

What's in a Name?

By Jeff Noblit

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Ephesians 3:21
Preached on: Sunday, June 30, 2019

Anchored in Truth Ministries

1915 Avalon Ave.
Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

Website: www.anchoredintruth.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth

Ephesians 2:8-9 and then chapter 3, verse 21. Ephesians 2 verses 8 and 9,

8 For by grace [past tense now] you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Now go to verse 21 of chapter 3.

21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

When you get to roughly the 16th century in Christendom, generally speaking you only have Roman Catholicism, the Roman Catholic system and Roman Catholic doctrine with all of its ever-changing variations had ruled the known world religiously. Ah, the governments of the world were church governments. The church and the state were one. Now there was a noble thought behind that, the thought was governments are prone to abuse of power and corruption. You say amen right there. So the, the governments, the state, needs the influence of the church to stay pure and stay right, stay just, stay righteous, I understand that, and then on the other hand to enforce the kind of truth and morality and justice in the culture, the church needed the support of the strength of the, of the state and so that was the thinking. Understand, there was what we know in America today or in the Western world today was radically unheard of, the separation of a particular denomination from government or the state.

Along about the 16th century, some scholars in Roman Catholicism began to read their Bibles more carefully we might say, and began to be convicted and convinced that the Roman Catholic Church had drifted far far, one more, far from biblical teaching. They had just a smidgen of Scripture here and there and some things that seemed right, but overwhelmingly they had developed a system of works whereby the people depended upon the church and the works the church mandated to obtain a right standing before God and get to heaven and people lived in terrifying fear that they had to jump through these hoops and honor these sacraments and these, ah, the priest-craft, you might say, to stay right with God, but some men began to say, "This is wrong," and they begin a movement to reform the church and they worked hard at it and they had success, but within that

reforming movement, later called the Protestant Reformation, there was another group that sprang up, a smaller group, and they're sometimes called the Radical Reformers, and in this smaller subset called the Radical Reformers, here's basically what they said. They looked to the Reformed group and said, "You've done a lot of good things and you've moved in the right direction but are you going all the way? Are you gonna stop short because this will keep you from being under state persecution, are you gonna go fully biblical and establish a fully New Testament biblical church?"

Well, overwhelmingly the Reformers said, "No, we're not going all the way like you guys are suggesting. That will cause too much trouble. We're gonna hang onto some things. One thing we're gonna hang onto is sprinkling infants. That's been the item in our church/state system for centuries after century after century and if we get rid of that thing, then we're gonna really usher in radical persecution against us so we're not going there." But our very earliest Baptist forefathers looked at those Reformers and said, "Thank you for all you've done but we must obey all the Scripture says including the doctrine of baptism of believers only or believer's baptism." And after they began doing that, the leaders of that earliest Baptist movement were martyred and guess how they were martyred? They drowned them. "You like going under water, you don't like sprinkling babies in the state sponsored church, then we'll just try to shut this thing." But here's something and to all the liberals and all the godless and all the so-called secular progressives out there, you can't stop God's church. Can't do it. You persecute the church, you just make her better. You just make her more pure.

Baptist. That's the name but what's in a name? What's in a name? Now in our first text this morning, we talked about grace or we read about grace, "For by grace you have been saved through faith." Grace. What does the word grace mean? Well, in the simplest definition, grace means favor. Just simply that God has this grace, this capacity to desire good or grant favor.

Now we talk about mainly two types of grace: common grace and saving or redemptive grace. Common grace is God's universal non-saving grace and it consists of all the blessings given to all of humanity for physical sustenance, pleasure, learning, beauty. All men can enjoy the beauty of a sunrise or a sunset. All men have the capacity to have an intellect and learn. All men can breathe the air God provides. On and on and on this, this grace favor, this common grace smothers in a wonderful sense all of mankind. And by the way, we should enjoy common grace and give God the praise for common grace. But common grace is limited to time. There will be a day when Jesus returns and time will end and all that we know of common grace will end then only redeeming grace will remain and that's the second grace, saving grace or redeeming grace, and saving grace is that grace where God extends the favor or the blessing of salvation to whom he chooses. Saving grace is the eternal and absolute free favor of God bestowing on human beings his love and his favor, his forgiveness, his reconciliation.

