua. It's a different Joshua. And he now, it says in this particular passage, look at verse 3, Zachariah Chapter 3 verse 3. "Now Joshua," this high priest, "was standing before the angel," in this vision and, "he was clothed in filthy garments." Now, immediately that's all over the place. And I just took you a few passages, that concept of filthiness. And if you think why is he filthy, right? Because he's defiled, he's dirty, he's done wrong. He's not righteous. "And the angel said to those who were standing before him, 'Remove the filthy garments from him.' And he said, 'Behold, I've taken all your iniquity away from it you.'" I get it now. It is iniquity. It is sin. Iniquity is sin. So we know the sin makes him unrighteous. He's dressed unrighteously because he's dirty. There's our metaphor. And it says, "And I will clothe you with pure vestments." Let me put you in clean clothes, and I will say, "Let them put a clean turban on his head," and they put a clean turban on his head, "and they clothed him with garments."

Now the word "Baptizo" is not used here of course because it is the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. But you're all in your clothes today, aren't you? Are you in your clothes? Thank you for being in your clothes today. I'm in my clothes. Right? I have little holes, portals, for my arms and my legs and my head. It's just convenient that way. They designed it that way. I'm in my clothes. You're in your clothes, right? If I get put in clothes it's not like I'm being dropped in the clothes but I get in new clothes. Here's a priest who is seen to be dirty in this vision because he's iniquitous, he's sinful, but he's going to be put into new clothes. He's got to have new clothes on. Okay? The idea of being placed into those new clothes that aren't dirty is our image. That's our metaphor. And we want to go from the washing metaphor now to being placed into something. So this is another aspect of it from dirty to clean. Well, we can talk about washing or we can talk about being placed into. Okay.

Go to Revelation Chapter 3. I read up to verse 4 in this letter to Sardis, but I want you to look at what you would feel like I hope if you read verse 4. If you're in the church at Sardis and I'm your pastor in Sardis and we're reading a postcard from Christ and he says in verse 4, there are a few people in this congregation who haven't soiled their garments and they will walk with me in white for they're worthy. You're like, "Oh, man, that ain't me. It's not me. I know I've sinned." Well, maybe not in the way that Jesus has in mind here but nevertheless you know we all have sinned. We all have sinned. And even as James Chapter 3 verse 2 says, "We all stumble in many ways." You're going to have a pang of guilt at that moment when the pastor says that relaying the message of Christ to you. But the whole promise of every ending of every letter of the seven letters in Revelations 2 and 3 is the one who conquers, the one who stands at the end, the one who makes it to the end and is justified. And look at the promise of verse 5, "The one who conquers will be clothed thus," like those people, "in white garments."

And you take one sin or a set of sins and like Job can be blameless in his generation, you say that guy is blameless. Well, he's not completely blameless. But he's blameless. I'm not like that. I'd like to be like that. Well, you're going to be clothed like that in righteous garments. "The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess him before the Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." That's great. I want Jesus to be my advocate and I want to be in those quote unquote, white garments. But I got to be put in those because my garments are a little dirty. So there's the picture, baptizo, being placed into.

Galatians Chapter 3 verse 25. Go to Galatians Chapter 3 verse 25. "But now that faith has come, we're no longer under a guardian," verse 26, "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God." I get to be a son of God because I am IN Christ Jesus. There's our concept, in Christ. "For as many of you who were," placed into Christ, "were baptized into Christ have..." Now you have in your English text here, if you get an English Standard Version, "put on Christ." Many translations will translate it the way it's often translated outside of this text "to be clothed in." Same idea, right? You've been put into clothes, you've been baptized into Christ. Guess what? You're wearing Christ. And guess what you're wearing when you're wearing Christ. Talk about the holy people in Sardis, this is the holy person of the universe who's never sinned, tempted in every way as you are, except he hasn't sinned. And you are now, if you've been placed into Christ, baptized into Christ, whatever that means, more on that in a minute, then we are clothed in Christ. We are baptized into Christ.

