

## Meaning of Baptism

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- What about baptism?
- What does it mean?
- Why do we do it?
- What is the significance of it for each individual?

Acts 2:38 tells us some of the purpose we saw earlier, and we'll cover that again. When God gave the Holy Spirit to the apostles, to preach in power on that Day of Pentecost, when the Church began, Peter gave a very powerful sermon showing the meaning and the purpose of the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That was meant—and God inspired it to be—to bring them to repentance. We find this right here: Repentance begins with each individual internally, in their own heart and mind.

Acts 2:37: “Now after hearing *this...*” that their sins crucified Christ. And if Christ died for the sins of the whole world, that means that every individual has his or her part in the crucifixion of Christ.

“...they were cut to the heart; and they said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for *the* remission of sins, and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all those who are afar off, **as many as the Lord our God may call**’” (vs 37-39). Very important!

It's not just an initiation. It is not just a prerequisite to belong to a church organization. *It is a result of God calling an individual!* God *calls* in different ways.

- He calls through preaching
- He calls through experience

a person goes through a terrible experience and they start seeking God.

- He calls through exposure to other Christians

Who show them the way of God, explain the Word of God. That's all part of it. Many different ways, but God is the One Who *calls!*

Let's come back to John 6, and in this *calling* it really is a very profound calling. Is not human life itself a very profound thing? And yet, so common. Billions! Everybody values human life. You're sad when someone dies, and we're all sad when we see what happened with a mother who drowned five of her own children, or someone is

murdered, or a plane blows up, a ship sinks, or whatever. *We value human life!*

Now let's talk about eternal life. God is calling you to eternal life—to *share in the existence of God*. That's why human beings are made in the image of God—male and female. That's why Jesus came, born of the virgin Mary, being completely human, so that we can become as He is. Since, at this time, God is not offering it to the whole world, God has to call (Acts 2). How does call? What is it that God used in your life? I can look back and see what God used in my life, and there will be something or someone or some thing that God used to begin to call you. He began to intervene in your life.

John 6:44: “No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him...” Who is God the Father? *He is the Sovereign of the universe!* Think about it: everyone that the Lord God shall call, God the Father, the Sovereign of the universe, has reached down and through His Spirit and through something in your life and:

- has given you a desire to seek Him
- has given you something that you desire to understand His Word
- has drawn you so you want to know what is the purpose of life
  - ✓ Why am I here?
  - ✓ Why am I born?
  - ✓ Why am I so rotten and miserable?
  - ✓ Why are human beings so evil, including me?

The Sovereign of the universe, God the Father, is the One Who draws! Isn't that something? That's very humbling in itself, and it takes a lot of thinking, living and learning, and of God's Spirit to fully appreciate that. You can appreciate it to start with, but you grow in this.

“...and I will raise him up at the last day.... [*Be raised from the dead!* That's profound! We've all attended funerals.

Here's something else that happens: ...It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God’....” (vs 44-45). God is teaching you, one way or the other:

- through experience
- through leading you with His Spirit
- through studying His Word
- through praying to Him

“...Therefore, everyone who has heard... [that is responds to this *drawing* and *calling*] ...from the Father, and has learned... [has been taught of the Father—these things that are to lead him to repentance] ...comes to Me” (v 45). So, it’s really quite a thing that happens.

God is the One Who does that! God is not way off somewhere in the universe, sitting up there with His arms folded just waiting for the end to come. He is actively involved in our lives. Christ is involved in our lives. But because it’s such a profound thing and it’s not just an ordinary occurrence—and God is not calling everyone at this time—therefore, you are required to enter into a covenant with Him. ***Whenever God deals with His people He enters into a covenant!*** Baptism is a covenant. Jesus said it is the New Covenant. Jesus being our Savior then, the One Who died for our sins and being the Author of the New Covenant, was telling this to His disciples.

He said, v 51: “I am the living bread, which came down from heaven... [He contrasts that just to the bread that people eat to sustain their physical lives.] (This bread is unusual because it says): ...if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is even My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

The Catholics believe that in the little wafer that the priest commands God to come into actually turns into the flesh and blood of Christ. That is not true. It is symbolic. But the meaning behind it is profound.

“...which I will give for the life of the world.’ Because of this, the Jews were arguing with one another, saying, ‘How is He able to give us *His* flesh to eat?’ Therefore, Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves.’” (vs 51-53).

