

## 1Corinthians 17-11-19b

Let's pick up our study now in 1 Corinthians, as I say we're in verses 13 through 17, and let's read those as we begin to take a look at the concept of water baptism. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? Now three concepts there, right? What are the three verbs? Is Christ divided? So even if somebody says, I am of Christ, if they're using it as a basis of division, the others aren't going to say, well, I'm of Christ too. It's a schism.

And he says, is Christ divided? What is the answer to that question? What would you say? I would say yes. Christ is actually divided because in practice that's what people have done. That's why you've got upwards of 435 denominations.

I counted them once in my handbook of denominations. That's how many separate entries there were, and I'm sure there's more than that. In practice, Christ is divided in the same way that even though we are sanctified and we are set apart unto holiness, we're not really holy.

You know, there is the already and the not yet aspect of our identity in Christ and our deliverance in Christ, our life in Christ. We have eternal life, but we're going to die. We are sanctified and we're given the righteousness of Christ, but we sin.

We are filled with the Spirit, but not always. We are unified, but not always. We love one another and are tenderhearted, forgiving one another, but not always.

And our job is to work on the not always and move in the direction of that which is going to be completed and perfected in us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the attitude of dedication and commitment, motivation and persuasion that these things ought to be our goal, ought to be what we strive for, that attitude is going to go forward. What's going to change? The nature and opportunity for our failure is going to change.

The nature of failure will change. Right now we are beset by sinful nature, we're beset by outside forces of evil and darkness in the world. We wrestle against principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age.

And we sin against each other. We've got the world, the flesh and the devil all after us. That's going to change.

We have the unperfected state of our salvation. That's going to change. What's not going to change? What do we take with us? They always say you can't take it with you.

What do we take with us? Remember the first question I asked this morning? What makes you who you are? What defines you? Your level of love for the Lord Jesus Christ. We all say we love the Lord and we appreciate what He did for us. But what is the quality of that love? Do we love Him enough to take up our cross and follow Him? If we are worthy of Him, do you remember

that passage? If any man loves father and mother more than me, he is not worthy of me.

Anything wrong with loving your father and mother? It's a command. It's on the tablets of stone that came down from Sinai. Honor your father and mother.

But if any man loves father and mother more than me, he is not worthy of me. Not worthy to be a disciple. If anyone would follow me and be a disciple, let him come after me, take up his cross, and follow me.

What does the cross represent in that context? If you're taking up the cross, if you're going to be crucified with Christ, as Paul says, I am crucified with Christ. My life is now His life. The quality, how motivating is that love? We all believe that we love the Lord in the same way that many of us believe we ought to lose weight or we believe we ought to be in better shape.

We believe that we should eat better and we believe that we should do all kinds of things. There's a lot of shoulds in life and we absolutely affirm and believe them. But to what extent are we motivated to fulfill them? If you believe enough that you need to lose weight, you'll find a way to do it.

If you believe enough that you need to be in better shape, you'll do it. If you believe that you need to treat other people better, you'll find a way to do it. If you believe that you need to improve your mind, you'll do it.

Otherwise we're Jeremiah 17.9, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can comprehend it? Who can know it? And we are deceiving our own selves. It isn't what we tell ourselves is true.

It's what manifests itself in our life that is true when it comes to our attitude. You can say all kinds of things, but it's what you do that proves out whether it is a self-deception. We don't want to be deceiving ourselves.

Jesus is the way and Jesus is the life, but what's at the center of those three things? Jesus is the truth. He told his disciples, you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. That's if we have his word and we keep it, we live by it, live in its light.

If his word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path and we choose that path and we walk it, then the reality begins to take place now and Christ is not divided. Paul says, I am very disappointed to hear that there are schisms among you. Christ should not be divided, but he is.

He says, I hear there are schisms. So these who are allegedly all of Christ, they are divided and it's their own doing and they should not be. God didn't divide them.

If God seems far away, who moved? Well if you're separated from other believers, who did the separating? Now if somebody else wants to look at you askance and go their own way, that's why Paul says in another place, to the extent that it is up to you, live peaceably with all. It may

not be up to you and if somebody else chooses to make an issue and divide, it's on them. They can stand at the judgment and explain it.