All right, one more, Romans Chapter 6. Just dealing with the metaphor here under the first point of being placed into. And it relates to our ordinance, because the word of the ordinance of water baptism is the word "being placed into." All right. The question on the table in Chapter 6 verse 1 of Romans is: okay if it's all about just believing, trusting in Christ, and your sins are forgiven, well then you guys are going to be sinning all the time because it sounds too easy. And he goes, no, that's not the way it is, right? If we died to sin, whatever that means, which he's about to explain, we're not going to keep doing it. We're not just let's find a license to do wrong. Verse 3, now let's get into it. "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptizo'ed, placed into Christ Jesus, were placed into his death, we're baptized into his death?" Now I'm going to say I'm in Christ, Paul's favorite phrase, in Christ. I'm in Christ. I know that I'm a son of God because I'm in Christ. I have the merits of Christ. But do you know, now he's going to get a subset of that, you're also then if you're in Christ, you're also in his death? Now that's a new concept, now, like, "Oh, what do you mean?" Well, drop down to verse 5. "If we have been united with him in a death." Right? There's a synonym for baptism. I've been united. You're seen as being in him when he died. Any confusion there? Verse 6, "We know that our old self," who we were, "was crucified with him." Yeah. He died on this Roman torture chamber rack. Right? That's how he died. And so you died with him. You were there in him, in his death.

Verse 8, "If you have died with Christ." Right? So we know that if we put on Christ, we've been put on, then we've been put into his death. So I have in my life it's as though I died with him. And when he died what was he doing? He was absorbing all the just anger of the Father. He was experiencing the justice from the Father so that I wouldn't have to. But here's the



thing. Mike Fabarez already has been penalized for his sin. He's already suffered for his sin. But I didn't suffer, but as though I was in him. Now you can see this is a metaphor because if I said, what was it like getting crucified with Christ? Not a single person in this room would know. It would all be theology and all theoretical and all principle and no one would know because you weren't physically, literally baptized with Christ. You were metaphorically baptized with Christ. This is a picture of something that happened in the reality. But the reality is not really being placed into the cross, but somehow you were placed into the cross.

It solves the problem on the table which is do we just keep sinning? And the point is, no, I realize that my whole life was seen as being penalized in Christ. He suffered for me so I'm not going to just go out and sin. There's a deep logic there, but the reality is I need to understand this idea. Joshua the high priest was put in new clothes. The Sardis Christians were put into white garments. The Galatian Christians were put into Christ like putting on clothes. Roman Christians were put into Christ and not only that his death. And furthermore, verse 4, I didn't even talk about that, you were buried therefore with him in baptism into death. You even went into the grave with him. Okay. All metaphor, metaphor, metaphor, metaphor. But metaphors are all about speaking to reality. I said, here's the category on the stage metaphor over here. The metaphors are speaking about realities over there. And so I'd say as best we can because we think in metaphors all day long, let's get as concrete, pardon the metaphor, let's get as real as we can about what we're talking about. Okay?

We're in Romans. Let's go back to Romans Chapter 2. And then we should write down number two. We should fixate on these truths. These are the truths and in our mind we ought to lock onto this. Number two, "Fixate on God's Saving Realities." Jot that down. Fixate on God's saving realities. This is where my mind needs to go. Those are metaphors, right? Talk about Jesus in your heart. Jesus is not in your heart, right? You understand that. He's enthroned at the right hand of the Father on high, he's not literally, his fingernails are not inside of your heart, right? His elbows are not in your heart. But this is a metaphor. The metaphor might work that Christ is in you. I get that. Paul says it in Colossians. But what are the realities we're talking about when we talk about being in Christ? Okay.

Here's the whole enchilada. That sounds good. It's getting late. Romans Chapter 2 verse 5. We need to talk about the whole big picture here. Here's the big picture. Five things. Let's get five things down on your notes here as what saving realities we need to fixate on as it relates to this whole concept. Romans Chapter 5 verse 2. "Because of your hard impenitent heart you're storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed." Now, I can't even get through that sentence without some metaphor, like a hard heart. It has nothing to do with the softness of your heart, the flexibility or the elasticity of your heart. But we know what you mean. it's unrepentant inside. In the control center of who you are you're not repentant of your sins. And because of that you are racking up all kinds of penalties on the day when God's righteous penalty, his just anger, is unleashed. There's a day when you're going to meet your maker and you die and then comes the judgment. When I'm judged I know that unrepentant sin is going to rack up more punishment because I'm learning in the book of Romans, as elsewhere, sin is going to be punished, right? The analogy of dirty clothes should be washed, well whatever. But they speak to realities and realities are



you're dirty before God, which means that you are a sinner. You violated his rules. You have not lived up to his rules and therefore it requires painful punishment. You should be punished by your creator. So that's number one. That's the first one.