Now then, you either have life or you don’t have life. You’ll either have the Holy Spirit or you won’t have the Holy Spirit. It’s impossible unless you enter into that New Covenant with Christ, and He tells us what that New Covenant is, as symbolized by the Passover and the partaking of the bread and the wine.

Verse 54: “The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day; for My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood is dwelling in Me, and I in him.... [and that’s the end result of it] ...***As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father; so also the one who eats Me shall live by Me***” (vs 54-57). So, the covenant is that ***you agree to live by***

***Jesus Christ—with His Spirit in you***, and He makes it all possible. God the Father gives His Spirit.

Let’s see how He does this as He begins to call people. Something happens; something different happens to you, which then we can say is the working of God the Father through the Holy Spirit.

This covenant is based upon this right here, John 14:15: “**If you love Me, keep the commandments**—namely, My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that it may be with you throughout the age; *even* the Spirit of the Truth, which the world cannot receive because it perceives it not, nor knows it; but you know it because it dwells with you, and shall be **within** you” (vs 15-17).

The way that God the Father draws someone is that He uses the power of His Holy Spirit:

- to begin to work in that person’s life
- to begin to work in that person’s mind
- to begin to work with that person to begin to see the futility of human life

It may be one day, as some people have—maybe you’ve been a Catholic—you walk in to this cathedral and you think God is not here. If you begin to respond to God, and say, ‘God, where are You?’ ***God will lead you:*** maybe to read the Scriptures, maybe lead you to someone who can explain some Scriptures to you, whatever. But ***God begins to deal with you.*** The Holy Spirit is with you.

After baptism and the laying on of hands, then the Holy Spirit is ***within*** you, ***in*** your mind, and this constitutes the begetting of the Holy Spirit. This also is the *circumcision of the heart*, because now you’re on the road to conversion. And just like a begetting of newly begotten child, it’s just a little bit. But you’re to grow in grace and knowledge, grow in the mind of Christ, and that is a process of conversion and overcoming.

If you’re brand new and you hear all of these things and you’re kind of overwhelmed, don’t worry, it’ll come later. What you do is stay with the basic, beginning things. Now then, this process develops in such a way, Jesus explains it here.

Verse 18: “I will not leave you orphans... [the Holy Spirit is to comfort us, to help us, to encourage us] ...I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world shall see Me no longer; but you shall see Me. Because I live, you shall live also. In that day, you shall know that I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you. **The one who has My commandments and is keeping them, that is the one who loves Me;** and the one who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and

will manifest Myself to him. Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, ‘Lord, what has happened that You are about to manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?’” (vs 18-22). The answer is: *by God’s Spirit and by His love!*

The world can’t tell us from any other person in the world—can they? *But God can tell!* God knows whoever belongs to Him because they have the Spirit of God *within* them. God knows who He is calling because He sent the Spirit to draw them.

How He is going to do it so that only those who are being called will be able to respond: Verse 23 “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and **We will come to him and make Our abode with him**” Notice the two parts of the Holy Spirit are from the Father, which is the begetting; and the Spirit of Christ, which is Christ in us. And it says, “...**We will come to him and make Our abode with him**”—which then is *in*. That’s why we have baptism, because not only do you enter into a covenant, but you become a different person. You no longer belong to the world, you belong to Christ, and God the Father and Christ are *in* you.

Here’s the dividing line, v 24: “The one who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word that you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s, Who sent Me”

So, if you hear about the Sabbath and you think, ‘Oh, that’s just for the Jews.’ Then you go your own way. God’s Spirit will withdraw from you and you go right back on into the world without ever being led to the knowledge of baptism and repentance. Or you could do like this one woman when she first heard about the Sabbath, she said: ‘Well, isn’t that what the Bible says?’ *Yes!* And then she begins to respond.

Let’s carry this a little bit further so we can understand what we need to do. As we were discussing between services, there is a little deafness as to whether this should be in the Scriptures or not. But it’s here and it should be and yes, it’s in Byzantine text.