We should not be the agents of division. Christ is not divided is the proper answer. Was Paul crucified for you? No.

These are a series of no answers. This is reverse salesmanship. You're supposed to get everybody to say yes, yes, yes.

Here Paul says, is Christ divided? Crowd says no. Even on the cross he was not divided. Sacrifices in the Old Testament picture were divided.

Look at Elijah on Mount Carmel. He takes the ox and it says he divided it and placed it on the altar. Christ is not divided.

Paul was not crucified for you. You were not baptized in the name of Paul. I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.

He does not say I'm thankful I didn't baptize any of you because nobody should be doing baptisms. He says I'm thankful I didn't baptize you, lest anybody should seize on that as a basis for dividing. The few people that he did personally baptize were very early in his career in Corinthians.

We know from other places that Stephanus and Crispus and Gaius were likely some of the first converts in Corinth. At that time the group was small. When somebody came to Christ, Paul baptized them.

Very soon after that, as soon as he had a few good helpers, Paul said my job is not to stop preaching so that I can baptize. What if he preaches to a group and a hundred people come forward? Are they going to line up and Paul is going to spend all day dunking them one after the other? He says look, that's not my job. Christ did not commission me to baptize.

He commissioned me to preach. Look at verse 17. Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

So he's now going to transition into this not with wisdom of words idea because he's going to circle back around to this idea you are dividing over the words. It's one thing to say Apollos, Cephas, Paul, Christ, but why would those be a basis for division? Well, Apollos' presentation of the message is going to be different than Paul's presentation which is different than Peter's presentation which might be different than quotes of the Lord Jesus himself that are circulating from the early gospel accounts. So it's the words and he says you're focusing on the words that people say and identifying with the messenger who speaks that message, that particular flavor of message or take on the message and you're losing the cross of Christ.

The cross of Christ is made of none effect. Now, are there differences in the way Paul preaches, Apollos preaches, Peter preaches and even the Lord Jesus spoke? Remember, Jesus is not even in the church age. He's teaching in the age of Israel.

His audience is Israel. He is calling them to Old Testament account, right? So, you have to be careful about just taking the Lord Jesus' teaching out of its context and trying to apply it in the church age because it's a different time and a different message with a different purpose to a different audience in a different dispensation. And the baptism of John, by the way, was in a different dispensation and had a different purpose as we'll shortly see.

So that's why he says not with wisdom of words lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. Is Christ divided? No. Were you baptized in the name of Paul? No.

What's the issue? What unites all of us? It's the cross of Christ. It's the testimony of Christ. It is the message of Jesus Christ.

Focus on that and you won't have schisms. You can have differences of opinion. You can feel free to gather in different groups that have a different ethos, a different emphasis, a different focus, different understandings, different practices.

Nobody's going to be 100% right. As long as the cross of Christ is in there somewhere, nobody's going to be 100% wrong. Unless you say Jesus is not the Son of God and He didn't really die and it's just one big happy social club, somewhere in there is the cross of Christ.

If you're Christian at all, you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you're saved. That's the cross, right? So he says, don't let that be made of no effect. Well, what about baptism, water baptism? I pulled up an old interview with Dave Hunt.

Many of you are familiar with his books, *Escaping to the Light* and a lot of others that he wrote. He had a newsletter for years called the Berean Call. On the Berean Call website, there's an interview with him talking not about this passage, but about the statement, which intrigued me, of John the Baptist.

Because in the New Testament, your first introduction to water baptism is John the Baptizer, right? And what does he say about baptism? He says, I baptize you with water, but there's one coming after me who is greater than me, I'm not worthy to touch his shoe. He will baptize you, how? With the Holy Spirit and with fire. Right? One coming after me greater than me.

So, somebody named Tom is interviewing Dave here on the Berean Call. And the question is, and I think the name of the article is, how can Jesus baptize with fire? What is the baptism of fire? Seems a little bit peripheral here, but I'll do the Perry thing, tie it all up. So, what do we have, and I'm just going to follow this because it's a convenient summary.

And he goes to the same issue that we've already addressed. When it says, baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire, is it in, by, or with? Again, it's the dative, locative, or instrumental.

You've got the preposition n-e-n, and you either get that explicit with the preposition or implicit in the case of your object.