Now rush on to Romans Chapter 8. Romans Chapter 8 verse 1. Now let's get to the second one. Here's the second saving reality that we care about the concept of salvation. Verse 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." I'd like that because I'm learning all through this book, starting in Chapter 1, that there is judgment from God coming on sinners. I'm a sinner, and I know that I'm going to be punished because my sin requires God's just punishment. And every time I broke one of his standards, every time I broke one of his rules, every time I fall short of his glory, to put it in terms of Romans, I am going to be punished. But I want to get here. Whatever penitence looks like, whatever "in Christ" looks like, I want to be that. So divine reality number two that I want to focus on is that I can be exempt from punishment. I can be exempt from being punished. And that's the promise of the book of Romans. And the first eight chapters are all about this plan, all about how this works. So fixating on real things is, even though we are going to appreciate the analogies, we're going to appreciate the metaphors, that I know this: my sin should be punished. Number two. Right? I cannot be punished. I can be without any punishment.

Wow, how do I do that? Well, back to Chapter 3. Let's figure out how to do it. Number three, our third point those are the bookends. How do I get in the middle of this? Well the first thing I do is I understand verse 19. Romans Chapter 3 verse 19. Now we know that whatever the law says, it says about if you look back up, the Old Testament law talks about our sin. It speaks to those who were under the law. And of course we are under the rules. We're accountable for those rules, whether the rules are just written on our hearts and we're some pagan out in the jungle and I've got the law of God written on my heart. Whatever extent I have God's rules, I am going to be held accountable for that. And all of that is trying to show me I'm a sinner, so that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world be held accountable to God. And one day everyone will. Just like Job can blather on about his self-justification before God. It's not fair. I want time with God and then God shows up and what does it say Job does? He puts his hand over his mouth and he's not going to say anything. No more excuses, no more rationalization. I have no defense.

When someone gets accused of wrong today the first thing they do is they call Sweet James lawyers or whatever, right? Yeah. Get the lawyer on the phone because I need a defense. Even if they know they have no defense, they don't want to be judged. So I need a defense. And the whole point of what you read up there, "None is righteous, no, not one," verse 10, "no one understands; no one seeks for God," no one, "everyone's turned aside; they become worthless; no one does good, not even one." So that picture of the condemnation of the law saying, you're a sinner, you're a sinner, you're a sinner, is leading me to recognize that I should shut my mouth. No more excuses. And that means I'm accepting that I am responsible and accountable to God. Okay.

Third divine truth, right? This is the third thing we need to fixate on it and admitting our responsibility for violating God's rules. I admit it, I have no excuse. There is no defense. I'm

not going to call any lawyer, any attorney. I'm not going to try to make my own defense. I am guilty. Okay. Well, what do I do to fix it? Romans Chapter 4. Romans Chapter 4. Abraham becomes the example in this. And when he gets down into this part, the last part of Chapter 4, Paul's talking about the promise that God makes to Abraham that he's going to have a kid even though he and Sarah are past childbearing age. But the promise is you're going to have a kid and he can come from your own body. Wow. Really? That seems impossible. Well, Abraham says I'm going to believe you. Okay, that's what's going on here. If you look at that, like verse 19, "He did not weaken in his faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he's about 100 years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. But no unbelief made him waver," verse 20, this is Romans Chapter 4 verse 20, "concerning the promise of God." Matter of fact, "He grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God." Have you ever like given thanks before something happened? Here he is building a crib because he believes God. He knows God's going to keep his promise. That's amazing. That's huge. "Fully convinced God was able to do what he had promised. That's why his faith was 'counted to him as righteousness.'" Right? That was the quote earlier. "Counted to him as righteous." A great Greek word is "Logizomai." It is now imputed to him. It is credited to him as righteousness. God said, there you go. "But the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also."

Now the paradigm is you're too old to have a kid. You can't possibly fix the problem of having a kid, but God promises he's going to fix it. And guess what? You got to believe it. Just like lye and soap cannot take away your guilt. But you need to believe the promise of Ezekiel 36. He will take your sin away. He'll wash it away, quote unquote, in this analogy, in this metaphor. And to believe it, just like my analogy of the 3,000 years ago in the suburbs of Jerusalem to say I am a repentant sinner, I accept responsibility for everything, I trust God's going to solve the problem, right? That is counted to them as righteousness. And in our day we know, verse 24, it's for us because "it's counted to us who believe in him." Now we know the focus of our faith "who was raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses." We know how this was done. He died on a cross and he was "raised for our justification." And we know that we're right before God because we have a living Christ who conquered death by the paradigm of him suffering and dying and then rising. This is my trust. This is my hope. So the whole point, the fourth point that I want you to get down, is the saving reality is not just I know I'm a sinner who deserves punishment. I would like to have no punishment. That's the goal. And I've got to accept responsibility for my sin. Now, number four is I got to put my trust, just like Abraham trusted God's promise, the promise that Christ died for me, that he suffered for me. I have to believe that I have to put my loyalty and my confidence and my love in a Christ who would die for me. And so I trust in him. Okay? We put our love, loyalty, reliance on Christ's saving work. Okay? That's reality number four.

