

God is Big on Baptism

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Take your Bibles and go to Luke chapter 3. My firm intention, ladies, is to pick back up with Titus and get to that next section in Titus chapter 2, uh, next week where he straightens out the women in the church. That's the word that where he is commended by Paul to set things in order. It means to straighten things out. We've covered the older men. We'll purpose to get to the ladies next week. However, I have 15 pages of notes on something else I purpose to get through. We'll see what happens.

This, uh, I've got a lot of work done on the next section of Titus. We're preaching through the book of Titus if you're just visiting this morning, but in in getting there I felt like the Spirit of God apprehended my heart on this subject and, uh, just started writing notes and reading the text and here's where we are. Luke chapter 3, beginning in verse 3, going through verse 16, I've entitled this exposition with a significant amount of practical application for us at the end, "God is Big on Baptism." God is big on baptism. Verse 3, Luke 3,

3 And he [John the Baptist] came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; 4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT. 5 EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH;

John is saying, there's one coming and he's going to get everything straightened out. He's changing everything. Verse 6,

6 AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.'" 7 So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 "Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Indeed the axe

is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

Now he's saying this one that's coming is the one of all authority. He's not the descendant of Abraham. He's the Creator of Abraham, and he can make the true children of God out of rocks if need be and he's gonna get everything made straight, cleaned up, judged.

10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?" 11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise." 12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to." 14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages."

So basically he's not giving them a catalog of sins you must repent of to be saved. He's saying, this is the way you're living. You're abusing your religion so that you might take advantage of your fellow man. It's not something you're slipping at. It's something that you have as a purpose and intentional lifestyle. It's just pure wickedness. If you were saved, these tight things would not be in your life. That's what John's saying. Verse 15,

15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ [the promised Jewish Messiah, i.e. the Savior], 16 John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

As we unpack the text, I., John basically says, "You must turn from everything you're presently trusting in," that's the idea of repentance. John is saying, "Everything you've been about is wrong. Now, now you've been on this path. Now, you must change your mind and heart. Your heart and mind must change and turn to someone else, something else." It's actually both/and.

So once again, the backdrop here is a Jewish context and all of these Jews were, metaphorically speaking, baptized into Moses. So there's a lot about that. Matter of fact, we're going to talk about four different kinds of baptism this morning and this is the first one: the Jews were all baptized into Moses. 1 Corinthians 10:1-2, "For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." So what he's saying is, "At one time your forefathers were enslaved in Egyptian captivity, they were to a great extent wallowing in the paganism of ancient Egypt, and then I sent Moses to deliver you, and you turned from that, believing in that, trusting that life, and you turned to embrace Moses, and the law I gave Moses to lead you out and be a people." So you see the

repentance there. You were going this way in Egypt, God delivered you, now you look to God's lawgiver, Moses, as your leader, and as giving you the guide for your lives. Okay?

We know throughout Scripture, baptism is always a symbol of a cleansing, but it also includes a turning. Baptism does not cleanse. Baptism does not turn you. Baptism is a symbol of a cleansing and a turning. So all these Jews were committed to God's truth through the mediator, Moses. Moses gave them the law. That's why John Paul writes to the Corinthians, you are all baptized into Moses. You all turned from what you were embracing and you've turned to trust God's mediator, Moses, and the law God gave him to give to you.

Now also, another form of baptism was practiced in ancient Israel. When the Jews converted a person from Gentile paganism and polytheism, they had a baptism for them. They immersed them in water, and they would say, "You came from paganism, now you've come to embrace Jehovah, the true God, and so we're going to immerse you to show you're cleansed of those old, wicked pagan ways, now you're turning to embrace Moses and the teaching of the law." So there was the figurative, if you will, baptism of all of Israel as Moses led them out of Egypt. There is the literal baptism of pagan proselytes as they came into Judaism. So there's a lot, God God's big on baptism. God is big on baptism.

Now here's John, and John is baptizing. So John the Baptist comes on the scene. We know that John the Baptist was prophesied about in the Old Testament that he would come, the spirit of Elijah, and he would be the forerunner, the herald that would be announcing that the true Messiah, the Christ, anointed one, the Savior of the world has come from God. So, John is calling all men to be baptized. Now, he's doing this again in a Jewish context. That would have been a radical thought to the Jews. They'd say, "Now, wait a minute, time out." The Jews of this day would say, "We're of Moses. Our forefathers came out of Egypt in Moses. Matter of fact, our forefather before Moses is Abraham. We're of the blood lineage of Abraham. So this makes us the people of God. Why do we have to show a cleansing and a starting over when we've got God's prophet and we've got God's law?" This would have been radical to them, offensive to them on many levels.