Is it in, by, or with? And so he addresses that, and it says in Acts chapter 1, verse 4, Jesus is talking to the disciples. Remember Acts 1, this is just before the ascension, in Acts 1-8-12. He says, you'll be witnesses unto me, Jerusalem, Judea, Acts 1-8.

And by 1-12, Jesus has ascended into heaven, right? Well, this is Acts 1-4. Flip over there a few pages back, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians. What does Jesus say? Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up, after he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen, to whom he also presented himself alive after his suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

He presented himself alive to them by many infallible proofs. Many infallible proofs. He presented himself over the course of forty days, right? Don't forget that.

We're coming back to it. And being assembled together with them, he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, you have heard from me. For John truly baptized with water.

In, by, or with? What would you say? Jesus says, John truly, truly baptized. How would you translate in here? In water? By water? With water? It's kind of all of them, isn't it? It was certainly in. He was standing in the Jordan, dunking people.

He wasn't out there effusing them, or sprinkling water from the Sea of Galilee. He's in the Jordan, and he is baptizing them in the water. They are baptized by means of the water.

Without the water, you've got no baptism. And they're baptized with water. So it's kind of a Venn diagram.

They all kind of meet in the middle, and there's areas where you could say, well, they didn't take the water out of the river. They had to be in it in order to be baptized by it or with it. Well, that conditions the same exact construction in the rest of the sentence.

John truly baptized in, by, and with water. But you shall be baptized in, by, and with the Holy Spirit. Not many days from now.

In, by, and with the Holy Spirit. What is the first thing that these disciples, Peter, Andrew, James, and John, heard on the banks of the Jordan from John the Baptist before they ever met the Lord? There's one coming after me, mightier than me. I baptize with water, right? In, by, and with water.

He will baptize in, by, and with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Right? Jesus doesn't say you're going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He says you're going to be baptized with

the Holy Spirit.

Not many days hence. Go to Acts chapter 2. When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Then there appeared to them divided tongues as of fire, and one sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues. We'll get to the tongues part when we get a little bit further in the letter of 1 Corinthians. But, this is what Jesus talked about in Acts 1, 4 and 5. Right? Not many days hence.

You will be baptized. So this coming of the Holy Spirit upon them as though they were tongues of fire. And notice it says divided because it's one fire.

If you ever see this depicted, it's like little torches all come down, little candle flames come down and hit each one of them. It's one big bonfire that descends and just before it gets to head height, it divides and hits each head. But it's one fire.

That's why it says, There appeared to them divided tongues as of fire. Meaning it comes from a common source. You can't divide something that's not one.

Right? So, divided tongues. If anybody is going to depict this graphically, it needs to be tongues. Your tongue comes from something to which it is connected.

Right? And if somehow you could have multiple tongues, they would all come from a common source. So it comes down and then it's lightning bolts or flames of fire shooting out from a common big ball of flame. Ball of fire.

So, that's the baptism of the Spirit. Now, why would John the Baptist say, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire? Let me ask you this. Holy Spirit, visible or invisible? Everybody that says he's visible, raise your hand.

No hands. He's invisible. Fire, invisible or visible? Anybody that thinks fire is invisible, raise your hand.

It's anonymous. It's unanimous. Spirit is invisible.

Fire is visible. So, if you want to manifest the presence of God in some fashion, fire is a good way to do it. It speaks of judgment.

It speaks of absolute righteousness. It is going to incinerate anything that cannot survive fire. Fire is visible.

Spirit is invisible. So, if you want to denote the presence of the Spirit, there are ways of doing it. When Jesus is baptized and He comes up out of the water, does fire come down from heaven and land on His head? So, here's my question.

Jesus gets baptized and the Spirit of God descends like what? A dove. Here, the Spirit of God descends and it's a fire. Why is it not the other way around? Why doesn't fire come down from heaven and land on Jesus' head? Why don't doves come down? It's the opposite of a wedding where they let all the doves loose and it's a big happy scene.

Here, why isn't there just a big flock of doves that come down? Jesus said, I'm going away, but I will send you another comforter. He will lead you into all truth. And what else will He do? He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

Now, does the Lord Jesus need any conviction of sin and righteousness and judgment? He is the judge. He is the standard of righteousness. So, the Holy Spirit coming upon His humanity is a dove, which is the universal symbol of peace.

