

Meaning of Baptism

Fred R. Coulter – June 1, 2001

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

First of all, let's see Acts 2:38—and that's a basic one. This 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. And that was meant—and God inspired it to be—to bring them to repentance. Now, we find this right here beginning in v 37. Repentance begins with each individual internally, in their own hearts and minds. "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.] ...Now after hearing *this*, 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, mark that.

It's not just an initiation, as we will see. It is not just a prerequisite to belong to a church organization. It is a result of God "calling" an individual. Now God *calls* in different ways. He calls through preaching. He calls through experience—that a person goes through a terrible experience and they start seeking God. He calls through exposure to other Christians, which 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. Now let me ask you a question as we're turning there: Is not human life itself a very profound thing? And yet so common, isn't it? Billions! And everybody values human life, don't you? And you're sad when someone dies, and we're all sad when we see what happened with this mother [who] drowned five of her own children, or someone is murdered, or a plane blows up, or whatever, a ship sinks. And so 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*. Now that's why human beings are made in the image of God—male and female. And that's why

Jesus came, born of the virgin Mary, being completely human, so that we can become as He is. Now since at this time God is not offering it to the whole world, God has to call—as we saw there back in Acts, the second chapter. Now 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. And He began to intervene in your life.

Now here in John 6:44, it says: "No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him..." Which means that—let's ask the question: Who is God the Father? *He is the Sovereign of the universe*, is He not? *Yes, He is*. Now, think about it: "for everyone that the Lord God shall call," God the Father, the Sovereign of the universe, has reached down and through His Spirit and through some thing in your life,

- 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?
 - And 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? Now that's very humbling in itself, and it takes a lot of thinking and 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!* Now that's profound, isn't it? We've all attended funerals, haven't we? *Yes, we have*. Now here's something else that happens] ...It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God'.... [Now 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 is to lead him to repentance] ...comes to Me" (vs 44-45). So it's really quite a thing that happens, isn't it? God is the One Who does that. Because 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. And 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.*** And baptism is a covenant. Jesus said it is the New Covenant. Now Jesus being our Savior then, the One Who died for our sins and being the Author of the New Covenant, He was telling this to His disciples. Let's come here to v 51: [He said,] "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven... [and He contrasts that just to the bread that people eat to sustain their physical lives. Now 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."

Now the Catholics believe that 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.

He says, "...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. So 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.

Now v 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. Now, here's the key:] ...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.

Now, let's come to John 14 and see how He does this as He begins to call people. Because something happens; something different happens to you, which then we can say is the working of God the Father through the Holy Spirit. Now here, John 14:15—now this covenant that we enter into—we're going to have two baptisms this afternoon, so if you want to stick around for that, by all means do—this covenant is based upon this right here: "**If you love Me, keep the commandments**—namely, My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter... [now, I'm going to read it the way that it should be translated.] ...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).

So 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; begin to work in that person's mind; to begin to work with that person, to begin to see the futility of human life. Now it may be one day, as some people have—maybe you've been a Catholic—and maybe one day you walk in to this cathedral and you think God is not here. Now if you begin to respond to God, and say, "God, where are You?" When 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. And the Holy Spirit is with you. Now, 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.

So, 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. So what you do is stay with the basic, beginning things. Now then, this process develops in such a way—Jesus explains it here. Now, He continues on, v 18: "I will not leave you orphans... [Because 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.* Now the world, when we walk out of this building today, they can't tell us from any other person in the world, can they? But God can tell, can't He? *Yes!* 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.

Now, so He answers the question, v 23, how He is going to do it so that only those who are being called will be able to respond: "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**'" Now 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 make Our abode with him." Which then is *in*. So 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.

Now 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. Then 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.

Now, let's carry this a little bit further so we can understand what we need to do. Let's come to Matthew 28—and as we were discussing between services, there is a little de-feudality 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. Now here's the command that Jesus gave to apostles, v 19: "Therefore, go *and* make disciples in all nations... [Now we're going to teach them] ... baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Now, why do we have these three things here when in Acts, the second chapter, 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. And] ...**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.

Now, 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" So this is a process which is going to continue right on down from the time of Christ, right on down to His return.

Now let's come to Romans, the sixth chapter, and let's see the meaning of baptism defined even a little bit more. Now when we are baptized, it is **a formal act of making a covenant with God**. And 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, didn't He? He pledged His own death. "This is My flesh and this is My blood." Both of the New Covenant. Now, 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). So 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. So then they generally cry and weep and wail at the infant baptisms. Now, I saw one baby by the Russian Orthodox, and I didn't realize it, 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?... [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.] ... Or are you ignorant that we, as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death... [So 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 2-4). 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 in a way, the way that we want to, because now *we've got to go a new way*.

In 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." Here, hold your place here and let's go to Ephesians, the second chapter. And 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).

Now, 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. So 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... [Now 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.' So when you're out in the world that 'spirit that works in the children of disobedience'—that's everybody.] (Notice v 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... [so 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.] ... Even when we were dead in *our* trespasses, has made *us* alive together with Christ. (*For you have been saved by grace.*)” (vs 3-5).

Now, let me just mention here: get the tape, *Salvation is Creation*—because 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.

Now, let's come down here to v 8: “For by grace you have been saved... [that is 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.... [Now then, something different takes place.] ...For **we are His workmanship**... [Now then, we become the workmanship of God the Father, and He is creating us in Jesus Christ—notice:] ...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.” (vs 8-10). And Jesus said that we're to live by every Word of God, and that's how we're to walk in them.