Why do they need to be baptized again? This is only the third one. There is a fourth baptism, but we're talking about John's baptism now. This is the third one I'm talking about because John is saying something has come, someone has come who is exceedingly greater than Moses. That had been tough for an Orthodox Jew of this day to hear too. "What? greater than Moses, the one who went up on Sinai and got the law from God and gave it to the people?" Yes. Now God has sent his one and only Son, Jesus the Christ, the one and only anointed one. He's much greater than Moses. You got the law through Moses, but Jesus, God's Son, is not a lawgiver. He himself is the perfection of the law, something Moses never was. Moses could never keep the law he gave the Jews but Jesus is the perfection of the law. He himself, Jesus, fulfills all the righteousness of God, and he himself will become an atoning sacrifice for all the sins and transgressions of the people. This is something Moses never did. "Oh, there's one greater than Moses," John is saying,

"and you need to show symbolically through a baptism that you've turned from trusting what you were looking to and trusting in, and you've turned to look to the one God's sending now, His very own Son."

John, um, 1:17 reminds us, "For the Law was given through Moses," something very very much greater, "grace and truth were realized," came to reality, to fruition in your very being and as a standing of where you are before God is "realized through Jesus Christ." Moses could tell you about God's righteous law, but he couldn't tell you how to reach it. Jesus enables you to become as if you've already fulfilled all the law of Moses.

Oh, ones greater is here and quickly, Hebrews 3:1 through 6. "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house." You understand that the writer of Hebrews is saying, "Moses was created. Jesus is the Creator. Moses was a part of the house of God. Jesus is the builder of the house of God."

Verse 4, Hebrews 3, "For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later." Moses was a symbol, a type of what is fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus is greater. "But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end." So John the Baptist is here on the scene. He's the forerunner to Jesus the Christ. He's preparing to meet one greater than Moses and this baptism that he is baptizing people with is a symbol of them turning from what they previously trusted in and turning to embrace and trust the one that's about to appear, Jesus.

Now, this baptism of John was not Christian baptism in the sense we get it today. It was not a believer's baptism in the sense we get it today. You see, baptism again was an outward symbol of an inward change, a change of heart and direction. Repentance here, which is in our text, let's look at it there together in verse 3, uh, chapter 3, Luke, "And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance," change of heart. In other words, what we formerly believed and trusted in, Moses and the law, we're turning from that to believe in another one, Jesus the Christ. Now they didn't know all of that well maybe at this point, but they're getting to it. He's preparing them for the turning to Jesus Christ. So John's message and John's baptism was not necessarily a saving message. John's baptism was a symbol of, or rather was not a symbol of saving faith, but it was a symbol of repentance. So John is crying out, "All of you need to turn from all the things you presently put your confidence in to give you a right standing before the Triune holy God. Turn from that and be ready to turn to God's promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, who will save you."

So it's a baptism of repentance, our text says in verse 3, then it continues in verse 3, "for the forgiveness of sins." The word "for" is a preposition. It has the idea of a point reached or entered. So the idea is we've come to this point in the chronology of God's progressive

revelation. We've come to this point where Jesus is arriving and you need to turn and get ready for him. We've come to that point. So that's what his baptism means, turning from what you were looking to, looking toward Jesus who is coming. So John's getting them to that place toward. So he's saying, "Not that you're forgiven of your sins through this baptism, you're being baptized to symbolize that you're turning from what could never forgive you to the One who can truly forgive you. I'm turning you to get you ready for, looking toward the forgiveness of sins."

So John's baptism was a turning from, believing in, and trusting in Moses and his law and a turning toward the soon arriving Jesus. This was their new destiny. Now, let's review those different baptisms. When God called the Jews out of Egyptian bondage through the agency of the mediator Moses, he said, the Bible says they were baptized into Moses. They turned from their old life in Egypt, turned to following God's word through Moses the lawgiver. Then when the Jews would receive a proselyte out of pagan polytheism, they would immerse them and baptize them to say they've turned from their old pagan beliefs, they're now embracing the true God of Scripture, Jehovah, who gave us Moses and the law. Now John goes progressively a step further. John's baptism is a turning from now Moses and even Abraham and all that they had known in the old, uh, Judaistic economy and turning to the promised and soon coming Jesus. So notice the turning, turning, turning, turning. That's what repentance is. It's turning from one direction and mindset, turning to another direction and another mindset.

So the first aspect of John's message is you must turn from all that you have previously believed in and trusted in. Number 2, II., in our text: realize your present approach to life is a fatal error. Now, when we look at verses 7 through 14, and we'll just, um, look at verse 14, and I'm going to have to go rather quickly. Verse 7 says, "So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'" Here's what he's saying, and this is primarily, probably the religious authorities among the Jews, and they were professionals at hypocrisy. They they were warped and wicked and misusing the truth of God for their own selfish gain. So he's saying, "The lifestyle pattern you're on is a fatal mistake because God's getting ready to do some powerful things."

Verse 9, "the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." Graphic, pointed language. "You're on the wrong path," is what John is saying. So these Jews who only observed the external law, never had the internal heart change that Christianity brings, they're living this fatally flawed lifestyle that's going to bring the judgment of God. John in effect is saying, "Look what following the law has done for you. It hadn't changed you at all. The law hadn't made you a better person at all." It's a fatally flawed track to be on to think I'm going to keep enough rules and God's going to like me for it. That's a fatally flawed approach to life.