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Peace. There is peace between God and the Lord Jesus because He is absolute righteousness.

There is no need for judgment on the Lord Jesus at the beginning of His ministry. He is going to bear the judgment of us all at the end. When the Holy Spirit comes through the behest of the Lord Jesus, that's going to be a refining fire.

Some things will survive and some won't. So, it descends like tongues of fire. There is now going to be, like Jesus said, I've come not to bring peace, but a sword, and it's going to divide.

If you're on the survive the fire side, because God has, through Christ, accepted His judgment on your behalf, now you will have grace and peace. But that's after the fire. So, that's baptism there.

Flip a few pages forward to Acts chapter 10, verse 44. Peter meets Cornelius. Peter preaches in Cornelius' household.

Remember that? They're all Gentiles. Peter was commissioned to preach to the Jews, to the circumcision. But he preaches here, and while, verse 44, while Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. He was speaking these words. Testimony of Christ was confirmed with all wisdom and utterance, just like Paul talks about to the Corinthians.

And the Holy Spirit fell. Then he says, in verse 47, Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we? And he, Peter, commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord, and they asked him to stay a few days. So, they get the baptism of the Spirit, and then Peter says, now that they have received the Spirit, which is the baptism of the Spirit, Jesus defined it that way in Acts chapter 1, you'll receive the baptism of the Spirit not many days, hence the Spirit descended on them, they spoke in tongues.

Same thing happens here. And Peter says, in recognition of this Spirit baptism, should these not be water baptized? Can anybody say they shouldn't be water baptized? And so they do. So, how many baptisms for the Cornelius household? There are two.

Which one's first? Baptism of the Spirit. Peter says, seeing they've gotten the Spirit baptism, can anybody forbid water baptism? And then they dunk them. Clear, right? So, is this going to be the pattern for the church age? Should we recognize and have someone affirm that they are saved, and that they've received this baptism of the Spirit, and then should we have them baptized? This is the Baptist view.

I grew up in a Baptist church. My family's been Baptist for 200 years that I know of. So, should this be the model? Should all churches, once they ascertain that someone is truly saved, to the best of their ability, see to it that they get baptized in water? Well, let me divide this into a couple of parts.

First of all, there are churches who say, if you're going to join our church, we need to see you baptized or have some letter that says somebody else saw you get baptized. This is most of your Baptist churches, Southern Baptist churches in particular. There's a letter that says, on such and such a date, Sam was baptized, so let him in.

He's qualified to join your fellowship. On the model of Acts in particular, we see that water baptism is not associated with local church membership. The household of Cornelius doesn't turn into a church.

Peter says, as a testimony to what has just happened with the invisible Spirit, let's do a visible baptism and explain what just happened. But it is not anywhere made a condition of church membership. In fact, Paul argues against that in Corinth.

He says, look, I founded your church. I evangelized all you people, but I'm glad I baptized practically none. Now, he doesn't say that baptism is not important.

He doesn't say that it wasn't practiced. He says, I didn't do it. I'm the preacher, and as soon as I got enough guys, other guys did the baptizing.

And that makes it clear that this is a sign or a signification of something that has happened that is in the invisible realm. I'm not turning you into Paulites or Paulines. He says, lest anybody should say I baptized in my own name, lest I'm starting a personality cult of Paul.

I'm glad that nobody can say, well, I'm better than you because Paul baptized me. You just got baptized by a lackey. I got baptized by the apostle himself.

In some ways, people say, well, you're not really baptized unless you're baptized in the Jordan. They go all the way over to Israel and somebody dunks them in the Jordan. Now I'm really baptized.

Paul says, you get no credit for who, where, how you're baptized. The Ethiopian eunuch got dunked in some unknown pool in the desert by Philip. Nobody even saw it.

He didn't have a letter to transfer to any church, and yet somehow he got water baptized by Philip. So, we've seen so far that there are two kinds of New Testament baptisms. One is water baptism, and one is spirit baptism.

It's obvious, right? John makes that clear before Jesus even arrives on the scene. I baptize with water. Now, John chapter 1, verse 29.

Turn back to John, right before Acts. John chapter 1. This is John, chapter 1, verse 29. The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

This is he of whom I said, After me comes a man who is preferred before me. He was before me. He existed before me.