Here’s the command that Jesus gave to apostles, v 19: “Therefore, go *and* make disciples in all nations... [we’re going to teach them] ...baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Why do we have these three things here when in Acts 2 we read that they were baptized in the name of Jesus. One does not contradict the other. They both go together and it goes like this:

- “...baptizing them **into** the name of the

Father...” Why? *Because you receive the begetting of the Holy Spirit from the Father!*

- “...and **of** the Son...” Here the word ‘name’ is not there, but it’s *of the Son* because of the crucifixion and death of Christ to pay for our sins, and His blood which is for the remission of sins.
- “...**of** the Holy Spirit” *because the Holy Spirit is to lead us and guide us as we draw close to God.*

All of this is done in the name of Jesus Christ so they all fit together.

Let’s go a little bit further, v 20: “Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, *even* until the completion of the age” This is a process which is going to continue right on down from the time of Christ, right on down to His return.

Let’s see the meaning of baptism defined even a little bit more. When we are baptized, it is *a formal act of making a covenant with God*. When you make a covenant, you pledge your own death to fulfill it. That’s what Christ did when He prepared for the New Covenant. He pledged His own death. ‘This is My flesh and this is My blood,’ both of the New Covenant.

When you enter into baptism, it’s defined here in Romans 6:1: “What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin... [‘sin is the transgression of the law’—no, you can’t] ...so that grace may abound? **MAY IT NEVER BE!** We who died to sin...” (vs 1-2).

Baptism is a burial. That’s why you go all the way under the water and you have to be called and you have to be knowledgeable of what you’re doing, and you have to have repented of your sins. So therefore, infant baptism is a false baptism. An infant doesn’t know anything. All it knows is that it’s getting sprinkled, you couldn’t even define that. Then they generally cry and weep and wail at the infant baptisms. I saw one baby baptized by the Russian Orthodox, and I didn’t realize it but their infant baptism they go right in the water three times. And boy, those kids are really howling and screaming after the third time.

We died of sin, therefore, we don’t “...live any longer therein?...” (v 2). It doesn’t mean that we don’t sin. We do because we still have a sinful nature and we’re overcoming. But God forgives us again upon repentance, because then we’re under His grace.

Verse 3: “Or are you ignorant that we, as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were

baptized into His death... [this becomes part of the covenant death that you enter into] ...Therefore, we were buried with Him though the baptism into **the death**... [the definite articles are in the Greek: *the* death of Christ and *the* death of the covenant] ...so that, just as Christ was raised from *the* dead by the glory of the Father, in the same way, we also should walk in newness of life” (vs 3-4). Our lives are to change:

- We no longer live to the self, *we live to God!*
- We no longer live to please ourselves, *we live to help and to serve!*
- We no longer live our lives the way that we want to, because now *we've got to go a new way!*

The counterfeit of Protestantism is that ‘you’re born again.’ Well, that’s a misnomer. You’re not born until the resurrection, then you’re changed from flesh to spirit. But we’re to ‘walk in newness of life.’ We see the operation of this explained by the Apostle Paul:

Ephesians 2:1: “Now, you were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you walked in times past...” (vs 1-2). Let’s understand something, because God is calling you out of the world, He is calling you from a world that is filled with sin, cut off from God, having no true understanding of God. They may have some understanding of God. They may understand some parts of the Bible, but having no true, spiritual understanding of God. **He makes you alive!**

“...you were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you walked in times past according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air... [which is Satan the devil] ...the spirit that is now working within the children of disobedience” (vs 1-2). You see the difference here?

Jesus said, ‘If you love Me, you’ll keep My commandments. If you don’t love Me, you won’t keep My commandments.’ When you’re out in the world that ‘spirit that works in the children of disobedience’; that’s everybody.

Verse 3: “Among whom also we all once had our conduct in the lusts of our flesh, doing the things willed by the flesh and by the mind, and were by nature *the* children of wrath, even as the rest of *the world*. But God, Who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us” (vs 3-4). It’s a powerful thing that God the Father does

- to call you
- to love you
- to reveal Himself to you
- to reveal Christ to you.

Verse 5: “Even when we were dead in *our* trespasses, has made *us* alive together with Christ. (*For you have been saved by grace*.)” {see sermon: *Salvation is Creation*} There’s three steps to being saved:

1. you *have been saved* from your sins by baptism
2. you *are being saved* if you continue in the Gospel
3. you *shall be saved* at the resurrection when you are changed from flesh to spirit

Verse 8: “For by grace you have been saved... [from your sins and Satan the devil] ...through faith, and this *especially* is not of your own selves...” You didn’t find God, *God found you*. Not of something you bought or have purchased or a work that you did.

