

# Baptists and Presbyterians Coming Together

*How Pleasant It Is!*

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**Bible Text:** Psalm 133

**Preached on:** September 5, 2010

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Let us now read from the Word of God. Turn to Psalm 133. Let's read God's Word.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.<sup>1</sup>

Every church is unique. It doesn't matter where that church is. It doesn't matter what denomination that church associates itself with. Every church is unique. It has its own emphases. It has its own pluses and minuses. It frames the antithesis in different ways. They shepherd in different ways. They focus on different things in the messages. It is important to avoid hobby horses from time to time, but sometimes we are on hobby horses when we are dealing with sins that are prevalent in a society where you find yourselves.

I don't preach a whole lot about cannibalism here because I haven't run into many cannibals in Elbert County or in Douglas County for that matter. It is just not a hobby horse of mine.

But I have, I think, brought up the issue of love and unity before, have I not? Love, unity, yeah. I think I dwelt on that topic from time to time.

Some churches will be healthy churches. Some will be less healthy. Some will grow in the fruits of the Spirit. Some the less so. And over 10 years we have chosen a certain approach, certain doctrines. We attack certain antitheses very hard. We have cultivated unity wherever we could and we may be healthier than some churches, less healthy than others. It is our responsibility to be good farmers and to raise good crops. So that is what we are trying to do.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 133.

Fortunately, it is not my responsibility to run around trying to figure out how all the other farmers are doing it and then compare our church on a ranking basis to every other church in Castle Rock or in Douglas County. So, you know, the pressure is off. Don't have to do that. It is a good thing.

But if there is some way in which we can grow more in the area of love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, we are all ears, which is what we want to do. This is the goal. We want to be more loving in 20 years from now than we are now. We want to be more joyful. We would like to be more longsuffering. That is the goal. So you tell me how to do it and if you point out in the Word of God how we should do that, you find an avenue whereby we can accomplish that, then I am all ears.

Well, Psalm 133 expresses the importance of unity. And many of you know that I am probably going to wind up speaking on baptism because whenever the pastor turns to Psalm 133 and brings out unity you know that we are going to talk about issues in which we find challenges to our unity. And every church has these issues. And I will talk about that as we go. But the world is disunified, there is no question. The world is disunified.

Now the world fakes unity for a time. They will develop a United Nations organization. Everybody come together. All of the great minds, all of the great scientists, all of the great political scientists they will come together and they will try to establish some kind of unity without Christ and the rest of us are hiding under the couches knowing that at some point this whole unity is going to explode and we are going to see the nations at war again. The United Nations is not going to produce any more peace than any other organization has done for the last 6000 years of world history.

It is only in Christ that we are going to find the unity that we enjoy.

God's intention for us is that we be unified. This is God's ... John chapter 17 Jesus has a prayer he brings to God before his disciples. He records it for us before he goes to the cross. And the last few verses he is committed to unity. Three times he said, "Oh, Father that they might be unified, that they might be one as we are one." This is a commitment that Jesus is so committed to that he is willing to go to the cross in order to bring this about. God is committed to unity. And this is what we find in Psalm 133.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"<sup>2</sup>

Jesus wants us unified. This is a value. This is something to strive for, something he is committed to. He expects us to be committed to it. He wants to see a little zeal here. I mean, he showed a little zeal at the cross to accomplish some love, some unity among his brothers and he wants to see it here, too. He would like to see some zeal from his brothers in accomplishing the value he has set for himself. It is a good and pleasant thing to God and to us. It ought to be us, too. And we ought to be searching out, trying to achieve

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<sup>2</sup> Psalm 133:1.

more unity, finding ways in which we can bring about more unity. This is the goal of our Lord.

And this is also the goal of life. God has commanded the blessing light forever for Zion, Zion being the Church, certainly the Church consummated, that is, in heaven forever and ever. We are going to enjoy life forever. But it is life without war, life without argument, life without fighting each other, life with the peace of God that passes all understanding. This is what God sends to us. And he sends it to the Church as he sends dew to the plains or to the mountainsides.