Now remember, who was born first? You remember the whole Elizabeth baby leaping in the womb, and Mary's just pregnant, and John's born first. I did not know him, but that he should be revealed to Israel. Therefore, I came baptizing with water.

Aha! How many times does anybody ever take you to this verse? Read it again. After me comes a man who is preferred before me. He existed before me.

Even though I'm six months older than him, he existed before me. I did not know him, but in order that he should be revealed to Israel, therefore, I came baptizing with water. What is the purpose of John's water baptism? Read the verse.

Why is John baptizing with water? In order that Israel will recognize the Messiah. He is the forerunner. He is Elijah.

John's baptism in the Jordan River has as its purpose to call Israel's attention to their Messiah. Only. That's all it says.

This is why I came baptizing, John says. So that Israel will recognize the Messiah. John bore witness saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like what? Like a dove.

And remained upon him. I did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. You're baptizing with water, Israel.

You're going to identify the guy and tell them, here's the Messiah. He will baptize with the Spirit. Notice there's no mention of fire here.

He will baptize with the Spirit. So, clearly, two kinds of baptism. John understood the difference.

What is the purpose of John's water baptism? To make sure Israel recognizes the Christ, the Messiah. And what does John say about him? Once you see him and know him, he's got a baptism of his own. What is his baptism? Is it with water and the Spirit? Water and the Spirit and fire? Earth, wind, and fire? What is his baptism? With the Spirit.

The baptism of the Lord Jesus is with the Spirit. John's baptism is with water. John's work, message, and ministry are anticipating with physical means, much as the entire Old Testament age is a physical representation of what will become a spiritual reality.

You've got physical tables of the law. Now you've got the commands of God written in your heart. You have physical Israel.

Now you've got a spiritual people of God. You've got a nation under God here. You've got a church under the Lord Jesus later.

You've got the blood of goats and bulls. You have the now invisible work of Christ. The blood of goats and bulls can never take away sin.

Boats and gulls? Goats and bulls can never take away sin. The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. Right? Physical, spiritual.

Water, Spirit. Clear so far? Ephesians chapter 3, verse 1. For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles, if indeed you've heard of the dispensation of God's grace, verse 3, by revelation was made known to me the mystery, verse 5, in other generations it was not made known to the sons of men. Now, he does not speak specifically about baptism here.

What does he say? In other generations it was not made known, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets, how? In the Spirit. That's verse 5. Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, fellow partakers of the promise of Christ Jesus through the gospel of which I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace given to me according to the working of His power. Another statement of what we just saw in Corinthians chapter 1. Now look.

To me, the least of all saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light the dispensation of the mystery which for ages had been hidden in God who created all things, so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be known. They got the testimony of Christ through utterance and wisdom in Corinth, right? Same thing he says here. Now, what does that mean for us? Turn back a page or two to Galatians chapter 2, verse 7. He's talking about going up by revelation to Jerusalem.

In Galatians 2, verse 6, God shows no personal favoritism. Those who seemed to be something added nothing to me. But on the contrary, when they saw, this is Galatians 2, verse 7, they saw the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me.

The gospel to the uncircumcised had been committed to me just as the gospel for the

circumcised was committed to Peter. The gospel to Israel committed to Peter, to the circumcised. He who works effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised, he says it again, also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles, the uncircumcised.

Circumcision or uncircumcision is not anything anymore. You could not be a part of Israel unless you were circumcised. You could not be a part of the anticipation of the Messiah in John the Baptist day until you were baptized.

It was a physical anticipation, a physical sign and seal. So, what does this mean? Water baptism was introduced as a means of introducing Christ to Israel, the Messiah to Israel. That's why John came baptizing with water.

That's where water baptism really came from. There's other examples of proselytes to Judaism going through the mikvah and so on. But in terms of the Bible, it says nothing about that.

That was some sort of a human tradition. The Bible never says go through the mikvah. It doesn't say build a mikvah.

It doesn't say come in one side and come out the other. Water baptism, biblically speaking, is introduced by John the Baptist. God sent him to do water baptism and to anticipate one coming who is mightier, who will baptize with the Spirit.

So, water baptism is a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Right? That's what it says. Repent so that your sins are forgiven, John preaches.