Reality number five. Romans Chapter 5. In Romans Chapter 5. He speaks of the means again in verse 9, Romans Chapter 5 verse 9, "Since, therefore, we have been justified by his blood," we know that death on a cross delivered up for us for our trespasses, will be "saved by him from the wrath of God." That's it. That's what I want to get from Romans 2 to Romans 8. That's where I want to be. "For if while we were enemies, we were," keyword here now, this is going to lead right into my fifth reality, "we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,



much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life?" He's a resurrected Christ. He is a mediator between me and God. He's going to stand there as he clothed me in his own righteousness, to use a metaphor. I'm going to be there acceptable before my maker. "More than that, we rejoice in God through our," boss, "Lord Jesus," the Savior, "Christ," the King, the Messiah, "through whom we now received reconciliation."

Now, the key word here in the fifth reality is "reconciliation." I'm alienated from God. I'm a sinner. He should judge me. But I'm going to be to Romans Chapter 8 verse 1, not going to be judged. "No condemnation" in my head because "I'm in Christ." Well to be in Christ is to be reconciled to him. Now think about reconciliation. Just picture some small claims court, civil case, whatever and you have two parties who reach an agreement. They settle, maybe they settle out of court. They reach across the table, they shake hands and now everybody's whole, everyone's at peace, everyone walks away friends. You could talk about that as reconciliation. But that's not how this works with God because it's not just two people being reunited as friends, if you think about friends who are mad at each other, we're reconciled. Well that's great. Marriage, reconciled. That's great. But that's not this. This is God through Christ who is the Lord, the Savior, the King, he's now reconciling us to himself. That's a huge dynamic. It's not like, hey, we get to be buddies again, who's going to pick up the tab, you know, at El Pollo Loco or something, right? No. I don't why I went there, I don't even like that place. (audience laughs) My wife likes it so that's half of us. It's just not filling and the beans are not right. The "guac" is not bad, though. Okay. Reconciled. Listen to me. We're talking Bible stuff right now. Stop it! Look what you do to me.

Reconciled to God. Think about that. That means that he gets to be God and I get to be his people. He is the shepherd. I am the sheep. I'm no longer straying. Now, all the penalties for straying now has been paid for by Christ. Now I'm reconciled to him. So what does that mean? We have the right arrangement now. And the right arrangement is you're the boss, right? I'm not. I'm the servant. Right? You're the king. You're the master. You're the CEO of the universe. And I'm just a worker. When I've done everything that's commanded me, I say "I'm an unworthy slave; I've only done that which I ought to have done," to quote Christ. This is reconciliation. The problem with the sheep that are straying they're not there in the fold. They're not in the flock. They're not returning to the shepherd and overseer of their souls. But now we are. That's called reconciliation. So where does that leave us? I put it this way. We're in a reconciled relationship with God, and that's a huge word. And in particular, the mediatorial work of Jesus as our King. So that has huge implications. Five saving realities. I deserve punishment. I can be forgiven. I got to admit my responsibility. I got to place my faith, my love, my loyalty on the saving work of Christ, and now I'm rightly related as servant to king, sheep to shepherd. Okay. That's the saving reality.

Now, please catch this. This is the key. With no time left. No, I got time. A little time. The abstractions of the metaphor are here and they're nice and we listen to lyrics in music. Even music. Think of it. It's just even itself. It's like someone's not just talking words to us. Like we're listening to music. It's all emotional. It communicates in a deep and profound way the experience of that. God uses metaphors and it's so good that God is a great communicator. Metaphors are helpful, but they all speak to realities. Those are the hard facts of the Romans



Chapters 1 through 8. So metaphors they all connect to realities. Being placed in Christ, having blots of sin that are made righteous. Right? I get that.

Let's inject a third category here now. Right? There's something that stands between the metaphors over here and the reality over there that simply draws on the metaphor, and it points to the reality and that we'll call a symbol. Right? We can call it a ceremony if you want, but I'll use the word symbol here. And God sometimes mandates those symbols, whether it is in the Old Testament circumcision, sacrificing animals, a priesthood, a temple, a breastplate, the Urim and Thummim. Right? Having tents and outside of the Temple Mount, camping on the Feast of Booths or coming with torches and water and all the stuff they do. That's all ceremony. Well, all that's obsolete in the Old Testament now, because the New Testament has come. But in the New Testament Jesus gave us two symbols. He said, I want you to proclaim my death through two symbols in the Lord's Supper, a different sermon, and I want you to baptize people in water. Okay. There's a symbol that sits between all the metaphorical analogies over here and the realities over there. Getting those clearly in our minds is helpful. Now we can inject the symbol.