And you understand that when you... when God sends dew to the mountainsides he is providing the means whereby those fields become beautiful, dream. Maybe not a lot like what you see the fields behind you. Unfortunately, we have had a few storms this last July and August, but there are places that receive dew. Ok, maybe not Colorado in the summer time, but when that dew falls upon the fields it becomes green and lush and beautiful. And when the Spirit of God comes upon his people, that is, upon Zion, and the love of God begins to spread around us and we begin to develop passion in our hearts for this kind of unity, God blesses us with this wonderful, wonderful help as well.

Now, for us we have established an experiment in unity. This has not been an easy experiment at all. We have tried to establish some unity despite the fact there has been disagreements in this church on certain doctrinal issues.

I am here to tell there is always going to be disagreement. If you have two people in a room you are going to wind up with disagreements, always, always.

Now, you are not going to probably hear the disagreements in the first five minutes, 10 minutes, but by a year, if you are together for an entire year you are probably going to find something you disagree on. We have some measure of disunity in this congregation, some measure. Now thanks be to God, I believe we have enjoyed more unity and more peace than I have ever experienced in any church I have been a part of for all my life. I have seen tremendous peace and we have got a huge number of people here, more people I have worshipped with in this church than I think any other church I have been a part of. But it is difficult. It is a challenge. It is a challenge because all of us take the Word of God seriously.

We are not the kind of people that come in and say, "You know what? I am willing to compromise every single page of the Scripture. I don't really believe in anything. I am just willing to live together and enjoy some punch and cookies and have a good fellowship meal from time to time and I don't really have any standard in the Word of God for which I would stand and uncompromisingly stand for it."

No, we are not those sorts of people. We are those kind of people that come together. We take the Word of God seriously and we don't want to compromise on anything and yet God still is encouraging us to maintain and to establish some unity between each other. So herein lies the challenge. In one point we don't want to compromise some position

that we have. On the other hand, God commands us to work or strive for the unity in the spirit and the bond of peace. That word “strive” there is to strive like a gladiator. In other words, it is a life and death struggle. God wants us to engage in that struggle no matter how difficult it might be.

Now it is ironic where our disunity tends to come. I think there is a huge irony.

God wants a marriage to be a unity. I think everybody understands that. When a man and a woman live together in marriage God wants that marriage to move along in unity.

Now we establish the ceremony or establish the marriage by means of the ceremony we call the marriage vows. Some of you have been to a wedding before. Has anybody been to a wedding here? In the wedding we establish the marriage. You establish the unity. You establish the covenant at the wedding. They make some vows and that is where the bonds are established.

Now it is interesting that from time to time some of the greatest disunity occurs in fighting over the wedding ceremony. There is irony there, isn't there? Where here is a man and a woman coming together and the ceremony is the great ceremony standing for the bringing together of a man and a woman in marital unity and marital bliss forever and ever amen. And imagine that the bride and the groom to be are in just all out struggle. I mean, they are hitting each other. They are beating on each other about what is going to happen in the wedding ceremony now.

What happens in the establishment of the unity of the church? There are two ceremonies that Jesus left for us. We call them sacraments. And it is ironic that these two ceremonies are meant to establish unity.

Romans six. By baptism we are planted together in a field, Romans six.

1 Corinthians 12:13. In one Spirit were we all baptized into one body.

So the idea of baptism brings us together. It is like a wedding ceremony that brings us together. It is a uniting ceremony.

Well, there is also another ceremony called the Lord's Supper and here we read in 1 Corinthians 10 it is not the bread that we break in participation of the body of Christ because there is one loaf. We who are many are one body for we partake of the one loaf.

So what Paul is saying here is when we partake of the Lord's Supper together, which we do every Sunday, we are exercising the ceremony of unity. This is what forms the bond. This is what brings us together. This is what establishes the unity. It is the sacraments. It is the ceremonies of the church that establish the unity. So, again, even as men and women will sometimes argue over what is going to happen in that wedding ceremony, it is interesting that the sacraments, the Lord's Supper and baptism seem to be the issues over which we battle [?] and disrupt the unity.

I am just saying it is interesting. That is all I am saying.

Now, this is not the first time this has happened. Has anybody read Bede's *History of the English Church*. the venerable Bede's *History of the English Church*? Nobody? Again, that is a classic.