Lest you have any question about that, look at Mark 1. Probably the earliest of the Gospels, reflecting the preaching of Peter. Mark 1.4, John came baptizing in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Does the baptism get the sins taken care of? Or does the repentance? What do you think? Washing the body is not going to take away sin. Change of mind, that's going to qualify one for the forgiveness of sins. So, this baptism is a teaching tool talking about what repentance will do.

If you change your mind away from dead life in the world and life and faith in God, it is as though you have died to the old attitude and been raised to the new attitude. So, it is a baptism that anticipates Christ, and it is a baptism that teaches the effect of repentance. What God will do based on your change of mind, He will forgive your sins.

Why will you die, O house of Israel? I hold out my hands all day long, but you're stiff-necked and disobedient. If you would change your mind, your sins would be forgiven you. Baptism.

You could have a whole new life and relationship with God. Water baptism. So, Acts chapter 13, verse 23.

Turn to it, please. Acts 13. This is Paul preaching.

In verse 16, they're in Antioch of Pisidia. Verse 16, Paul stood up in motion with his hands and said, Men of Israel, you who fear God, listen. Who's the audience? The circumcised.

Peter is sent to the circumcised, but sometimes he preaches to Gentiles, like Cornelius and his household. Paul is sent to the uncircumcised, but sometimes he preaches to Israel, as he does here. Men of Israel, you who fear God, listen.

The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, etc. Look at verse 23, talking about David. From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior, Yeshua, Jesus.

After John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. Sums up the two things we've seen about water baptism in John's hands, right? To Israel, for Israel, about Israel, Israel's Messiah. Repentance of sin is necessary for the Messiah to bring in the kingdom, to be the king.

They've got to change their mind. They didn't. That's why there's no kingdom there, yet.

As John was finishing his course, he said, Who do you think I am? I am not he. One comes after me, the sandals I lose. I'm not worthy to lose.

Paul goes on to preach, that's Jesus. Men of Israel, you should have seen Him. John told you He was coming, right? Go back to Ephesians chapter 1. Give a little exercise in your New Testament here.

Acts, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians. Water doesn't wash away sins, Ephesians 1, 7 and 8. In Him we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. One of the gifts we have is forgiveness of sin, redemption, through His blood, which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and understanding.

Prudence, right? The blood of Christ. So what happens once the church comes in? Turn over a few pages to Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians 4, this is our point this morning. I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, Ephesians 4, beseech you, I plead with you, walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.

Have we seen anything about calling in 1 Corinthians 1? Call to be saints. Paul is called to be an apostle. You are called to be united.

Loneliness, gentleness, long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. Grace to you and peace. The peace should unite you.

Schisms are not peace. There's what? One body and one Spirit. Everybody good so far? Body of Christ is not, is Christ divided? There's one body.

Not multiple churches of Christ. In the universal sense there's one. One body and one Spirit just as you were called in one hope of your calling.

He mentioned calling three times in chapter 1 of 1 Corinthians. One Lord, right? One faith, belief in the testimony of Jesus Christ, and what? One baptism. Not two baptisms, one baptism.

So, if I give you a choice of one baptism out of all the different baptisms you can think of, which one would you pick? What baptism pertains for you and me? You can only have one. I'm Monty Hall. Behind door number one, you've got water baptism.

Behind door number two, you've got church water baptism. Door number one is John's baptism in the Jordan. Door number two is baptism in a baptistry in a church.

Door number three is one Spirit, one baptism, the Spirit baptism that comes with, by, and through the Lord Jesus. Pick your door. Are you Israel? Door number one is off the table.

So, if there's one baptism, is it door number two or door number three? It is door number three. It is Spirit baptism. Now, what happened when Spirit baptism hit in the earliest days of the church? Miraculous signs.

Visible manifestations of the invisible thing that had just happened. How did they know that the Spirit had descended on them in the household of Cornelius? How did they know the Spirit had descended on them in Acts chapter 2? How did the Ethiopian eunuch know that he was regenerate and that God had entered him into the universal body of Christ prior to there being any epistles of Paul in existence? How did he know? There was a visible sign, a visible teaching tool, a visible manifestation. How come everybody that gets saved doesn't have a tongue of fire come out of the ceiling and hit them in the head? How come everybody doesn't immediately launch into tongues at the point of their salvation so that they know they're saved? So that they know they've got the presence, power, witness, baptism of the Holy Spirit? Why doesn't that happen anymore? Why do things typically not happen? One of two things.