So John is, in effect, warning these Jews, those who are perhaps some of them just came to watch the spectacle of John. He was quite a unique character and people were coming to him in droves, so they want to know what's going on. Some just came to watch, but

some probably came to be baptized, and John said, "Now listen to me. Don't you come here and get my baptism to add it on to your previous religion. You don't just add what I've got to offer you onto your previous man-centered, man-empowered, fleshly system of religious works. Don't you do that, you bunch of snakes." That's what John calls them, a bunch of brood, a bunch of snakes. Are you snake-ish this morning? Are you trying to add Jesus onto your personal philosophy of life? Tack him on somewhere? Listen to me, our Christ tolerates no rivals, period. That's why he called them a bunch of snakes. "Quit adding him on to your philosophy and your viewpoint and your approach."

Verse 8, he says, "Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves," John says, "I know what you're saying. Here's what you're saying. We have Abraham for our father." So what he's saying is you must turn from believing and trusting in your heritage; just because you're the blood lineage of Abraham means nothing to God. You must turn to someone else, Jesus the Christ who's coming.

Verse 9 again, "axe is already laid at the root of the trees; if you don't bear good fruit, you're going to be cut down and thrown into the fire." He means that absolutely everything that's not in Christ and of Christ will perish. You're not going to heaven because Christ is just in you. You're going to heaven because you're in Christ and God would never judge his Son. So if you're not in Christ, vitally connected to him, then you are exposed to the absolute un-thwartable wrath of God. If you miss Christ, you perish.

These Jews again had followed a natural line of thinking that indicates their fatal error, their thinking in their minds, "Well, we are the direct bloodline descendants of father Abraham. So therefore we're God's people. We're God's saved children." So they called themselves the children of Abraham, but while they were the blood descendants of Abraham, they were not the spiritual descendants of Abraham. That was the root of their fatal error.

Abraham, when he was called from Ur the Chaldees, a pagan land, Genesis chapter 12, when he was called there by God, he turned from that and turned to God's promise of a coming Savior. May not could have articulated like we do, but he was saved by faith, turning from what he was living for and trusting in and turning to the promise of the coming Christ. That's why the Bible says, John 8:56, "Your father Abraham," this is Jesus talking, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." Your father in faith saw me, Jesus Christ, coming to be the Savior of the world.

And in Genesis 15:6, "Then he," that's Abraham, "believed God and it was reckoned it to him as righteousness." Not keeping the law, not keeping the rituals and the ceremonies, he believed God's promise of a coming Savior from God. Not Moses, one greater than Moses. He believed by faith, looking forward to the coming of Jesus.

So these Jews may have had Abraham's blood in their veins, but they did not have Abraham's faith in their hearts. They had not repented and turned from trusting their physical lineage connected to Abraham. They had not turned and stopped trusting in Moses' law to turn to look to only Jesus. And by the way, John says, "I know what you're

thinking. You think you have some special one-up on everybody else as far as being God's accepted child because you're of the physical line of Abraham." He said, "I want to tell you something. If God wants to, He can make the children of Abraham out of these rocks. So don't think you've got a head start. God can do anything He wants." Matter of fact, if you're saved, you're a child of Abraham, and some of y'all are rock-like before God saved you. Some of us were rock-headed, rock-stubborn, rock-dumb, but God can save even the hard rocks and make them the children of Abraham.

Now in verses 10 through 14, John gives an example of where their bankrupt religion, where their misplaced confidence had brought them in their lives. Matter of fact, these Jews through all the centuries had unconverted, unregenerate hearts and they developed... They took the religion Moses gave them and they warped, they perverted that religion in two key ways. Number 1, they took the law of Moses and manipulated and added to it so that it served their selfish sinful desires. They had 300 and something additional laws they added to the law of Moses so they could just live fleshly, selfishly, indulgently, and abuse and run over their fellow man. So this wasn't just a sin they struggled with, this was a well-conceived, thoroughly established, worked out wickedness they were walking in.

So they warped and perverted the law of Moses to serve themselves and abuse their fellow man and, secondly, they viewed the external rituals and ceremonies of Judaism as like a sponge that soaks up the sin of the weak. "Well, if we have one who has sin, we'll make sure we get down to the temple and we may not live a righteous and just life with our fellow man, but we'll bring our offerings and we'll bring our sacrifices. Whoo, that cleans us up. We're all done." It was just a whole perversion of the law of Moses and so, in their lifestyles, they exhibited the kind of coarse, hardened, bitter selfishness that abused their fellow man.

Look at it there in verses 10 and 11. He says, um, "And the crowds were questioning him, saying, 'Then what shall we do?' And he would answer and say to them, 'The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise.'" Now, folks, this was back when poor was poor. If you were poor in this day, you were not obese. You literally didn't have enough to eat. If you were poor in this way, it didn't mean you had a 37-inch television instead of a 57 or 77, whatever they come in. It meant you barely had anything at all. Abject suffering poverty was all around them. So so John is saying if you really were God's child, you'll still sin, but you can't, as a wanton, intentional, brazen, hardened lifestyle, keep ignoring your neighbor who's suffering so severely. He's not saying these works gets them saved. He's saying these works show your lifestyle is based on a fatal error. It's not working.