“...it is the gift of God, Not of works, so that no one may boast.... [something different takes place] ...For **we are His workmanship**...” (vs 8-10). We become the workmanship of God the Father, and He is creating us in Jesus Christ.

“...**created in Christ Jesus unto the good works**... [keeping the commandments of God, loving God, loving the brethren] ...that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them” (v 10). Jesus said that we’re to live by every Word of God, and that’s how we’re to walk in them. That is the ‘newness of life’ in which we are to walk.

Here’s a guarantee, Romans 6:5: “For if we have been conjoined together in the likeness of His death, so also shall we be *in the likeness* of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*...” (vs 5-6). Just as Christ entered into the covenant death by crucifixion, symbolically—through the burial of baptism—you are crucified with Him.

“...**that the body of sin might be destroyed**...” (v 6); showing when you have your sins initially forgiven, when you are baptized, then it is a process that that which is within you of your own nature might be destroyed. That’s the process of growing and overcoming.

“...**so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin**.... [there is the key: you don’t serve it; it doesn’t rule over you] ...Because the one who has died *to sin*... [by baptism] ...has been justified from sin” (vs 6-7).

You’re not free of sin. When you start reading Rom. 7 about we do the things that we don’t want to do and so forth, it’s showing how human nature is there. Why does God leave the human nature in there? *For us to overcome!* That’s so we

will appreciate and love and understand that God's way is so much greater. We come to abhor sin!

Let's understand something, too: When you are first brought to repentance, that is an initial thing that God leads you to. But as you grow in your Christian life, as you walk in the way that God wants you to go in, you actually come to deeper repentance as you continue to *walk in the way of God*. You come to a deeper repentance because you begin to love God more, you understand what God is doing, you see that you understand what Christ did for you and all the brethren. Your repentance becomes deeper, like I covered this morning. You come to a point that you understand that ***there is nothing that you didn't receive***. Baptism is a start! It's marvelous that God has done it this way.

Verse 8: "Now, if we died together with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has any dominion over Him. For when He died, He died unto sin once for all; but in that He lives, He lives unto God.... [here is the whole layout of our Christian life from then]: ...In the same way also, you should indeed reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore, do not let sin rule in your mortal body by obeying it in the lusts thereof" (vs 8-12). That's what baptism really is; the old self dies.

This is a conscience decision that we come to. Not only is it spiritual, which it is *because God calls us*. Not only is it emotional, because *you see yourself in your sins*, and it could be very traumatic in some cases. I remember when I knew I was ready for baptism, and I was driving down to Ambassador College, because I was baptized down there. Some of you have been down to Bakersfield, and I was driving down, going out of Bakersfield—there are these big eucalyptus trees on the side—and I was driving my little old 1957 Nash Rambler; little ole two-door car puttin' along. I was listening to the World Tomorrow program, it was talking about baptism and repentance. Tears were coming down my eyes and man, it was really an experience for me, and driving on down and I'd be baptized the next morning. Boy, I could hardly wait to get down there. When I was baptized, I knew I received God's Spirit right then; I knew that, no doubt in my mind whatsoever.

Here's something that you have to do. God does not expect anyone to be perfect in knowledge before you're baptized, because we're to grow in grace and knowledge after we're baptized. But He wants us to enter into the covenant with both eyes and heart and mind wide open.

Which is this—Jesus made it very clear, Luke 14:26: "If anyone comes to Me... [this is called *counting the cost* by the way—*count the cost*] ...and does not hate his father... [to love God more in comparison to] ...and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, and, in addition, his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.... [that means in the Greek, *the strongest impossibility of it becoming so*] ...And whoever does not carry his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple; For which one of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has *sufficient* for its completion?" (vs 26-28).

All of us, before we're baptized, sit down and we count the cost. In each particular life it's a little bit different from the things that you count the cost for. But you're entering into a covenant death with Christ.

- He died for you, *you die for Him!*
- He took the literal death, *you take the spiritual death!*
- You're co-joined in that death—*the covenant death!*

And you signify to God, by this, that you will finish the course. That you will remain true and faithful to God the Father and Jesus Christ in all circumstances, everything in your life, because you have died in Christ. That's why we have *counting the cost*.