Ok. He talks about how the Church established itself in England over a period of 400 years. Do you understand the major issue that split the Culdean or the Irish Church and the Roman Church for 600 years between roughly 450 and 1100? The issue that splits, the issue that Bede mentions in his *Ecclesiastical History of the British Church*, the issue that splits the two major churches in western Europe over 600 years, does everybody know what it was? It was the date upon which they would celebrate Easter.

Six hundred years they argued over that. Could you find stupider issue?

Brothers and sisters, we live in a sinful world and we cannot come at this, we cannot establish the unity that is recommended for us in Psalm 133 without two things: humility and long suffering, humility towards ourselves. We cannot. We cannot be unified. This is what Paul says in Ephesians 4:1. We have got to come at it with meekness and long suffering in order to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We have got to come out of it with humility. Humility, why? Humility to acknowledge something about yourself. What is that? You are not perfect and you do not know all.

Number one, humility.

Number two, long suffering to put up with all these other geeks that have it wrong. See, humility in respect to myself and longsuffering in respect to others. We live in a sinful world. This is the only way we are going to have unity in a sinful world. We are not going to achieve it because we have got multiple sinners involved here. We have got multiple people who do not know it all, who have finite minds, who are unable to comprehend the deepest mysteries of Scripture.

So what you have in the Church are people that come together. Yes, they are sinful people. But the problems... and there is problems. They have differences.

See, if you could come together and you all have the same sin and yet humility then perhaps you could deal with each other. But if you are coming together with different sins, how do people who struggle with anger put up with people that struggle with worry. Or how do people who struggle with lust put up with people who don't understand baptism?

There are some people who sin in the area of lust. Is that true? Do you think there are people out there who sin in the area of lust? They violate Matthew chapter five and look at women to lust after them in their hearts. Yes, there are. Do you think there are people who do not do baptism appropriately, that sin in some way in the area of baptism? My

guess is there are some. Perhaps they don't take the Lord's Supper in a proper way. Perhaps, you know, fill in the blank.

The problem is in the church you have people who have to deal with other people who do not either understand or apply things properly in their lives.

This is a sinful world we live in. Now we have got to be able to distinguish between majors and minors. We have said that many, many times. There are guys out there who commit murder and rob banks. That is one thing. But does everybody understand that there is a difference between somebody murdering people and robbing banks every weekend and those people who may not have the head covering thing right in the worship service?

Ok, does everybody understand there is a distinction here, ok? There are majors and there are minors. As Jesus said, there are camels and there are gnats. And the Pharisees are well known for those who will strain at gnats to swallow camels.

Now none of this would work, none of this unity business would work if people are constantly looking for something to get bitter about. So in other words, if we start talking and you bring up something that you disagree on. It could be baptism. It could be the Lord's Supper. It could be head coverings. It could be some aspect of the sovereignty of God. It could be a lot of different things. But the minute you mention it, the minute you mention something that you disagree on all switches go off. Immediately I am not listening. I know this guy's spiel on this issue. I am not concerned about what this guy thinks anymore. Ok? I mean, there is that reaction. There is a reaction of saying, "You know what? I am done with this guy. You understand. I have put up with this guy for six and a half weeks and I have explained to him by means of my incredible knowledge of the Word of God and my omniscient understanding of these very deep doctrines of regeneration in Matthew. I dealt with it in 10 minutes last week and he didn't get it. Well, enough of that. I am out of here."

Ok, so if that is our approach, it is just not going to work. It is not going to work.

Secondly, your list of major issues in any kind of assembly, if it includes the three or four issues that the church congregation happens to find the debatable issue then it is not going to work. Understand there are potentially thousands of issues that could be debated at any one point in time. And in any given congregation there may be three or four that seem to be the ones that are the most controversial. And if you are saying, "Well, those three or four issues happen to be on my major lists," then you are not going to be able to at least pretty quickly you are not going to be able to continue working through the unity. You are not going to be able to ignore certain things. You are not going to be able to oversee, overlook certain things. You are just going to have to leave. You are going to have to go find another church that has the three or four issues you can tolerate a little discussion upon.

Ok, and, of course, we need a great deal of love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance.