Then he talks about the tax collectors, verses 12 and 13. I'll not read that, but basically he said, you know, the tax collectors in those days had to collect taxes for Rome and then Rome required so much, but Rome said, "Whatever else you can get, go for it." So they just charged exorbitant taxes against even these impoverished people and just ruined their lives and just trampled over them and they lived wealthy because Rome would protect them because they were raising the taxes for Rome. What John is saying is if you knew

God, you may sin and fail but you wouldn't as an intentional open lifestyle trample over your brothers and sisters in your country like that.

And then he talks about the soldiers, same idea If you really were God's, you wouldn't use your position and authority as a soldier to trample down in injustice those under your feet and, in effect, like the tax collectors robbed from them when they have far, far less than you do. Anyway, this is not about woke-ism. It's not about this silly nonsense of progression progressivism that's come into the church. It's not about socialism or communism. It's an illustration of how bankrupt their system was that they would pervert Moses' teachings to give them such a hardened, oppressive trampling of those around them.

3. John says, first of all, "I'm baptizing you as a symbol that you're turning from Moses and Abraham and the law, and you're turning to trust only in the promised Christ who's coming." Secondly, "Look at your life. You need to turn. Your life looks nothing like one who's experienced the forgiveness of God." Thirdly, "Not only must you turn from something, you need to turn to something, actually to someone." So actually, kind of from verse 3 down through verse 15 is something of an interlude. I'm not saying it's not important but he concludes his thinking in verse 14, verse 15 rather, when he says, verse 16 rather, where he says, "John answered and said to them all, 'But as for me, I baptize you with water.'" Here's what John's saying, "I told you to turn. I told you to baptize symbolizing your turning from what you're formerly looking to. But don't turn and look at me. I'm not here for you to look at me. I'm here to turn you to look at Him." Who's the "Him"? Verse 16, "One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals," the lowest slaves in the household would take off your sandals in the evening when you came in walking those dusty roads. "He, he'll not just dip you in liquid water, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." He's coming and he will baptize you. He'll immerse you in fire, symbolic for cleansing. When he comes, he, now listen to me, he himself will do everything necessary to completely cleanse you, purge you of all your vile offensive sinful standing before God. He will do that and John said, "I can't do anything like that. I can't do it, but He can. And He'll baptize you with the Holy Spirit. He will bring into you new life. New life. Whereby, because of the new heart, you'll begin to love God and the things of God, and you'll begin a pilgrimage of not loving this world and the things of this world." And you won't get completely done until glorification, but that'll be the new purpose and pattern of your life.

Seems so simple doesn't it? Turn from what you're presently trusting in and turn to believing and trusting in Christ and what he will do and what he will accomplish. But there is one other baptism, not just that figuratively speaking, metaphorically speaking the Jews were baptized into Moses when he led them out of Egypt through the cloud, the pillar of cloud through the water, the Red Sea, not just Jews baptizing proselytes from pagan Gentile lands who turned from their polytheism and wanted to embrace the one true God, Jehovah, and the law of Moses. They were baptized. Not John's baptism, which was a turning from what they were presently trusting in, but not yet fully grasping and holding to Christ. The fourth baptism is those who have trusted in Christ, those who have believer's baptism, the ordinance that God's ordained that you partake of publicly to

profess to everyone, "I am not going to disobey my God. He's commanded me to believe on Jesus," and then the first thing to do is to be baptized in a local New Testament church.

Now, I want to give you three conclusions for practical application, but let me begin with this verse, Matthew 10:32 and 33. "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven." I remember as a young Christian thinking if I go out there one time and I'm anywhere in the neighborhood, in Walmart, in the restaurant, at school, the factory, the office, wherever I am, if I don't confess Jesus regularly, I'm going to hell. That's not what the text is teaching. It means as you go through your life, you purpose to honor Christ and set forth your trust and faith in him. So it includes those times on the ball team at school, or in the band room at school, or the classroom, or in the factory, or on the assembly line at the plant, or in the neighborhood, or in the public square, that there are times for us to stand and say, "I've committed my life to Jesus Christ. He's my hope of forgiveness and He's the Lord of my life and this is the way I see this, this is the way I must live." It includes that, confessing him before men, but it absolutely requires confessing Christ before men absolutely requires that you confess him through believer's baptism in a local church. That is not optional.

God's big on baptism. He's big on baptism. Acts 23:8, "Repent, and let's each of you be baptized." Acts 2:41, "Those who received his word were baptized." Acts 8:12, "they were being baptized, men and women alike." Acts 8:13, "even Simon himself believed after being baptized." Acts 8:36, "And they went along the road and came to some water and the eunuch said, 'What prevents me from being baptized?'" Acts 9:18 concerning Paul, "And he regained his sight and got up and was baptized." Acts 10:41 concerning Cornelius and his family, "Surely no one can, uh, refuse water for these to be baptized." Acts 10:48, "and he ordered them to be baptized." Acts 16:15 Acts 16:15 concerning Lydia and her household says Lydia and her household had been baptized. And that's just a few of the many many many commands because God is big on baptism.