If God mandates a symbol you ought to take it seriously. You should, number three, "Never Discount God's Mandated Symbols." God gives you a symbol, you ought to do it. You shouldn't say, I'm never going to do the Lord's Supper. I'm never going to get baptized. You should because it is a mandated symbol. Now, a few things to know about this symbol. Clearly it's commanded, Matthew 28 verses 19 and 20. Matthew 28, "Go make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them." How do I make a disciple? Well, I've got to preach to them at least the five saving realities that we just talked about in the book of Romans. They're guilty, right? They want to be not guilty before God, not punished. But they got to admit their sin. They got to put their trust in Christ. They got to be reconciled to God. They now have Christ as their Lord. Great. You got to preach those things. Then they become a disciple, or they become part of the flock of God, or they become part of the family of God, the adopted son. However we want to say it. But then once you make that disciple, you ought to baptize them, okay? And we know that's in water. You think about the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip in Acts 8 "And he said, there's water. What prevents me from being baptized?" Well, nothing now, let's go down and do that. And they go into the water and he baptizes him.

We can talk about and there are fat books that I was back into reading this week about all the familiarity in the first century of the ablutions and the washings and all the ceremonies of baptism in the day. And God just used that in John the Baptist's ministry to declare externally in a very immersive way, pardon the pun, to say I am repentant. And then Jesus comes along and says, I want that to be the sign, the symbol, one of the ceremonies that stands between the metaphorical pictures of washing and the reality of justification. I want to put the symbol there. So it is a symbol and it's in water and it's commanded to us. Okay? It reflects the metaphor. And let's talk about it real quickly. You can turn to Deuteronomy Chapter 30. It's like Deuteronomy Chapter 10, it's like the book of Jeremiah. They all speak to circumcision as it relates to the reality. Circumcision, I hate to go there on a Sunday about circumcision. Think about it. Not too hard, not too long, but think about circumcision. Circumcision was this sign, right? Usually done on eight-day-old babies. But even when Joshua, during the wilderness



wanderings, they didn't get circumcised, came into the land, they circumcised a bunch of adults. Right? So is it real? Ask them recovering from their circumcision as adults. It's real. Super real. Right? Especially when you're using, like, flint knives. It's real and it hurts. Okay. Stop.

Circumcision. Now if I ask, that is some kind of metaphor. It's a symbol about a metaphor. Okay? Well, there are things in the Scripture where God talks about that metaphor. Look at Deuteronomy Chapter 30. Look at verse 6. "And the Lord your God," Yahweh, your God, "will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart," all of it, all of it, "with all your soul that you may live." Circumcision. Right? Think about that but not too long. Circumcision is this removal of flesh, right? And he says, what really I'm concerned with is what's going on in your quote unquote heart, in the internal part of your life where you can enthrone God as God. We can have the right relationship that you can live. And all of that you need your heart circumcised. Deuteronomy 10 says that, Jeremiah spoke to that circumcise your heart. Well, there's no circumcision of your heart. Right? That's a metaphor. It's a metaphor for making sure there are no idols in your heart, that God is God to you. The symbol was a picture that spoke to that, and it's so referenced here with you and your offspring, wants your whole community. We want every one of you to love God first. Love him with our heart, soul, strength and mind. Right? And then you'll live. So there's a reality there about idolatry, right? Confessing sin and trusting in God for forgiveness and being reconciled to God. Making sure God is God to you. All the realities of the image and the metaphor are depicted here, right? The metaphorical. But the act is actually cutting the foreskin off of eight-year-old males.

It's the same concept here with this thing in the New Testament called water baptism. The concept is the symbol itself, as First Peter Chapter 3 verse 21 says, it's not when some water touches your body and starts to do something to make you a child of God. It's not the removal of flesh. It's the appeal of a sincere conscience crying out to God and salvation. Save me. It's you doing what God said. Taking responsibility for your sin. Putting your trust in Christ. Being reconciled to God. The water does not do this. It's not like when your forehead finally gets under the surface of water, now that happens. Because here's the problem, the conflation of the symbol with the reality. The metaphor, that's being communicated. That's the rhetorical device. It's part of being in the image of God to speak, to enrich experience with metaphor. The symbol is only drawing on the metaphor to point to the reality. The reality is what matters, and the reality cannot be conflated with the symbol to think that somehow the symbol effectuates the reality. Which is, to put it in modern terms, that is the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, that if you just think about the act of the symbol, it's going to make the reality.