Now in a general sense whether we're talking about common grace or saving or redeeming grace, let's remind ourselves that grace is a favor toward those who have no merit in them and no compensation is demanded from them. Now did you hear that? God

looks at you and now I, whether it's common grace or saving grace and says, "I'm gonna dump this on you, these blessings and these goodnesses on you, and you haven't earned any of them and I'm not requiring any compensation back for them." It's grace. If, if, if God required you to do anything then it's no longer grace. What a beautiful picture that is. Grace is a divine favor to those who are thoroughly undeserving. Grace is completely unsought, it comes as a pure charity. It's unasked for and it's undesired, at least at the beginning. Grace is extended to all of us who are altogether, or I should say who altogether have no attractiveness that calls the grace to be extended to us. Grace cannot be bought or earned or won by the creature, if so it is not grace. Romans 11:16 reminds us but if, if it is by grace, but if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works otherwise grace is no longer grace.

So let's remind ourselves now talking about saving grace that saving grace is, first of all, eternal. It's eternal. In 2 Timothy 1:9, "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." God's favor to save us through his Son Jesus Christ was a favor that existed in the heart of God beyond time and all eternity, all eternity past, this was in God's heart. Grace is eternal, grace is free. Romans 3:24, "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." It's eternal, it's free, thirdly, it's sovereign. This is the part that irritates me about a lot of people who don't care to study hard or study well, they just leave out the fact that this saving power comes from the God who is sovereign. It, it can't be any other way. If it comes from God, it's sovereign and his grace he extends is sovereign grace.

The Bible says in Hebrews 4:16, "let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace." A throne of grace. You see, if grace reigns on the throne, then it is sovereign grace because the one who sits on the throne is sovereign. Sovereign means it is perfect, it is righteous, it is proper. Sovereign means God acts of his own will without being affected in any way by anything or anyone outside himself. Did you hear that? You can roar, you can rage, you can revile, you can march in the streets, you can call conferences or symposiums or whatever you want to do, you can vote, you can do everything but God remains sovereign. Nothing man does, nothing the angels may do, nothing occurs in the universe whereby God says, "I think because that happened, I'll do this." God doesn't act that... God is completely sovereign. He acts without any influence from any outside entity whatsoever. Aren't you glad God is God? He's not like us? You see, grace is not on the Walmart shopping rack to be looked at, examined and handled and chosen by men if it suits them. Grace is on the throne of the universe and it is bestowed when and on whom the perfect Sovereign One chooses and is pleased to bestow it.

So let's break this down right quick and we'll pick this up in a moment. Don't, don't, ah, go into too much detail right now. And can I say this this morning one final time to you? You must save the best part of your brain for Sunday morning sermon. Sunday is not a day for you to be lazy, indifferent and hope something okay happens to keep you entertained. This is a time to use your brain to bring in the glories and the greatness and the wonders of our God and nothing's greater than his grace.

All men are born as unrepentant and unbelieving rebels against God. That's the first thought. Thought 2: all men fully and absolutely deserve eternal condemnation. 3. The Sovereign One sits on his throne and in his love and goodness dispenses common grace to all. Alright, he looks at all these wicked rebels, all of mankind. There's no man on earth that wakes up every day with a full heart and a full mind full of gratitude and praise and obedience to God. That person does not exist because we're all sinners. But God yet keeps showering undeserved common grace on all men.

Now and any and all men under common grace who will repent of sin and embrace by faith Jesus Christ will be eternally saved. Any and all under common grace that will repent of sin and place their faith in Jesus Christ, they will be saved. But none do. None under common grace. No man wakes up and says, "Because God gives me this air to breathe, this beautiful sky to behold, this atmosphere to enjoy, these children and my wife who are a blessing and the untold thousands of other blessings He's bestowed upon me, I thank I'll embrace His Son and repent that I'm a wretch and a sinner and believe on Jesus and be saved." It doesn't happen. Under common grace no man is ever saved.