So why haven't you been baptized? Why haven't you been baptized? I have three thoughts here and there's some overlap but perhaps one of these three things or a combination is the reason why some of you are not yet baptized. Number 1, these are conclusions for practical application, you're a microscope monster or I might say you're a monster with a microscope. You get out the microscope, you put your life under it, and you determine, "I haven't got the performance I need to be baptized yet." You look at Luke chapter 3 and other sections of the Bible where some specific sins are listed and you look at the list of sins you think, "Oh no, I don't know if I've done the list well enough," because you've got a monstrosity of examining your life like a microscope. And when you make those lists and try to make sure you're doing enough, you're performing well enough to be baptized, or you make a repentance scale, "Is my repentance high enough up here? Is my repentance of such a quality that I'm now a candidate I can be baptized?" That is a misusing of the text.

For example, take the list of sins John mentions here, need to give a tunic to a suffering brother who doesn't have one, need to give food to a suffering brother who has nothing to eat, you need to quit charging all these taxes if you're a tax collector, etc, etc. If those were the list of sins you must get right, then John left out a bunch of good ones. He didn't mention sexual sins like adultery, fornication, unnatural sex sexual affections like homosexuality. He didn't mention family sins like disrespecting parents or not loving your wife or not submitting to your husband. He didn't mention moral sins like murder and stealing, divorce. My point is, God does not intend for you to make a lit litmus test of things you've got to perform well in to be saved. Again, these were just specific things this particular people at this particular time were living in brazen, open, unrepentant, uh, uh, uh, experience in or practice in to show them how bankrupt their system was, what fools they were. You know, you need to stop looking at a list of sins and start looking at Jesus. Look to Jesus. Don't examine your sin. Examine Jesus. That's why John comes to verse 16 and says, "Don't look at me. There's One mightier than I. He's the one you look at."

So reviewing our text where John gives these lists of sins, particularly to these people in their brazen, hardened lifestyle of abusing their neighbors, we're not seeing a catalog of sins you must find and repent of so that you might be in, you might be qualified for baptism. We do not find some scale or measure of repentance you must reach to find out if you're in and you're a proper candidate for baptism. By the way, understand the microscope you use to examine your life is like a childhood toy. It's not much of a microscope. You you're just not up to the task of examining your own life. God's microscope is much better than yours. God's is like the Titan Krios, which is a cryo cryogenic electron microscope that costs six million dollars and even that don't compare with God's microscope.

So if you've got to repent of particular sins in your life in order to trust Jesus and be saved and then be baptized, you can't even know all the sins of your mind, all the sins of your heart, all the sins of your motives, all the sins of your attitudes, much less all the sins of your behavior and deeds because you're not omniscient. You can't know them. Now, when we become God's child, we begin to detest the sins we're aware of. We begin to call them what they are. "Lord, I know that's wicked and You're holy. It's against You." We can begin doing that. You begin a new direction in life, but not a sinless direction, not yet. But if your assurance of salvation is based on how well you live above sin, you're hopeless.

Listen to what the Apostle Paul said about his own journey. Romans 7:21-25, 5, "I find then the principle that evil is present in me," I'm saved but there's still evil in me, "the one," the new man, "who wants to do good." Verse 22, "For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man," the new inner man that's been birthed at conversion, it loves God's law. Verse 23, "but I see a different law in the members of my body," this old unredeemed flesh body package I walk around in, and it "waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members." Paul said, "I just can't completely live above sin." Vance Habner used to say, "The only way to live above sin is to rent an apartment above the pool hall."

So Paul says, verse 24, "Wretched man that I am!" Who's gonna fix this? I mean, this body, who will set me free in this lustful, sinful body? Well, there's one who can do that. Verse 25, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Not reforming yourself, not picking up yourself by the bootstrap, not trying harder. Jesus fixes it. He fixes it positionally right now, you stand justified in Jesus right now. He fixes it permanently at glorification in heaven when he gets rid of your old sin-polluted, corrupted body with all of its lust and you get a new glorified body in harmony with the new man he put in your heart at conversion.

So if salvation has anything to do with your performance of repenting and forsaking known sin, you're doomed. You see, you get saved from your inability to fix yourself. That's part of salvation. Forsaking sin is a progressive fruit. It's a progressive fruit of true salvation, but it's not the source of your salvation. Listen, did you hear me? Progressing in overcoming sin is a fruit, but not a foundation of salvation.