He says in another place that you 'take up your cross daily.' Meaning that you may be confronted with problems even on a daily basis. But ***always know that God is there with you***. Never forget that! There's something to understand for all of us. Christ expects you to be faithful in everything you do. Never turn back on Him. Why? *Because in being conjoined into His death, He has committed the same thing to you!*

Notice what Paul says, Hebrews 13:5: "Do not *allow the* love of money to influence your behavior, *but be* satisfied with what you have; for He has said, '**In no way will I ever leave you; no—I will never forsake you in any way.**'" That means regardless of the circumstances in your life.

What happens when you get old and weak? Is God going to leave you? *No! No, He's not going to leave you!* David said, 'When I'm old and gray, forsake me not.' ***God doesn't leave you!*** What happens if you're in a terrible trial, will God leave you? *No! He won't! He's promised He WILL NOT!* That's a guarantee! ***That's from God!*** Do you see that? ***That's from Christ!*** God has committed Himself to you, and you have committed yourself to God in a covenant relationship for eternal life. He wants you to love Him. He wants you to seek Him.

Psalm 23 is talking about perhaps a prophecy of Jesus, but let's understand something here concerning the physical circumstances we may find ourselves in.

(go to the next track)

Whatever the circumstances are that we have been confronted with, and I'll tell you one thing for sure: Has your Christian walk been that which you thought it was going to be? *No!* God knows that. I remember this from William Tyndale's writing—and it's very moving what he wrote. And it says, **"If God bid you go over the sea, He will send a tempest to see if you believe Him or no."**

There will be trials that will come; God doesn't throw them upon you right away. We can have this absolute confidence of God. This is one, when I first heard it as a kid, I wondered why on earth did they ever say it. I could never get past the first verse. I never attended church, and I wasn't in a religious family, but I had an aunt—Aunt Grace—and that's the only thing I knew about grace was my aunt. Whenever I heard this expressed:

Psalm 23:1 "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." I thought, why would anyone say, 'The Lord is my Shepherd' and not want Him? I couldn't figure that out. It means *I shall lack nothing*.

Verse 2: "He makes me to lie down in green pastures..." That's so you're going to be fed spiritually, from His Word.

"...He leads me beside the still waters... [because He will bring peace to you] ...He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness... [those are the good works that we are to walk in] ...for His name's sake" (vs 2-3).

In spite of everything, v 4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me... [because Jesus said, 'I will never, no not ever, leave you or forsake you.'] ...Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies..." (vs 4-5).

Maybe in your own way you'll experience that sometime. I've experienced that! In the presence of my enemies, God allowed me to do *A Harmony of the Gospels*. Though every evangelist within the Church was against me, when it was all said and done, Herbert Armstrong thanked me for it and said, 'I wish more ministers would write books.' And you can only say, 'That's a table prepared in the presence of my enemies.' It does not matter the circumstances that will come upon us, because this *covenant of baptism* that we go through and that we enter into, God is going to guarantee it. He has sealed it with

His blood, with His death—and God cannot lie. He has promised it, so therefore it shall be.

"...You anoint my head with oil... [symbolic of the Holy Spirit] ...my cup runs over" (v 5). There is nothing in the world which can fill you with desire and satisfaction and love than the Spirit of God.

Verse 6: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever." That's what He's called you to. Isn't that a marvelous thing? I tell you what brethren, ***when God reveals His family to this world, they are going to be absolutely dumbfounded***, because all the rich of the world are not going to be there. God does things differently than people do. God takes:

- that which is nothing and rejected
- that which is despised
- that which is least

and through the power of conversion and the resurrection create them into being the sons and daughters of God. That's an awesome thing to be. {see sermon: *From a Speck of Dust to the Son of God*}—that's what God is doing. To the world today, we're nothing. We're down here in a room. No one knows us. They're out there doing whatever they're doing. Yet, ***God is here with us!***

1-Corinthians 1:23<sup>[transcriber's correction]</sup>: "But we proclaim Christ crucified. To *the Jews it is* a cause of offense... [and they haven't gotten over it to this day] ...and to the Greeks *it is* foolishness; but to those who are called—both Jews and Greeks—Christ *is* God's power and God's wisdom" (vs 23-24).