So 5, God then exercises his divine right as Sovereign to extend saving grace to some of the all undeserving, unrepentant, unbelieving rebels and this bestows on them spiritual and eternal blessings and manifests in a deeper way the love and goodness of God. Ephesians 2:10 reminds us, "For we are His workmanship." God decides on some he'll perform a deeper work for his own glory. We are his workmanship, "created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Now that's my introduction. I., and I will have to leave out a lot of stuff this morning, alright? I. Grace existed eternally in the heart and mind of God. Grace existed eternally in the heart and mind of God. In other words, grace isn't something he put on one day, grace isn't something he thought of, it's a part of his essential essence. A in our outline would be that it's an attribute of God. You see, God is who God is. God is not what we think him to be, God is not what we feel like he should be, he is who he is thus the saying in Scripture, "I am that I am." God can't compare himself to nobody because there's no one like him. He just said, "I am that I am."

And God's attributes are not separate from his essential nature but they emanate from his essential nature. Grace existed in the heart and mind of God before it was displayed in the world. Grace is a beautiful attribute of the very nature and heart of God. Think about these parts that grace encompasses. Grace is a part of his essence, it's a part of who he is. Grace is something he desires, he desires to favor and bless those who do not deserve it. Grace comes out of his wisdom, in his wisdom he ordained the plan, sending his Son to a cross to extend this grace. Grace functions in his will because he decides to initiate and actually carry out the plan. Grace flows with his power. He has the power to completely effectually complete the plan of salvation of grace. It's all out of him. It's an attribute of God.

B in our outline: grace is in the council of the Godhead and I'm just gonna run through this quickly, but we kinda picture in our minds God the Father, God the Son and God the

Holy Spirit from eternity past in their councils, they decide how this saving grace is going to look and how it's going to work. Now this is anthropomorphically speaking. I don't think God decides anything because he doesn't have to think about anything because he already knows everything but it helps us to view it anthropomorphically like a man or a group of men would think.

So God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit came up with eight words used in our New Testament that describes God's choice to act and show this unmerited blessing and favor of salvation. The first word is the word chose, in grace he chose us. The second word is foreknow, in grace he foreknew us. It means an intimate knowledge of one before time. In grace he elected us to pick out among the others. In grace he predestined us. Now that's chosen, foreknown, elected, predestined, four words so far. Predestined just means to mark out beforehand. In grace he called us. In grace he justified us. In grace he sanctified us and even in the past tense, in grace he glorified us. Eight different words occurring in 50 different New Testament texts to express the sovereign God's design, if you will, to cast this blessing and favor on those he would save.

So grace existed eternally in the heart and mind of God. It's his attribute and the functioning of how grace would work out was active in the councils of the Godhead. II. Grace is manifested by the Son and applied by the Spirit. So now we come out of God in eternity past, we come out of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in their council of how this is going to work, now we come down into time. Man's been created, all men are sinners, God acts in grace to perform this wonderful work of salvation.

A. This grace is manifested by the Son Jesus Christ. The Son, you see, came as one who has perfection. He qualifies as our guilt offering. If he had sinned like we sin, he would not be qualified. Being the Son of God and God the Son, he has the perfection and he qualifies as our guilt offering for sin.

Secondly, he's crucified and in his crucifixion he is our substitution. It's, it's, it's a vicarious atonement. In our place he dies on the cross. Then he's resurrected in our, in his resurrection he seals or proclaims our justification. He says, "In the council of the Godhead from eternity past, I elected, I chose, I foreknew, I predestined, I determined to justify, sanctify and glorify and now in time and space history, I have sent My perfect Son" – listen to me – who cannot fail the wisdom of God because the Son had perfection and the power of God and it cannot fail. And so up from the grave he arose and in his rising from the grave all of the children's sins are declared to be effectually banished as far as standing against them in judgment. If Jesus is risen, your sins are gone. Gone. Gone.

In perfection he qualifies, in crucifixion he substituted, in resurrection he seals our justification, and now in his continued intersection he sanctifies us and keeps us his own. I like grace. I want you to grasp more of this in your brain and I want you to treasure and marvel over more of this in your heart. You must know it and you must feel it, then you'll be a true church, a working church, a serving church, a humble church, an effective

church for God's glory. John 1:17 reminds us, "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth come through Jesus Christ." Moses was just part of a set-up crew. Moses was just the preliminary. Jesus is the show.