These people who were told this in Deuteronomy Chapter 30. Right? Think about it. The issue wasn't just go circumcise yourselves, because the people he's talking to have to be circumcised and Joshua's going to have them circumcised. It wasn't about the symbol, even though the symbol was required and Joshua would demand it, but it was about their hearts. You got to circumcise your hearts then you'll live. What if I circumcise my heart quote unquote, metaphor language for the realities, and I haven't yet been circumcised? Guess what? You're right with God before you get your foreskin cut off. The reality is, the symbol



simply points to the reality. And God's requiring the symbol in the Old Testament. Our symbols in the New Testament are the Lord's Supper and baptism. It is not the washing of your body. Because if you think about the metaphor, the metaphor is used, well, it's water and the word. I guess we throw some Bibles in the baptism tank. No, it's the blood. Well, let's baptize you in blood. No, that's not it. Right? It's the Holy Spirit. I don't even know how to do that. So the reality is something different than the symbol. But the symbol can't be conflated.

And do you think people do that? All the time. And it isn't just the Roman Catholics, which clearly their doctrinal position has been for a long, long time, many hundreds of years and it is today. In the 1990s they had their most official latest doctrine come out from the church. This is exactly what they teach. As a matter of fact, I knew you would be skeptical because you're looking at me skeptically. So I got to prove it to you. Section 1263 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the most recent Vatican dispensed doctrinal statement of the church. Listen: "By baptism." And in this whole section is about being baptized by the priest in a ceremony with water. "By baptism all sins are forgiven, original sin, all personal sins, as well as punishment for sins." Okay, that's section 1263. You can find this all on the Internet. It's all out there. 1265 speaking of becoming a new creation, "Baptism not only purifies from all sins," which 1263 says, 1265 says, "it also makes," the newly baptized persons called, "the neophyte," in this text, which means a newly baptized person, makes them a new creation, "a new creature, an adopted Son of God. It makes him a partaker of the divine nature, makes them a member of Christ, makes them a co-heir with him, makes them a temple of the Holy Spirit." If you know your Bible, those are all biblical phrases. Guess what? That speaks to realities. And they're saying, if you engage in the symbol, you have the realities.

It is what is called in Latin, the theological description is "Ex opere operato," which doesn't mean much to you, but the concept is what they mean exactly. "Ex" is "from," "Opere," from the "work," from doing the work comes the operation, "Operato," comes the function of it all. By doing the symbol, to put it this way, doing the symbol comes a reality. Just do the symbol and the reality comes. Now if we think about believer's baptism but what we're saying is someone puts their trust in Christ, this is the metaphors might have led us to a symbol, but the reality is over there, we've been dealing with the reality, but we're saying now what we're doing in the symbol is we're declaring the reality there, and we're doing it because God commands us to do it. But we're not saying the working of the symbol creates the reality, and that's what ex opere operato is referring to. That's what the idea of doing what the Catholic Church says. And I'm thinking, if that does it well then I want to get my kids done as soon as possible.

1250 I'm glad you said that. Listen to this statement: "Born with a fallen human nature tainted by original sin, children," I'm with you so far, totally with you on that. Work in the nursery to have it completely solidified in your mind. Children, fallen nature, tainted by original sin. "They have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness to be brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called. The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifested in infant Baptism," little children. "The church," listen, "and the parents would deny the child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism on them shortly after birth." So the



kid is not thinking of anything other than eating, right? And you're taking them there and saying we're going to have by the work of doing baptism, the workings of the reality are taking place. They're becoming a child of God by that. The conflation of that is not just in Roman Catholicism, right? There are lots of organizations. The Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ. the Duck Dynasty crowd, the Restoration Movement. We could go on and on and on with people who say that you become a Christian when you get baptized. And what we're saying is that's not what the Bible teaches.

Let me prove it to you really quickly. Let's go there fast, fast. As though you weren't going fast before. First Corinthians Chapter 1. First Corinthians Chapter 1 verse 10, Paul is concerned about division in the church. Everyone is talking about, I'm of this guy, I'm of that guy. And he says, I want you by the name of "the Lord Jesus Christ," First Corinthians 1:10, "that all of you agree. I want there to be no divisions among you, but you may be not united in the same mind, same judgment." You guys are all splintered and he's got a pastoral heart. Look at this church. It's all divided. "For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. And what I mean is this: that each one of you says, 'I'm of Paul,' or 'I'm of Apollos,' or 'I'm of Cephas,' or 'I follow Christ,' that crowd irritates you the most right there, like I'm just too holy for all this, but they're all divided.