2. So quit being a microscope monster. "Yeah, but I looked at this. Yeah, but I analyzed that. Yeah, but... Yeah, but... Yeah, but..." But there's no "but." Look to Jesus without a "but." Look to Jesus just like you are. 2. You're not thinking straight about repentance. You're not thinking straight about repentance. I remember when I was early converted and some teachers in my church began telling me that if you repent, you turn from that sin and you don't commit it anymore. "You know what that would mean? In six weeks, I'd be sinless. Are you hearing me? I mean, basically, I repented of every sin I knew of, and if you're like John Wesley, the founder of the Methodism, and believe in sinless perfection, that works for you, but we all know we're not like John Wesley. We're like the Apostle Paul, Romans 7. So repentance does not mean that I... well, let me say this, becoming a repentor does not mean I gain sinless perfection and that's why I came up with the terms primary repentance and secondary repentance. Now listen, listen, primary repentance and then there's a secondary repentance. John's key message was primary repentance, turn from what you're looking to to fix you, to cleanse you, to give you a right standing before God. Turn from Moses and the law and your heritage of being a descendant of Abraham and turn to the one who does it all for you, Jesus Christ. That's primary repentance. That's what repentance is, is turning.

That's primary repentance. That's saving repentance. But then there's also, legitimately so, a secondary repentance. Secondary repentance is that progressive turning from my love and embracing of specific sin as God makes me aware of them. There's no way on earth the moment you trusted Christ you could possibly know all the sin you need to repent of. It wasn't too many years ago when the light went on in my heart and I realized the anxiety and some of the fears I struggled with was the sin of self-idolatry. I didn't know it. I didn't know it but God showed it to me when I began to confess those things as me thinking about me. Now, I know none of you have that problem. None of you have that problem just every day, just all day long. Think about me, and that leads to me worrying about me. That leads to me worrying about me anxious about what might happen to me. And that's self-adultery. So I learned a new sin I had, and so I've become now a repentor of that sin but I didn't know that when I was saved, so I didn't repent of all my sin when I

was saved, because I didn't know about all my sin when I was saved, so am I lost? See what I mean? That's not saving repentance. Repenting of secondary sins as God teaches you about them is a part of your progress progressive progression in sanctification. It's not a part of the foundation of your salvation.

So, in secondary repentance, you become aware of sin, and as you become aware of sin, you redefine it in your mind, "God, that's wicked and against You," and you begin to redirect your behavior to not walk in it. It's all a growing process after you're saved and listen to me, you do not delay baptism until you get all of these sins fixed. Are you hearing me? That's a perversion of Christian truth. If you do that, you'll never be baptized. I can be with you five minutes and find some sins you hadn't completely overcome yet and God can be with you 0.5 seconds and come up with a whole list of sins you don't even know you have that you haven't repented of and overcome yet. And you see, an unsaved man may be about behavior modification, he may be about moral reformation, he may have convinced himself that certain activities that the Bible calls sinful are not good for him so he may stop drinking, he may stop smoking, he may stop cheating on his wife but that's just moral reformation. You see, you can do some secondary repentance, in a sense, without ever having primary repentance and being saved. You can clean some stuff up, but that's not conversion.

So notice my words, in a sense, you can have secondary repentance of sins and clean your life up some, but you never had primary repentance of, "I'm turning from trusting me accomplishing it, me keeping the law, me having this philosophy, I'm turning from all of that, abandoning that, I'm turning to Christ, my only and all hope is You dying for me on the cross. You didn't just die for my sins that I commit, and You know all of them, You died for the fact that in my very core nature I am a sinner and You cleansed me of that nature of defilement and the acts of transgression and sin." Don't you love Jesus? Don't you sinners love Jesus? What a gift.

Now listen to these statements, and I I I hope, I'm not asking you to give them back on a test later, but I hope some of them stick with you. Stick, stick, stick. Get down in the bone marrow and never let go. Primary repentance is more like a point in time. I turn from that, I look to Jesus. You may not can identify the exact point but it's more like a point in time. Secondary repentance is more a progression over time. Did you get that? Primary repentance is a point in time, but secondary repentance began with primary, they they always hinge together, but it continues on in progression. True primary repentance always includes secondary repentance of all those particular sins as you're made aware of them. You call them what they are. You purpose to turn from them. Imperfectly, yes, but that's the new pattern of who you are.

So true primary repentance always includes secondary repentance but a supposed, a presumed primary repentance with no secondary repentance is empty, pseudo, and false. It would be impossible. When I did that turning thing, I I turned and looked at Jesus, but I'm still shackled up with somebody I'm not married to. And by the way, some of those things take some time. We've had people genuinely converted here who in open immorality, but it just been what they are for so long, it took a while for the secondary

repentance thing to catch up with their primary repentance. But it was there. And as you taught them, the lights would go off and they would begin seeing, "I need to do better here and I need to humble myself there, and I need to strive better there." But primary repentance with a progressive secondary repentance of the specific sins is pure gold before God.