Well, it's manifested by the Son. He came and manifested God's grace for his children by dying, buried, raising, interceding at the right hand of the Father. Now secondly, B., grace and its effects are applied by the Spirit. Grace in time and space history is applied effectively or effectually to every single one who's saved by the power of the invisible, sovereign, third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. That's why during the Great Awakening as John Wesley and George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards and other fathers of the Awakening would preach to these rabidly dead churches all over Europe and the 13 colonies in the United States, they preach over and over and over and over and over again, "You've been sprinkled as a baby but you must be born-again. You must be born-again." Remember they asked John Wesley, "Why everywhere you go you keep saying you must be born-again? Why do you keep telling men everything they've got to be born of the Spirit, they must be born-again? Why, John Wesley, why?" John Wesley said, "Because you must be born-again." When you get to heaven, God's not gonna say, "Were you sprinkled in the state church?" God's not gonna ask you when you get to heaven, "Did you belong to the established Church of England or France or Switzerland or the Orthodox Church of, of, of, of, of Western Europe or Eastern Europe I should say?" No, the only ones that get in here are the ones whom the Spirit has birthed into the kingdom.

The Spirit applies the grace. He regenerates us. Ephesians 2:5 says even when we were dead in our transgressions, he made us alive together with Christ. Do you have spiritual life? I don't care if you're a Baptist, I really don't. Well, I kinda do. If you mean it biblically and historically I care, if you mean it the way modern Baptists have become, I could not care any less. Historically and biblically I hope you're a good Baptist but that's not the issue. It really doesn't matter to me which aisle you walked down and whether or not you got to a magic spot. Baptists have become Catholics. We've taught our people these steps are an altar and if you get down there to these steps God does something. Heresy! Blasphemy! Godless unbiblical doctrine! It's fine if you came down, it's fine if you came here but this is not a Catholic altar whereby a false priest convinces you he extends to you saving grace by you partaking of the sacrament out of his tainted sinful hand. You are saved by the Gospel and the Spirit of God regenerating your heart, bringing you to repentance, causing you to embrace Christ by faith in the pew, in your car, in the hall, at the house, on the ball field. It doesn't matter. The Gospel saves you by the power of the Spirit and when that happens, you'll say, "Preacher, I want to be a part of God's church. It doesn't matter, I'll walk down that aisle, I'll walk back up another aisle, I'll sit on the piano, I'll go to... it doesn't matter because He's changed me. I have new life in me now. I've cashed in my old religious system. I've come to faith by the power of the Spirit."

In grace the Gospel is preached and I never know what he's gonna do. I look at this guy over here, I'm looking at you, and I'll think he ain't getting a thing. And I'll look over here at this lady and I think she's soaking up every word. She goes out, cheats on her husband,

that guy back there comes next week and says, "God changed me during your sermon." I never know. I can't figure it out. God does it. Great is the mystery of godliness the Bible says. We don't know which one God's gonna save and add to the church next.

You just can't figure it out which leads me to a contemporary related comment. Would you imagine that I would comment on the contemporary condition of churches? Would you think I would do such a thing? What are these churches doing that are doing everything in the world to get people to come to church but preaching the Gospel and believing the Spirit to be of God's church? You know what they're doing? They're adding numbers, numbers, numbers, numbers, numbers, numbers, numbers, numbers and they're getting them with a silly circus instead of the true Gospel. I don't care to have a church or a congregation of 10 million, it doesn't matter to me how many there are, I'd rather have five who are Spirit-wrought believing Christians than five million who joined because I was the most clever pastor in town and had the most fun stuff. That's wrong. That's wrong. It dishonors God and it exalts the cleverness of men.