I think I said a number of years ago, you know, our church is like a nuclear power plant. And the one thing I know about the nuclear power plant is you keep the rods submerged. I am not a nuclear physicist. But I know that if you got a nuclear power plant in your back yard—and by the way, there is a home school kid who built one the other day. I read in *Reader's Digest*, yeah, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission came out and shut him down, just shut the kid down, said, “You can't do that here.”

So if there is a home school kid who is going to do a nuclear power plant in your back yard, the one thing I want to tell you, keep the rods submerged. Keep the rods submerged. Got to keep the rods cool. If you don't keep the rods cool it is going to be kaboom.

The same thing happens within the church. If we are a nuclear power plant, which means that there are issues at any point in time that could really affect us and we could wind up with a huge metastasizing conflict and everything would fall apart it seems, but you keep the rods submerged in love and joy and peace, long suffering. Keep the rods submerged. Keep them submerged. Everything is going to be ok.

All right.

Where I really want to go now this morning is I want to go to the river, because we are going to go to the river this afternoon. And this church is somewhat unique. There are other churches, there are other OPC churches as well, that will go down to rivers and will conduct immersion baptisms, ok? And our church is going to do that this afternoon.

Now you may have noticed that our church is not Reformation Baptist Church. Did anybody notice that yet? It is on the bulletin, isn't it? Is it on the bulletin? Look at the bulletin. Yeah. If you have... if you notice the bulletin it doesn't say Reformation Baptist Church there. I believe it says Reformation OPC, which is Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

So some of you are saying to yourself, “Scratch, scratch scratch. I didn't realize that Presbyterians went to rivers. So why are you going to the river? Don't you understand you have been fighting on this on 400 years of church history? Shouldn't you stand your ground on something?”

Well, is baptism a minor issue? The answer, of course, is no. Baptism is a major issue. But there are elements about baptism that are minor issues or relatively minor issues. And there are elements about baptism that are relatively major issues. You can blow your idea of baptism and you can wind up with, I would say regenerative baptism is a bad, bad mistake, i.e., put the guy in water, dump the water on his head, he is regenerated, voila, *abra cadabra*, done, regenerated. That kind of what we would call *ex operato* approach to baptism is, I don't believe, a biblical approach. It is the Spirit's work. It is

not my work. It is to manipulate the Spirit into regenerating some person or another person.

So that would be an example. There is different things we can talk about. But today I really want to focus on the mode and to some extent, to some smaller extent the subjects of baptism.

Now there are seven reasons why I consider the mode of baptism or certain elements of baptism to be minor issues. And here they are.

Number one, the reason why I consider it to be a minor issue is because of what I call the obvious humble reason, Spurgeon, Bunyan, Calvin were all smarter than me and I disagree with Calvin on some of the things he has written on baptism. He is more of an immersionist than I am.

Does that surprise anybody?

Calvin is just slightly more immersionist. He says the word βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo) means to immerse. So I somewhat disagree with that, somewhat.

But do you know what? John Calvin was pretty smart. And so was John Bunyan who disagreed with Calvin and Charles Spurgeon. So here is the obvious humble reason. We could humble ourselves with saying there are very smart men who disagreed on this over 2000 years of church history and I am not the smartest guy that ever walked the planet.

Now, ok, if you are the smartest guy who walked the planet and you happen to be here this morning maybe you are exempted on this reason, but not me. Ok? That is number one, the obvious humble reason.

Number two, Church history is all over the map on mode. In general Church history is more on the side of immersion than sprinkling. Coptic churches, eastern churches still immerse after 2000 years. In fact, there was a story recently in the news about in eastern church... I think it was in Russia or one of the eastern block nations, Poland maybe it was, they were baptizing a little baby. It drowned in the baptismal font. Ok? It may have been one reason why the west decided to stop the practice.

But they are still doing it after 200 years. Ok. The western church sprinkled for about 800 years. Occasionally you would see some indication of some immersions. Excuse me. They have sprinkled for 800 years, but prior to that, the first 1200 years there was mostly immersion as far as I can tell reading Bede and Eusebius and others that have commented on what was going on. And it appears that the western church just wanted to take a hard left or a hard right away from whatever the eastern church is doing at the time which is immersion and they moved more in the direction of sprinkling.