Either somebody failed or there's no need. Right? No need. Why do we not still have signed gifts, invisible manifestations, visible outward tokens? Not needed.

That which is complete has come. That which was in part is done away. Why is there no longer a requirement or a biblical foundation really to ensure that everybody who comes to faith in Christ gets dunked in some pool of water? Water baptism should be done by immersion when it's done.

There's no biblical example of anybody not being immersed when they got baptized. There's no Greek example of baptizo not meaning to stick into a big body of water. Nothing about sprinkling, nothing about effusing, nothing about spraying it in a fog.

It's immersion. But why is there no need for speaking in tongues? Why is there no need for signed gifts? Why is there no need for water baptism as a necessity? That which is complete has

come. We have the full-orbed revelation of scripture.

Now, if you went into an African village that had never been touched by civilization and you needed a teaching tool and you didn't yet have scriptures in their language, would water baptism be a wonderful ritual to use in the same way it was used in the first century? Sure. I probably would. For all of the same reasons it was done in the early church.

Are there occasions where it might be an appropriate thing to do? Why not? If it helps illustrate the message, if you don't have scripture to which you can point and there's not a convenient Bible, why not? Is it central? Does the Apostle Paul ever tell any church in Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, the three pastoral epistles, does he ever tell those pastors, be sure your converts get water baptized? Does he ever tell the church? Does he ever commend them for the number of baptisms they've had? Does he ever talk about, make sure you've got a baptistry or a nearby body of water? All of the examples of water baptism are early. And Paul in 1 Corinthians says, I'm glad that we're not making an issue out of water baptism, who does it, where it's done, anymore, because the gospel has now been fully revealed and it is being preached. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

If you're going to talk about baptism, why doesn't he say there are two? If he believes water baptism is valid and is an ordinance of the church, how can he say one baptism? Is he saying water baptism is the one baptism? What happened to, when he comes he will baptize you with the Spirit, the Lord Jesus. Jesus' baptism is off and John the Baptist's baptism is back, for its stated purposes. There's one baptism, you've got to pick.

How many gods are there? There's one God and Father. There are three members of the corporation, the Father, Son and Spirit, but he says there's one God and Father of us all. It's not multiple Fathers, one.

How many Lords are there? One. How many Spirits are there? One. How many baptisms are there? One.

It's Scripture. So, that's why Paul can say. If it was an ordinance, do you think Paul would ever say, I'm glad I didn't baptize, Christ didn't send me to baptize? If it's an essential part of the process of conversion and entrance into the church, couldn't Paul find something else to say? Why does he even bring up baptism? I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Cephas.

He says you're dividing over whether or not you got baptized and by who. And he says that's not the issue. So, this is why our church does not encourage.

I don't discourage. It is a choice, like so many other things in the body of Christ. If you would like to be water baptized, I will gladly go to the nearest large body of water, hopefully not too cold, and we'll do it.

It's a wonderful ritual. It is a tremendous thing. And certainly served a great purpose, just as

the gift of tongues was a wonderful thing.

We can't legitimately still speak in tongues. We can still legitimately water baptize. It is not what you do, it is why you do it.

What is in your heart. If you would like to publicly demonstrate that you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, especially those who freshly come to faith in Christ, and you want to be water baptized, there's not a thing in the world wrong with it. It's fine.

Let's do it. But to describe it as a requirement and an ordinance, and I've heard preachers say, if you don't want to be water baptized, you're probably not saved. Because it's a natural instinct.

And if you're saved, you're just going to want to get into the water. It's nonsense. I'm here to tell you it's nonsense.

Nothing wrong with it. If you want to refrain from eating meat offered to idols, you're welcome to do so. If you want to eat meat offered to idols, you're welcome to do so.

What's in your heart when you do it? You can drink wine in moderation. You can abstain from wine. It's up to you.