The Spirit, the Spirit, the Sovereign Spirit, he brings spiritual life to the dead, he conquers their rebellion, he melts their hearts, he opens their blind eyes and he cleanses them from sin. Them old Gospel songs have some truth in them. "I saw the light," there's some truth in that. In his book on the attributes of God, A. W. Pink quotes G. S. Bishop and here's what he writes, "Grace is a provision for men who are so fallen that they cannot reach the bar of justice, so corrupt that they cannot change their own natures, so averse to God that they cannot turn to Him, so blind that they cannot see Him, so deaf that they cannot hear Him, and so dead that He Himself must open their graves and lift them into resurrection." The Spirit does that and he uses the faithful preaching of the Gospel to do it.

Well, we've talked about grace existed eternally in the mind of God, we've talked about grace is manifested by the Son and applied by the Spirit, now III., grace produces spiritual life. Let's amplify this a little bit. Remember we talked about how Ephesians 2:5 we were dead in our transgressions and he made us alive while we were declared just in our relation to the law, the work of grace does more. When you believe on Christ, you, you stand justified, you're declared just in the eyes of God. You have the very justice or even justness that Jesus himself has the moment you believe but the Spirit does more than just place you in a status, a position of justness before God, the Spirit goes further, the Spirit also radically transforms us by giving us this new spiritual life, so much so that 2 Corinthians 5:17 says therefore if any man is in Christ, he's a new creation. Something new has happened on the inside. Something radical has changed. Life, spiritual life comes in. John 5:21 reminds us, "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He," believes? Walks down the aisle? Takes the preacher's hand? Repeats a prayer? No, to whom he, the Sovereign One wishes." It's spiritual.

Two thoughts here, E in our outline, there's inward evidences of this spiritual work. Inward evidences. This indwelling Spirit causes me to be conscious of my personal sin. It causes me to feel the corrupting presence of sin in my being. It causes me to agree with the preacher when he says our whole beings are polluted by sinfulness. There's just a part

of me that says, "Yes and amen. I sense that." He's not just yelling about something, something in me says yes, this corrupting, sinful defilement taints the totality of me too. You see, new life coming into you enables you to get that.

This indwelling Spirit causes me to humbly and fully confess that my sin is against God and there's no excuse. I'm beginning to stop this nonsense of, "Well, we're all just human." No, you're all fallen humans, corrupt in sin fallen humans and all of your sin is personally against God and there's no excuse. No excuse.

The indwelling Spirit causes me to sorrow over my sin. That's why Jesus said blessed are those who are poor in spirit. They carry within them a grieving over what they are before this holy God. Moms, that's what helps you parent better because though you've got to be firm and you've got to have rules and you've gotta discipline, you remember that you grieve too because you failed your Lord and Savior. Young people, that's what makes you a better student or a better child and a better, ah, respecter of your parents because you realize, "I've got this corrupting influence of sin. I, I know I don't do all that I ought to do." Businessmen, it makes you a better businessman. Yeah, you ought to be tough and you ought to be, to have the initiative, you ought to work hard but it causes you to be aware when you're doing a deal, "I don't deserve anything anyway."

Blessed are those that mourn, Jesus said. Blessed are those that are poor in spirit. The indwelling Spirit causes a sorrow over sin. The indwelling Spirit produces a purpose and a pattern to forsake sin. I do struggle and I do fail but I don't want to. I want to get on a better path. So much more I need to say.

Let's go on to, um, the outward evidences of the indwelling Spirit. Two thoughts here: spiritual fruit and a reforming life. Spiritual fruit and reforming life. Fruit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, those things, at least the seed of them I see popping up in my heart and life because the Spirit has changed me. A reforming life. I, I, I'm different as a father, I'm different as a husband, I'm different as a wife, I'm different as a mother, I'm different as a citizen, I'm different in who I align with. I now join God's church and I, I want to be around those people more. My life is reforming.

Well, we talked about the fact that grace existed eternally in the mind of God, in the heart of God or with God. Grace is manifested by the Son but it's applied by the Spirit. Grace produces spiritual life, number 4, and it's all to the glory of God. Now here's where the great majority get it wrong: they think salvation is primarily to keep men out of hell. Can I inform you, sir, that God would have no problem keeping all men out of hell if that was his purpose. Are you here to tell me that the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, holy, Triune holy God of the universe would have any trouble redeeming every man if he wanted to? Of course that's a motivation in the heart of God. Of course the text teaches that, and of course that motivates us but that's not all the Bible says. The Bible says in God's purposes to save his own and build his church, he's gonna bring great esteem to himself. He's gonna glorify himself. He's gonna cause men and angels to deem him worthy of all honor, glory and praise.