Do you understand that? ***When you receive the Spirit of God, you're receiving part of the power of God!*** Not to enhance your person, as a great important thing, but to give you the strength to overcome human nature, to fight this world and to fight Satan the devil. It's the power of God. 'I will never leave you or forsake you.'

Verse 25: "Because the foolishness of God..." If there be any foolishness of God. With God, I think He's created a few animals that show a little bit of His humor. Try the duckbilled platypus.

"...is ***wiser than men***; and the weakness of God... [God doesn't have any weakness, so this is a play on words] ...is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, that *there are* not many who are wise according to the flesh... [we're not] ...not many who are powerful..." (vs 25-26).

- we're not strong personalities
- we're not rich

- we're not powerful

One of the kings that Paul preached to—I think it was Festus—said, ‘Paul, you persuade me *almost* to become a Christian.’ *It’s hard!*

“...not many who are high-born *among you*.... [or that is of royalty] ...Rather, God has chosen the foolish things of the world so that He might put to shame those who are wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world so that He might put to shame the strong things. And the low-born of the world, and the despised has God chosen—even the things that are counted as nothing—in order that He might bring to nothing the things that are” (vs 26-28).

Remember what we read earlier, that God is going to make the synagogue of Satan come and worship before our feet. Do you know who the synagogue of Satan are? *Those are the rich, establishment people of the world,*

- that control the governments
- that control the money
- that control the corporations
- that control the universities and education

Those big high mucky-mucks of the world, are going to come and worship before the saints of God! *To know that Christ has loved us!* And that’s how He’s going to bring them to nothing.

Verse 29: “**So that no flesh might glory in His presence**.... [we are to glory in God] ...But you are of Him in Christ Jesus, Who was made to us wisdom from God—even righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; so that, as it is written, ‘The one who glories, let him glory in *the Lord*’” (vs 29-31).

As we grow in our Christian understanding, and as we grow in studying the Word of God, and as we use the Spirit of God in our lives, then something else begins to happen. It doesn’t happen all at once. That’s why it is really quite a miracle for new people to come in amongst our midst, because what we generally receive and I generally teach is to those who have been in the Church for years and years, so it’s at a higher level. I understand that there are some things that are difficult to understand when you first come in contact with us. But stick with it, you’ll make it, *because God is able to do it!*

Here is what God is going to do, 1-Corinthians 2:9: “But according as it is written, ‘*The eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*’”

Christ is preparing a special reward and blessing for everyone He calls. Now, you think on

that. It’s going to be as individual and unique as each one of us here in the flesh are individual and unique. Only God can do that, because **He’s God!** You can read books, go to libraries and never understand the plan of God.

You’ve probably heard me mention this, but I remember when I went to Washington, D.C., and I was taken into the Library of Congress—and that’s quite an experience, that’s big building. You walk in there and it’s all marble, and you walk in and here’s this great round room and around it are desks all lined up in different rows—many rows going around. And over the top of it is this huge dome, much like the dome of congress. You look up there and here are all these lights, and you look out there and here are all these desks. You are told that in the Library of Congress that they have almost every book in the world that has been published, and that you can get it from them. You can step over here on the side and they’ve got a little computer screen and they have a keyboard. You want a book, you put it in there, you can get it. They have millions and millions of volumes. And what struck me was, **God has one book! One book!** Which Satan hates and wants to destroy. It has the Word of God. You don’t need the Library of Congress; *you need the Bible.* With that, coupled with His Spirit, then a unique thing happens *because you love God!*

Verse 10: “But **God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit**: for the Spirit searches all things—even the deep things of God.” That’s why you’re to hunger and thirst for the Word of God, ‘for you shall be *filled.*’

Verse 11: “For who among men understands the things of man except *by* the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way also, the things of God no one understands except *by* the Spirit of God.” Whatever you understand about the Bible, thank God for it, because He’s opened your mind to understand it. Isn’t that an amazing thing? *God reveals it!*

Verse 12: “Now, we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that *is* of God, so that we might know the things graciously given to us by God.” When you receive the knowledge, do you get a bill in the mail next month? Credit Corporation of Heaven is sending you a bill for \$500, you better pay or you’ll be cut off with credit. No, *it’s freely given to you.*

That’s why God hates merchandizing of the brethren, merchandizing with religions, like they are in the world. God freely gives it. He gives His Spirit freely. All He requires is **all of you!** That means your whole being given to God. That’s what He requires.