It's why you do it. If you're drinking wine because you really need to escape, that's wrong. If you drink it because it doeth good for your bad stomach, or it helps you with its antioxidants, if you drink the dark red stuff, if you do it in moderation, if it is a way for you to enjoy the peace of God, and it does not cause anyone else to stumble, not a thing in the world wrong with it.

Nothing wrong with alcohol in moderation. What does Scripture say? Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess. Anything you do to excess.

Listen, if you eat too many bananas, if you get some kind of a thing for bananas, you're wrong. If you get some kind of a thing for anything, it can be a television program, you can be a glutton for TV, you can be a glutton for video, you can be a glutton for the Internet, you can be a glutton for some kind of social media. There's gluttony of all different forms, and people who stick their elbows out and say, well, lips that touch liquor will never touch mine, but they're going to excess in some other area, are drunk with something.

What's in your heart? Many wonderful God-fearing people have really been motivated. Many of them are in the Baptist church, and they wanted to be baptized, and it was a great experience for them and for all the rest of the church. Not a thing in the world wrong with it.

Go with God. I would never contend, I will never divide over the issue of water baptism. If people want to water baptize, go with God.

Enjoy it. It's wonderful. Nothing wrong with it.

Do I feel personally persuaded that I'm a better Christian because when I was seven years old,

somebody dunked me out in California in a little thing of water? No. Do I think you're better because you have or have not been water baptized? It is nothing to contend over, it is nothing to divide over, but it is nothing to worry about. If you haven't been baptized and you don't feel any particular reason why it ought to be done, you've been saved.

I had a lady that was in her seventies and had in some kind of way never been water baptized. She said, this whole thing of water baptism, I just wonder, am I not following the Lord in baptism and so on? I called her name and said, what does your heart tell you? Are you comfortable and at peace in your relationship with God and your relationship with your fellow believers? She said, oh absolutely. I said, well then don't worry about it.

What's the theme of chapter one? He's not preaching on baptism, but he spends four verses talking about it. And what does he say? It's really important or it's not important at all? Nothing is important enough to split the body. Nothing is important enough to start saying, I am of baptism or no baptism.

I am of those who eat meat offered to idols or those who don't. I am of those who drink wine or those who don't. I am of those who partake in these non-essential things.

It's not an essential, it's not a requirement, but people who do it and want to do it, as long as they are doing it with the right heart and not dividing over it, you can't join our group until we see you dunked or get a letter saying somebody else did. Now they're wrong. That is wrong.

Communion. We'll talk about that at some point. It's coming up in our book.

But to exclude someone, we have closed communion. Unless you're a member of our church, unless we've seen you baptized or have a letter saying somebody else did, you can't partake. I don't care what your stance is on communion.

If you divide and say some believers can't come in and participate over that, it's wrong. Schism is wrong within the body. There should be no schism.

Pick your doctrine. If you let it become a schism, you're wrong. And you need to repent and get right.

All things are ours in Christ. We have an invisible citizenship. We have an invisible baptism.

We have an invisible Lord, an invisible faith, an invisible God and Father of us all, a largely invisible future. But they are still real. So that's our coverage in a nutshell on water baptism.

We'll remember that it is a token. We're not just talking about baptism. We're talking about anything that can be raised as an issue to cause harsh debate within the body.

One thing to discern, something else to judge. It's one thing to go your own way because of what you believe. It's something else to call names over it and disparage somebody because what they believe from the Word of God is different than you.

It's not our place. The great shepherd can handle the under-shepherds and the sheep and those other flocks. We have our hands full trying to make sure that our heart is right, that we are fully committed to serving.

We've seen that in our Zechariah study, haven't we? God is all about looking on the heart. So we need to examine ourselves and see if we are in the faith. That's as much as we're called to do.

Let's close here in prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the wonderful freedom we have in the Lord Jesus.

Thank You that we have been forgiven much and we are able to forgive each other of much. And to the extent that we forgive each other, overlook each other's faults, each other's shortcomings, we ourselves are acceptable in Your sight. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will do His convicting work in our souls and our hearts, help us to see our hidden faults, just as David prays in Psalm 95, show me my secret faults, those things that are not apparent to me that I would rather not admit, so that we can be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish, a sacrifice holy and acceptable in Your sight as we take up our cross and follow the Lord Jesus in this life so that we can serve Him and through Him serve You now and in the ages to come.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.