It's all for the glory of God. Ephesians 3:21, our text, "to Him be the glory in the church," the church that he elected, predestined, chose, called, in that church, "and in Christ Jesus," for time and for eternity. The end of grace is that he might be known and glorified for the wonder, the wisdom, the power, the beauty and the utter wholesome attractiveness of his grace. The purpose of grace is not that he might redeem for himself a people that love him and enjoy him but that he might redeem for himself a people that love him and enjoy him and in that love and enjoyment he receives the glory and honor he deserves. You see, the greatest crime of the universe is God not being honored and deemed worthy of all honor and praise.

The glory of God is everything. Not a man missing hell is everything. That's a great thing, that's an important thing, but the glory of God is everything. Some of you right now, are you listening to your pastor this morning? Some of you right now you've got one giant problem, you can't get over loving yourself to enter into the realm of saying, "I want to see my God made much of." All time and all eternity is about the glory of God and God's primarily glorified in the work of his Son Jesus and the Son is primarily glorified along with the Father in redeeming the church, securing the church, and in glorifying the church.

Now we come all the way full circle, I'm about done, to V., what's in a name? What's in a name? I don't think I put that on the outline. You know, if you study church history, you'll find records of a separatist reform-minded congregation of Baptist people dating back about 600 years, 600 years. Matter of fact, in 1517 in October 31st of that year, a German monk by the name of Martin Luther, a Reformer in the Catholic Church, married, rather nailed a thesis on the door of the Wittenberg Church, he outlined 95 scriptural errors in Roman Catholic doctrine and in practice. In 1523 in Switzerland, a priest named Zwingli was holding meetings and teaching people how the Catholic Church had to change, had to reform, be more biblical. In one of Zwingli's meetings, a man named Conrad Grebel demanded that Zwingli lead the people to go further, more completely reform, be completely biblical in all of their doctrines and all of the practices, thus not just reforming Catholicism but get rid of it. It wasn't fixable, Conrad Grebel was saying. Zwingli refused Grebel's appeals. Zwingli said, "If we get rid of like infant baptism and other things, it would cause the city council to persecute us physically and directly. We can't go that far." But Grebel said, "No, we must go that far. We know the Bible teaches that only true believers who've had grace impart to them new life evidenced by repentance toward God and faith in Jesus, only believers should be baptized and only those true believers should be added to the church because only those have new life."

Think about that. Grace, life and those people together make a church. That's the oldest Baptist Bible doctrine there is. I like that. Have you ever heard that before? Grace, life, baptize those, you have a church. If you, if you make them church members before they've experienced grace and have new life, then you've got a bunch of sprinkled people who are still in their sin, you don't have a church. And Conrad Grebel said to Zwingli and Luther and others during the Protestant Reformation, "Are you boys going all the way or

are you gonna stop short and be safe?" And Grebel said, "Me and some other guys have decided whatever it means, whatever it cost, we're gonna be fully biblical."

So Grebel and others refused to submit their babies to the state church's sprinkling. Zwingli joined with the other state church leaders and established a decree that exiled Grebel and his disciples from the established church and forbid them to hold Bible studies anywhere. January 21, 1525, a dozen or so men met in the homes of a man by the name of Felix Manz and there they agreed that the New Testament only taught believer's baptism, those who by the grace of God have received new life and become believers, only those could be baptized, and so there in that home, they baptized adult believers by immersion and here the first Baptist church begins. This was a revolutionary break with both the Roman Catholic state churches of the day and the Protestant Reformed state churches of the day.

Here a group formed to dare to start a church after purely the New Testament pattern but there was a cost. On March 7, 1526, the Zurich Council passed a law that all who practiced believer's baptism rejecting the state's infant sprinkling would be executed by drowning. Ten months later, Felix Manz was arrested for refusing to recant of believing and practicing believer's baptism. He was put in a boat. His hands were tied behind his knees. A pole was placed between them. He was lowered into the body, into the water rather and he was executed by drowning.