Here's the thing that we actively and consistently do. Think of this; look at it this way: I talked to Jan, and he told me a an experience that he had. He went into the hospital and had a little operation to take out some gall stones, and they just put about three or four holes in there and they go zip-zap, bam-boom and the gall stones are gone. You're generally in there overnight and you get up the next day and you go home. So, it came time for him to go home and he got all dressed, his son came there to get him, and his wife was there, and he was all dressed to go, and all of a sudden he fainted and fell back on the bed and he had a pulmonary blockage in both lungs. It took them five minutes to revive him. He literally came back from the dead. *Yes he did!*

I want you to understand something, when you have an experience like that you love and appreciate things so much better. Now you have a chance to tell those that maybe if you died you wouldn't have an opportunity to say, 'I love you' and 'Thank you' and all of these things.

Likewise, God is doing the same thing with every one of us. When we die the baptismal death and are buried in that grave, we rise out of that grave so that we can walk 'in newness of life' and love God. That's why Christ said here, when He was asked:

Mark 12:28: "...Which is *the* first commandment of all?' Then Jesus answered him, *The first of all the commandments is, "Hear..."*" (vs 28-29). Listen, one of the things you're going to learn is that God expects you to obey His voice. His voice is recorded right here in the Bible.

"...O Israel... [you just put your name there] ...Our one God is *the* Lord, *the* Lord And you shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart... [because you've been raised from the dead, literally, through the operation of baptism] ...and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." This *is the* first commandment" (vs 29-30).

It's the primary thing in your life. That's what 'first' in the Greek means—it's 'protos'—*primary, the first*. We read last night about a church that lost it's first love and they had to repent, because they started doing works of social things instead of loving God.

Verse 31: "And *the* second *is* like this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Christ added a new commandment—didn't He. What was that new commandment? He said, 'Let there be strife among you, and arguments among you.' *NO!* Brethren, may we learn the lesson from that little bit

of cynicism. He said, '***Love one another as I have loved you. And by this shall all know that you are My disciples.***' That's what God wants.

We don't want our church experience to be that there is strife! We don't want it rigidly run like the military. Or like a woman told me recently: 'I got tired of going to church to get spanked.' And I told her this. I said:

- How do you want it with your own children?
- Do you want your own children to only remember that you have spanked them continuously?

or

- Do you not have a much better relationship with them when you love them?
- Isn't that what God wants?

***That's what God wants, brethren! That you love Him and He loves you, and He has the greatest, greatest thing to give you, which is eternal life!*** And it all begins with baptism. That's why it is a covenant unto death.

We'll have a baptism here a little later. But I think it's very important that we all understand it, even those of us who have been baptized for a long time. We need to review it, too. But also understand this, and this is very important: Every year when we partake of the Passover, we have the foot-washing ceremony. The foot-washing becomes very important because this signifies that you have a part in Christ. Understand this: ***those who do the foot-washing are brethren of Christ and they have the Holy Spirit in them!*** View it this way: that Christ in them—or in the one who's washing your feet—is the same as Christ washing your feet. With that then you renew the baptism every year and saying to God, yes, you will live by every Word of God and you will walk in the ways of righteousness.

And then you partake of the bread, which is symbolic of His broken body. Knowing that you have the forgiveness of sin and healing through the promises of Christ. Then you partake of the wine, which is symbolic of the blood of Jesus Christ—the blood of the covenant—and for the remission of your sins, personally, and the remission of sins for all that God forgives. ***It's really a great and wonderful thing, brethren! That's the meaning of baptism!***

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scripture References

- 1) Acts 2:37-39



- 2) John 6:44-45, 51-57
- 3) John 14:15-24
- 4) Matthew 28:19-20
- 5) Romans 6:1-4
- 6) Ephesians 2:1-5, 8-10
- 7) Romans 6:5-12
- 8) Luke 14:26-28
- 9) Hebrews 13:5
- 10) Psalm 23:1-6
- 11) 1 Corinthians 1:23-31
- 12) 1 Corinthians 2:9-12
- 13) Mark 12:28-31

Also referenced:

Sermons:

- *Salvation is Creation*
- *A Speck of Dust to the Son of God*

Book: *A Harmony of the Gospels* by Fred R. Coulter

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