Ok, that is the number two reason. Church history has been all over the map on the mode.



Number three reason is we need to take some time to barbecue a few camels. Now, what do I mean by that? We have over the history of at least the faith in this county, I believe, messed up what are majors and what are minors. We have swallowed a few camels. And I think maybe it is time to just take a break and stop straining the gnats and start dealing with the camels.

Incredibly, there are Presbyterian homosexual churches that are not united with the Baptist homosexual churches and the [?] homosexual churches. Do you all know that? There are churches that are ordaining their homosexuals and they just want to legitimize the practice of homosexuality which is, I believe, in direct conflict with the Word of God and there are Baptists who take that position. There are Presbyterians that... there are Anglicans that take that position. And for some incredible reason they will not unite with each other. They can't worship in the same building on a Sunday morning.

The same thing applies to feminists. You have Presbyterian feminists. You have Presbyterian feminists that can't get along with Baptist feminists. You have reformed Baptist feminists attacking our friends at McDonalds.

Now, why can't these people get along? Why can't they deal with their slight issues and get together? Well, apparently they aren't. You have bitter, angry Baptists can't seem to get along with bitter angry Presbyterians. You have Baptist churches that support godless education that can't get along with Presbyterian churches that support godless education, that is education that won't teach the fear of God as the beginning of wisdom and knowledge as basic, important, as crucial.

Baptist churches like that and Presbyterian churches that can't get along. Evidently they believe that the most important issues out there are the age of children in baptism or the amount of water you use in a baptism and the kind of church government you use.

Now, what are the major issues for me? The major issues for me are bitterness, feminism, egalitarianism, sexual sin. These are the things we have got to address. These are the important issues.

So how did we develop such a tangled mess where for some reason the church is incapable of distinguishing between majors and minors? How does that [?] over a long period of time?

The fact of the matter is there will always be areas in which we don't see eye to eye. There will always be some churches that will establish godless education and some of those churches have [?].

There is, you know, all these issues that come up within the church all the time. And we have got to pick our issues. And if you don't pick your issues right, you are going to lose your children. You will lose your children in the next generation. The faith will die in the next generation.

And if you wind up saying, “I think the mode of baptism is the main thing, but who cares about homosexuality, who cares about egalitarianism, who cares about the fact we have got bitterness all the way through the church?” Guys, you are going to lose your church that way. And that, I believe, is the reason why the church of Jesus Christ is weak in our day. It is because over two to 300 years people have made a tremendous thing out of a very, very tightly defined theologically tenuous discussion on the mode of baptism.

And that is what I am going to deal with right now. I think there has got to be a little repentance in this area. And I don't know about all you guys, but for the next 20 years out of my life I intend to repent in this area. I am going to back off of the gnat issues and I am going to sit down and I am going to raise my hands and pray to God that he gives me a little decent, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, wisdom, that I might be able to distinguish better what are the important issues and what are the less important issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, because the faith depends on it, the future of our children's faith depends on it.

If their little hearts get all wrapped around some tiny, little, insignificant issue and they are swallowing camels right and left, brothers and sisters, you are going to lose the faith that way. You are going to lose the faith that way.

So for me it is a matter of repentance. There has to be some measure of repentance in this area.

Ok, number four reason why this is not a major issue for me, specifically the mode of baptism is the number of texts dealing with love, dealing with certain other issues, sovereignty of God, for example. There are hundreds, thousands, way more than those that deal with the mode of baptism. It is just clarity.

God in his wisdom decided to give us more texts dealing with some of these other issues.

Number five. There is also no unified explanation for the position among the Baptist or among the Presbyterian theologians. This is one thing that has taken me again and again. And it made it extremely difficult for me to take a position early on because I had all these inconsistent explanations. Not all Presbyterians agree with each other. Did you know that? They arrive at the conclusion by different circuitous routes. The same thing applies to paedocommunion, by the way. They have vastly different systems of argumentation. Some Presbyterians I believe deny the household integrity of the New Testament. Others base their arguments upon the household. Some Presbyterians disconnect regeneration and baptism entirely. Some don't. Some Presbyterians are conversionistic, revivalistic. Some are more into plantology than ordo solutology.