Now when we look at these first Baptists, we realize that the foundational issue that celebrated these early Baptists from others who professed to be Christians was number 1, the doctrine, the doctrine, the doctrine of no authority but Scripture. Period. No authority but Scripture. And number 2, the baptism of disciples only, those who by the grace of God have received new life evidenced by repentance and faith in Jesus and then they're baptized and they become a part of the church. We preach the Gospel of grace. God's Spirit regenerates the heart and gives them life. Then they're considered disciples and then they're proper candidates for church membership. I wish Baptists would get back to that and quit counting everything else as qualifications for baptism other than the evidence of life, spiritual life.

In May 1977, this church was constituted. A number of good and godly people and some others, were in that group. Did you note what I just said? A mixed multitude, we might call them, some with good motives, I believe at least one with impure motives said, "We're gonna call this new group First Baptist Church of Muscle Shoals." There's only one problem with that: it was a lie. It wasn't the first Baptist church in Muscle Shoals. Now I know there's some technicalities about this but, look, it wasn't, and all the Baptist churches of our area always had a problem with us. Well, that's putting it lightly. A lot of them hated us and part of their reason was what right does a brand new group in 1977, what right do they have calling themselves First Baptist Church when from time immemorial the only group that could ever call themselves First Baptist must have been the first constituted Baptist church in that area, period? And you know what? They're right. They had a reason to be mad. They had a reason to be aggravated at us to say the least.

I remember for whatever reason one morning back in probably late 2007, I drove to church down Wilson Down and I never do that, I always come down Woodward Avenue, but I came down Wilson Down Road and there I saw First Southern Baptist Church on a sign out here on Wilson Down Road and it just, it just, boom, hit me like a ton of bricks and said, "Of course you are the first Southern Baptist church and we aren't." And in that time, we began to realize quite clearly that the name Baptist did not mean what it meant 50, 60, 70, 80, 100 years ago. Baptist has come to mean anything and everything.

So I ask you to consider can we give First Baptist back to its rightful owner and come up with a new name for us? And after all this study, much much more than you've heard, I said, "You know, one of the purest, most solid, biblical and baptistic historical names you could have are those people who have received the Gospel of grace, been born-again and evidenced new life showing repentance toward faith in Jesus Christ and then they're baptized and that forms a true biblical church, a true Baptist church." So let's just state what we are: Grace Life Church.

If somebody comes up to you and says, "Are y'all Baptists?" You need to say, "We're the most Baptist bunch around here by far. If you know Baptist history, you know the Scriptures." Now think about it. Think about it. Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz and others gave their lives rather than allowing into the church those who were not truly born-again. Gave their lives rather than get silly or casual or careless or flippant or just go through the motions putting people on the membership roll, and now the great majority of Baptists as our former pastor would say, if you could train a chimpanzee to walk down the aisle and fill out a card, they'd let him be a church member. Our forefathers gave their lives for the purity of the church and today churches do the most ungodly, unbiblical, silly nonsenses to build their numbers. But for me and my house, we want to stay on the old book, on the old truths, and since God has deemed to most glorify himself through his church, we want to be dogmatic? No, bulldogmatic about preaching the doctrines of grace, seeing the Spirit birth new life and when those give good biblical evidence of the new birth, then we add them to the church and baptize them. That's what Baptists originally did and believed and that's what we must believe and practice.

What's in a name? There's a lot in a name. There's a lot in a name. Any rebuttal? I'm glad you didn't say anything. I'd call you out of order, this is my time. You don't need to be saying anything.

I love you and I appreciate you. I know I'm preaching to the choir, I'm not here to convince anybody that's not already on board, but you know we have newer folks who haven't been through all this with us and it's good for us older folks to reaffirm what we are. Are we perfect? Oh, my goodness, far, far, far from it, but we're still striving to be all that we can be for the glory of God. We have so many new groups that are asking for our help so you need to pray as we go forward how we're gonna be able to handle all of this that the Lord's laid on our plate. It's good stuff but there's a lot of stuff to it.