Okay, now, with that in mind, go with me real quickly to Chapter 4, First Corinthians Chapter 4 verse 14. He says, I don't write these things," and he's trying to tell him your doctrines wrong about eschatology. But he says, "I don't write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as MY beloved children." How so possessive here, Paul are you? Yes. You're my beloved children. How? "For though you have countless guides." You have a lot of teachers out there. Maybe Apollos, maybe Peter. "But you don't have many fathers." What do you mean? "I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel." Guess what? This reality of being saved was effectuated, it was facilitated by Paul coming and telling the message, right? You're guilty before God. You need to be forgiven before God. You need to confess your sins before God. You need to put your trust in the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ, the ministry of Christ, and you need to be reconciled to God, which means now God is your God and Christ is your Lord. The message of all. They responded by God's grace. With power they received that. And God changed their lives and Paul became their father in the faith. He became the facilitator of their conversion through the preaching of the gospel.

Back to Chapter 1. He's concerned about division in the church. And he says in verse 13, hey, "Is Christ divided?" Of course, he's not divided. "Was Paul crucified?" You know that's silly. No, of course not. "Were you baptized in the name of Paul?" No, of course. We had the formula of Matthew 28, "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." No one was baptized in the name of Paul. Well, "I thank God that I baptized none of you," because who knows you're going to start saying you were baptized in the name of Paul, right? I thank God I baptized none of you except for Crispus and Gaius, so that no one may say you were baptized in my name." That's how crazy this is at the church right now. I guess "I did baptize," verse 16, "the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I don't know whether I baptize anyone else." Why? "Because Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, and not



with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross be emptied of its power." I didn't come, God did not send me into Corinth to save people. Is that what he's saying? No, he's their father. He was the facilitator of their salvation by coming and preaching the facts of the gospel. Did he preach with metaphor? I'm sure he did. Did he require the symbol? Yeah, but he wasn't there even amped up about baptizing them. Why? Because he came to facilitate their salvation by the reality of the message, and they became his children in the faith by being the ones who were facilitated by his preaching to become Christians. And he says, I'm glad I wasn't sent to baptize. I was sent to get you saved.

Now I'm just telling you, if you conflate the symbol with the reality, you'd never say that. You'd never say that. If you're a Roman Catholic, you'd never say that, right? They say, of course, you're sent to baptize, because that's where people get saved. And so many churches and so many organizations say that. And of course, you're going to do it as the Catholic Catechism says as soon as possible. And you might come out of a reformed tradition where you think, well, you came out of that. "We got into Lutheranism. We got, you know, all kinds of Presbyterians and Calvinists over here. And you say, well, we still baptize infants, but it's not like what they say. We're not making Christian. We're not forgiving sins through that because we don't think that's what's going on." But something else is going on and they'll talk about what else is going on. But the reality is this holdover of when you baptize is not based on the realities of accepting the message of the gospel. Paul says, I preach that so that you can be saved, and if you're saved and become a disciple, then you should be baptized, the symbol.

James Chapter 2 verse 14. In James Chapter 2 verses 14, 15, and 16, here is James saying this: if you say that you have faith and that doesn't function in real life with works, then it ain't saving faith. So, this may sound contradictory to you, but if you understand metaphor, reality, symbol, and you don't conflate any of that other than appreciating the reality because of the metaphor and appreciating the symbolism that comes from the metaphor, informed by the metaphor, to point to the reality, right? If you keep that in mind, then this won't confuse you. But if you come to me and say I am a Christian, my sins were dirty and like spots before God, and now they're clean. Use all that metaphorical language or you talk in concrete terms about how I understood my sin. I am not punished because I trust in Christ, great. If you say to me, I'm not going to get baptized, and you use as some lame excuse that I know that baptism is not salvific, right? I'm going to say to you, I don't think you're a Christian.

Now, if I say that people are going to go, whoa, I guess you do think baptism is salvific. No, James Chapter 2 simply says this: you can't say you have faith and it doesn't work itself out with obedience, because reconciliation is always going to say I am going to do what the Lord says. And when I'm told that I'm supposed to tell all of you to observe all that Christ commanded, Matthew 28 verse 20, then I'm going to start with the whole baptism thing. I'm going to make a disciple and baptize you, and then I'm going to teach you to continue to do all that Christ commanded. It starts with baptism. And if you say, "I'm not getting baptized." Okay? I'm going I don't think you're saved. I don't think you're a Christian. How can you be a Christian? Well, that's what James Chapter 2 says. Should I read it? I guess I should. "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but doesn't have works? Can that faith save him?" Rhetorical question. Of course not.