So once you're saved, you're baptized based on primary repentance, not on your performance on secondary repentance, and then you come to church in here every Sunday and let me scream at you to help you better with your secondary repentance because God's been screaming at me for three weeks about this. So I get screamed at first before you get screamed at second. I struggle with secondary repentance. It's a war. It's a war. If you're not killing sin, it's killing you. But I rely on primary repentance. Did you hear that? I rely that I I I I rest on primary repentance. "Lord, I turn from Jeff Noblit achieving it, Jeff Noblit's performance, Jeff Noblit repeating the right way enough times, overcoming enough sin." I turn from all of that and I rest and that I've turned to look and place my confidence in Jesus Christ wholly as my only hope of salvation. Brother Steve, I struggle with secondary repentance. I'm still repenting, but man, I'm, woo, I'm settled on primary. Woo, Jesus is the primary.

Primary repentance is the root of salvation. Secondary repentance is the fruit of salvation. Primary repentance is done and settled. Secondary repentance is new again at every point of sin. Primary repentance is salvation. Secondary repentance is sanctification.

Last point. Some of you are not yet baptized because you're viewing baptism backwards. You got it in the wrong spot. You're backwards in you're thinking of baptism. "Well, I don't know that I'm saved and I don't know if I'm ready for baptism because I haven't forsaken enough sin, so I can't be baptized yet." But that's like making repentance a work that clears your way to be pleasing to God. You got to repent of thinking about your repentance as an achievement. Actually, when you you're looking at things that way, that's a form of self-cleansing. Self-renovation and that's wickedness in the eyes of God. Quit telling God, "When I get this fixed, I'll be baptized." Quit it! Stop it! Stop it! Stop it! Look to Jesus. Obey him in the waters of baptism. That's getting baptism back where it belongs at the front end. You got it backwards. You're putting it way out here somewhere it don't belong.

The Bible tells us in Matthew 12:43 through 45, I jump down to jump down to verse 44, "Then it says, 'I will return to my house,'" this is a demon, "'from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there." He says, "If you clean yourself up first, that demon you may get out, but it'll bring back seven more demons. Self-cleansing, self-renovation, behavior modification, fixing yourself only invites satanic influence and wickedness into your life." What are we seeing in our culture right now? We're seeing men say, "God, You stay over there. I'll have nothing to do with You and Your book. I will decide for myself what's virtuous, right, and good." And what are they doing? They're full of demons. The stuff they're teaching and promoting is wicked. It's demonic. And some of you sitting in a Baptist pew

are in the idolatry of self-renovation and cleaning yourself up so that you might qualify for baptism. That is demonic. Can't do it. Don't you dare lay down your works beside the work of Jesus Christ.

Remember, a faith that saves is not the same as a faith that serves. They're different. A faith that saves grows into a faith that serves, but they are not the same thing. Too many examine themselves for the fruits of sanctification instead of the faith of regeneration. You're not supposed to see much of the fruits of sanctification before you're baptized because you're supposed to get baptized at the beginning of the faith journey. You haven't had time to work on sanctification yet if you follow the biblical plan. Now I know what some of you are thinking. "All right, pastor, you're the one taught us to do this." Yes, 25, 30 years ago, this church was immersed in man-centered, hoop-jump, shallow, easy-believe-ism, and we ran people through the baptistry waters by the thousands who did not know Christ. But we ain't like that anymore! God's allowed us, through many dangerous toils and snares, I'm gonna come out here because that way you ladies are listening to me better. God's allowed us to come way over here, and get those things straightened out so that now we can go back to the biblical model of believing and being baptized, then you grow in sanctification. You've got baptism backwards. It's not out there on the end. It's at the beginning.

The faith of regeneration then grows into the fruit of sanctification but don't make them the same thing. "Well, if my faith hadn't got me to this level of sinlessness and repentance then I I'm not a candidate for baptism." Wrong. So many of you this morning need to repent of looking at your repentance and instead look at Jesus. Look to Jesus. You need to repent of trusting in your repentance or your performance and look to Jesus. I know it didn't fit in your formula, but God doesn't fit in any formula. It's called the foolishness of preaching. It's what they told Paul. But we profess and we look to Jesus. Many of us need to quit looking for evidences of conversion and look to Jesus. You know the text in 2 Corinthians 13 that tells us to examine ourselves to see if we're in the faith, that is written to professing Christians who've already been baptized, who arrogantly and proudly were challenging Paul. That's a different thing than a new seeker or new believer.

So I I'm asking you to join your pastor. We we got out of this ditch over here of baptizing so many people who didn't know Christ. We came over here, and then now we've got over here, and I don't think we're in the ditch on the other side, but that's the way it goes. You almost get over here too far, and we've gotten over here too far. We're too slow. We're too cautious. We're too careful. "Well, Brother Jeff, what if I baptize my baby, and then they get saved at 21, and they get baptized again?" Praise God, they're saved. Your pastor and your staff is not going to be sloppy about this, trust me. I want you to keep listening now. Don't go sleep on me. I know it's Father's Day, but listen. Are you trapped in the idolatry idolatry of morbid introspection? You're always, there's always another twist, always another sin, always another weakness, always another overthinking of it, and you're like a dog chasing his tail? Many of you today must see a pastor right away and say, "Put me down a date. I'm going to obey my Lord in baptism." And if God stops us, I'll stop. There can be nothing wrong with that.