Now let's come back to Romans, the sixth chapter. That is the “newness of life” in which we are to walk. Now here's a guarantee: “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 co-crucified with *Him*... [so just as Christ entered into the covenant death by crucifixion, symbolically—through the burial of baptism—you are crucified with Him.] (Notice): ...**that the body of sin might be destroyed**... [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*... [that is by baptism] ... has been justified from sin” (vs 5-7).

You're not free of sin. Because when you start reading Romans, the seventh chapter, about we do the things that we don't want to do and so forth,

it's showing how human nature is there. And 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! And then we come to the point—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. And 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. And so 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***. So baptism is a start. And it's marvelous that God has done it this way.

Now then, v 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.... [Then 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). And that's what baptism really is. The old self dies.

Now, 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 would be very traumatic in some cases. Now I remember when I knew I was ready for baptism, and I was driving down to Ambassador College, because I was baptized down there. And I was driving down—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. You know, 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. And when I was baptized, I knew I received God's Spirit right then—I knew that, no doubt in my mind whatsoever.

Now then, but here's something that you have to do. Let's ask a question. Let's go to Luke 14. 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—v 26: “If anyone comes to Me... [this is called *counting the cost* by the way—

count the cost.] ...and does not hate his father... [Now this means 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.... [And 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). So all of us, before we’re baptized, we sit down and we count the cost. In each particular life it’s a little bit different of 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. So that’s why we have *counting the cost.*

Now, 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. Let’s come back here to Hebrews 13. Christ expects you to be faithful in everything you do. Never turn back on Him. Why? Come here to Hebrews 13—very important. Because in being co-joined into His death, He has committed the same thing to you. Notice what He says, v 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.’*” And 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,*** brethren. 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. And He wants you to love Him. And He wants you to seek Him.

Now, let’s go back to the Twenty-third Psalm. Now I know this is talking about perhaps a prophecy of Jesus, but let’s understand something here. Let’s understand something concerning the physical circumstances we may find ourselves....

(go to the next track)

So 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. And 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.”**

So there will be trials that will come. Now God doesn’t throw them upon you right away—Psalm 23. We can have this absolute confidence of God. And 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. Because 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. And whenever I heard this expressed: “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.... [I thought now why, why would anyone say, ‘The Lord is my Shepherd’ and not want Him? And I couldn’t figure that out. It means *I shall lack nothing.*] ...He maketh me to lie down in green pastures... [that so you’re going to be fed spiritually, from His Word.] ...he leadeth me beside the still waters... [because He will bring peace to you]. ...He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness... [those are the good works that we are to walk in.] ...for his name’s sake.... [In spite of everything:] ...Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me... [because Jesus said, ‘I will never, no not ever, leave you or forsake you.’] ...thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies...” (vs 1-5). Now 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 the *Harmony of the Gospels.* And 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. And He has promised it, so therefore it shall be.

“...thou anointest my head with oil [which is symbolic of the Holy Spirit]; my cup runneth over... [because there is nothing in the world which can fill you with desire and satisfaction and love than the Spirit of God.] ...Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever” (vs 5-6). And 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, they’re not going to be there.

Here let's come back to 1-Corinthians ^[transcribers correction] the first chapter. God does things differently than people do. God takes that which is nothing and rejected, and He takes that which is despised, He takes that which is least, and through the power of conversion and the resurrection create them into being the sons and daughters of God. Now that's an awesome thing to be. You get the 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.

Now then, 1-Corinthians 1:23^[transcriber's correction]: “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.... [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. No, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.'] ...Because the foolishness of God ...[If there be any foolishness of God. Now, 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... [now God doesn't have any weakness, so this is, you know, 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... [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—and Paul was preaching, and he 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 23-28).

Now remember what we read earlier, and we did last night, that God is going to make the synagogue of Satan come and worship before our feet. Now, 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, they're 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.] ...**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).

Now then, 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. So 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 and 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.

Now, let's come to 1-Corinthians 2:9. Here is what God is going to do: “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. And only God can do that, because He's God! So you can read books, go to libraries and never understand the plan of God.

Now, you probably heard me mention this on a tape, 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, all, and boy, 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. And you look up there and here are all these lights. And you look out there and here are all these desks. And 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. And 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. And 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.... [And that's why you're to hunger and thirst for the Word of God, 'for you shall be *filled*.'] ...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.] ...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..." (vs 10-12). 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. And 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.

Now, let's come to Mark 12. Then here's the thing that we actively and consistently do. Now think of this. Think of this. Look at it this way: Now 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. So you literally came back from the dead, didn't you? *Yes you did.*

Now I want you to understand something, when you have an experience like that—and I know you probably are going through it—you love and appreciate things so much better, don't you? Because 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. So God, likewise, 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, "What was the first and great commandment?"—Mark 12:29: "'The first of all the commandments is, 'Hear... [listen—one of the things you're going to learn is that God expects you to obey His voice. And His voice is recorded right here in the Bible.] ...Hear, O Israel... [now, 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.* Now 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.

"And *the* second *is* like this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (v 31). Now, 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.

And so we don't want 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, "Now 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.

So 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: Then every year when you partake of the Passover, we have the footwashing ceremony. And the footwashing becomes very important because this signifies that you have a part in Christ. Now understand this: those who do the footwashing are brethren of Christ and they have the Holy Spirit in them. So 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. And 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.

So it's really a great and wonderful thing, brethren. And so, that's the meaning of baptism.

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 6:1-2
- 6) Ephesians 2:1-5, 8-10
- 7) Romans 5:5-12
- 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 12:29-31

Also referenced:

- Sermons: *Salvation is Creation*
 - *A Speck of Dust to the Son of God*
- Book: *Harmony of the Gospels* by Fred R. Coulter

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