"If a brother or sister is poorly clothed lacking daily food, and one of you says, 'Go in peace, be warm, be filled' without giving them the things they need for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, that does not have works is dead." And if it's dead, you can answer the question of verse 14, can that faith save him? If you are not willing to get your hair wet in front of people as the symbol of all the metaphorical concepts that point to the realities of your salvation, I'm going, what in the world are you talking about? You have faith and you're reconciled to God. I don't believe it. I mean, you say, "Don't judge me, man." I'm not. I'm just quoting the Bible for you. And the Bible says you need to do what God said. So March 16th, this is just a long announcement, by the way. (audience laughing) March 16th and 17th is our next baptism. Okay. I'm assuming if I check the database on the website this afternoon, there'll be plenty of people signed up for that. So just consider really that you are discounting the symbol. It's mandated and I want you to do it.

The Council of Trent after the Church trying to clarify some of the important things like "Christ alone, faith alone," you know, the issues two and three of the five Solas, which was a great summary of what they were trying to do for the course correction in the Church. They had this multiyear, two-decade council trying to say, "Oh, those Protestants are all wrong. They're protesting against us but they're all wrong." Well, it really got down to the authority of the Church. When it came to the section on the canons of the Council of Trent where they talked about baptism. I guess I should read a little of it for you, just to know, as long as you know, I'm a rebel here. Canon number five. "If anyone is to say that baptism is not necessary unto salvation, let him be anathema." Now I'm going to say you're wrong if we're understanding that the symbol effectuates the reality. I don't agree with that. That's what they're teaching in the context. So you can anathematize me all you want. I think the reading of Scripture is clear. Okay?

This is maybe even more condemning for your pastor, canon number two, and the subject heading of baptism. If you rest some sort of metaphor from the words of our Lord Jesus, now he quotes John 3, you should hear my sermon on John 3 was all about how the water and the Spirit point back to Ezekiel 36 and all the new covenant promises. It is a metaphor. It is a metaphor. Right? "Except a man be born again of water, and the Holy Spirit," that is washing of the water, washing of the Spirit. These are concepts that speak to reality, but the reality is not found in the symbol. And if you're going to run to a water must mean baptism in a church, right? If they say if you think there's a metaphor there, let that person be damned. Let him be anathema. Right? So I'm in trouble with your Uncle Vinny's church, right? If they are faithful Catholics, they're going to say if you teach what you just taught you are damned of God. And I'm going to say that is a huge problem. And I firmly stand with many, many people who are going to say that is not what the Bible teaches. And just because you have the power structures or whatever, you don't have the right to say whatever you want about what God's word says. And thanks to William Tyndale and so many others who said, we really need to get the Bible in our laps, right? We just get the Bible on our laptops, Tyndale said, quote unquote. The church can say whatever it wants, right? Well, we're going to see what the Bible has to say and do what the Bible says.



And if you're carrying over the timing of baptism because you're a Calvinist or you're, you know, a Lutheran or whatever, and you're saying, well, you know, we still baptize babies, this just doesn't mean what they say. I'm just saying you need to rethink all of this, from the whole picture of how God communicates, what that speaks to, and how the symbol is drawing from the metaphor to point to the reality. And we do it post-conversion in water, baptism means to be placed into water. That's going to happen again next time. March 26th. Why don't you stand with me and I'll finally let you go to get enchiladas? (audience laughing)

Let's pray. God, I know this is important. There are only two ceremonies left in the New Covenant age. All the other things that you say like assembling together, yes, we do it, literally we do that. But the thing that you have told us to do, that speaks to a metaphor, that draws from a metaphor, we just need to understand what it means and what it doesn't mean. And just because we know it's not salvific based on what the Bible has to say, Paul, clearly, was making it so clear there's a distinguishing between baptism and the work of saving people. God, we never want to discount it. And for some in this room who are discounting baptism, they say they don't want to do it because they're embarrassed or they don't want to be seen on a stage, or they want to talk in front of people. God, please help us get over all of that to do what we need to do, which is to be faithful to you in doing the symbol and then saying, we understand what it means and the richness of the experience when we understand it, God, just how good it is, instead of just saying, I checked the box. And God for those of us who have just checked the box as we see this next baptism coming up next month or two months from now, whatever, God, I just pray that we could just relive maybe even our own baptism with the richness of more deeply understanding this ordinance. God, thanks so much for the picture of washing away sin. Thank you so much for the symbol that relates to that. But God, we just hold tightly and fixate on the realities and we're grateful to be saved those of us who are here today. Dismiss us now, God, please, with your blessing, your kindness to us. Continue to be good to us as we praise you and worship you and thank you in advance for what you're going to do for us ultimately, when we see you face to face

In Jesus name. Amen.