You say, "Well, pastor, I'll be baptized when I know it's real." Only thing you need to know is real is Jesus. He's real. He's real. You look at him. Let me ask you, what do you mean when it's real? Do you mean your progressions over sin gets to a level you think it's real? You mean your sanctification being set apart to serve God has come to a level that you think it's real, so now you can be baptized? That's not a condition for salvation. The only thing you must have that is real to be baptized is there's been a real turning of your heart and mind confidence from you and everything else to Jesus alone. That is the only real thing you look for and the only real thing you trust in.

Now now listen to this, here's the key: one's performance, and I'm using that word because that's the way I think we're thinking, I don't like to use it, but I'm using it because I think that's what we're thinking, one's performance and progression over sin follows baptism. Did you hear me? It follows baptism. It's not a prerequisite for baptism. You fumble, you stumble, you struggle, you fail, you sin again. And could it be, now listen to me, you're struggling and you're fumbling and you're stumbling and you fail because you didn't put first things first. Baptism was the first thing you're supposed to do. God's not going to help you with the rest when you disobeyed the first. Are you hearing your pastor? Formal baptism and formal church membership is God's primary means to victory over sin. You see you come to Christ because you can't stop sinning. You come to Jesus and you tell your pastors, "Get the water ready. I'm honoring my Lord because I can't do it. I need all the ammunition, all the fortification, all the helps He's ordained to help me fight this sin in my life." But you've got to do what he says first. You've got to get your baptism off the end. You get it back at the beginning of the journey.

Matthew 28:18 through 20 is the concise marching orders for the church. Is it on the screen? "Go therefore into all the world and make disciples, believers, new believers of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit." That's first. Then "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I've commanded you." Did you get that order? Teaching them to do what? Teaching them what sin is, what repentance is, what sanctification is, and how to begin having some victory over those sins after the first thing, believing in baptism. Are y'all getting this? This is as simple as falling off a log. You're not putting the first thing first and wonder why it's not working. It's not working because God's not going to help you until you're obedient to what he says is first.

Well, baptism, you say, is not all that important because it does not save. That is straight out of the pit of hell because baptism does save. Did you hear me? I've got a whole message on that. Last time I preached it, we had a senior adult man who never got over it. He never got over it. He never got over it because I said baptism is essential for salvation from the power of sin. It's a key a key means of grace to help you in this new warfare against sin and living for Jesus and if you leave that out, you're trying to drive the tank without the tracks. You you've got the main thing. When you get in that baptism, you're saying, "Grace Life Church of the Shoals, I'm weak like you. I'm a failure like you. I sin like you, but I don't want to. I'm joining up with you and now let's ally help each other from baptism forward as a body of believers help one another overcome sin in our lives."

But baptism is first, not all the way on down the road, that therefore is essential for us in overcoming the power of sin. And you understand in the Bible, the Bible teaches we're we're saved from the penalty of sin, justification, the moment you believe, that's settled forever. You're saved from the power of sin in daily life. Then you're saved from the presence of sin when you get to heaven, glorification. But the Bible doesn't let you just just sort those out. The Bible makes you keep them all as one. So the point is, believe on Jesus. Be baptized in a local church. Commit yourself to the duties and blessings and accountability of that local church. That's what you need to reach those performances, those repentance levels, those overcoming sin elements you so long to see in your life.

Can't do it your way. You see, baptism is the first step for obedience. It's not the second step. It's not the third thing. It's not the fifth thing or the hundredth thing. It's the first. And you find that all through the New Testament. You cannot say, "When I get these three things straightened out, pastor, when I get these five things fixed then I'll be baptized." No. The first, now listen, I want you to hear this now, the first sin you overcome is the sin of refusing to be baptized and join a local church. The first sin you're to overcome is the is the sin of refusing baptism and being a member in God's local church. You see, your pastor's still growing and learning, and I had to grow and learn that once we got the excessive easy-believe-ism, hoop-jump nonsense fixed, we need to get back to the biblical model better concerning the ordinance of baptism.

So you're baptized, you join a local church, then the blessings and sanctifying sanctifying fellowship of that local church will help you when you venture out to do battle with sin and all uncleanness that pops up in your life. There is no Plan B concerning God's ordained means for living out Christianity in this world. No Plan B. I charge you in the name of Jesus if you can say, "I know I'm not looking to me. I know I'm a failure and I am turning, I've looked to Jesus," if you can say that, see a pastor, get ready for believer's baptism and we'll fight the rest of the way with you. We'll struggle the rest of the way with you. You know why you won't do that some of you? You are so cotton-stinking proud, arrogant, proud, ashamed of Jesus. You say, "Pastor, you're strong." It's true. It's true. Throw fear to the wind, throw insecurity to the wind, throw throw pride to the wind and say, "I'm honoring my Lord through believer's baptism." Our forefathers, the early Baptists, were so adamant on baptism they would rather be martyred than not perform the ordinance of believer's baptism, and they were murdered, many of them drowned by the state churches who only practiced sprinkling because they would not deny the ordinance of God.