And as I see all these differences, I wonder what happens to some poor layman who has to listen to six different explanations. I mean he is going to be utterly confused at the end of the day, confused. What do all these people believe? We have this explanation. We have this explanation. We have this explanation.

And, by the way, the Baptists are the same way. Some are more covenantal. Some believe in some level of continuity between Old and New Testaments. Some don't. There is all kinds of explanations. I mean just go to your favorite one.

By the way, I think that the reason why most people take a certain position is because of the personality and ethos, the respect, the PhD, the ThD, whatever after the name of the guy who is teaching them. I think in general that is what happens in Presbyterian, Baptist churches. In my experience that is what happens. Just the teacher appears to be competent in position. He has got some reasons. And they are just going to go with that because he is confident. And that probably makes sense because the teachers bare the weightier responsibility according to the book of James and people just don't want to do all the work and try to siphon through 18 different books, very complex arguments on both sides of the issue.

We can't come together with unified explanation ourselves, then what are we doing? Again, humility, long suffering in the mean time would be [?].

Ok, number six. Sixth reason why it is a judgment call whether or not this is a minor issue, whether you are going to get a work with the issues, spend some time discussing the issue and working through those things. You have got to make a judgment call as elders of this congregation. I will tell you what. Right now we are up to our elbows in [?]. We have got so many issues.

To be honest with you, the sin of delaying baptism is not our number one issue. It just is not. I mean, we have got the violation of 1 Corinthians 13. We have got Proverbs one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. We have Hebrews 13, Ephesians four and Ephesians five, Ephesians six. Do you believe [?] Matthew five violations on the internet, keeping marriages together. We have got to restore broken relationships. We have got to overcome bitterness. We have got...

And then somebody comes up to us and says, "Well, now, did you know that Joe Schmoe doesn't agree with us or them on the mode of baptism?"

Come on, be reasonable. Instead of trying to be pastors trying to lead a congregation to the Promised Land and we are not going to fix everything overnight. We have 46,557 projects going on in this church. Trying to get people to observe whatsoever Jesus has commanded and excommunicating Spurgeon for his position on [?] baptism or going after Calvin because he didn't quite get the βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo) word right. It is just not really high on my list.

So we will deal with the salamanders after we have dealt with the alligators. How is that?

Now there is this argument that has been, I think, floating around a little bit that, you know, I have been to Baptist churches and I just find that Baptist are more mature spiritually than Presbyterians. Now, I have heard this before. You know, I have heard... I

have been to Presbyterian churches. They are just... their kids turn out right, you know? I mean, they get those kids baptized. Man, they are just [?]. They go out. They believe. They have all that strong faith and everything. And they poor Presbyterians or these poor, poor Baptist over here are, you know, having a hard time with their kids and their kids are always rebelling because they are just enforcing faithlessness on those kids. You know, I mean, I hear these all the time.

To be honest with you, brothers and sisters, after 47 years of experience on both sides of the fence, I think there are some Baptists that teach their kids faithlessness and some Presbyterians that teach their kids presumption. And ok? So who is sinning more? I don't know. I have no idea.

There are Presbyterians that blow it. There are Baptists that blow it. And then we blow it in different areas and different times. At the end of the day I don't know. I guess we will leave it up to God to sort it out.

Ok, and here is the seventh reason. The seventh reason is really this, is we believe that the church is growing in the faith and growing in unity. Now we believe that. We believe that is so. We believe that the church has grown tremendously and it has been difficult. It has been challenging. We have had [?] and we have tried to work through conflicts and we have had some difficult discussions. And we have had a hard time. But after 19 years I have to tell you, brothers and sisters, I still love Jim Euler. Brother, I still love you. And I trust you still love me. And I think having a little Jim Euler in my life hasn't been all that bad. And I trust that Kevin Swanson being in Jim Euler's life over 19 years of his life hasn't really been all that bad. I mean, brother, have you been edified? Yet?

I trust you have. I trust that you have been edified. I trust that this mix of people is capable with all of our flaws and all of our warped ideas and with all of our mistakes and our sins and our tripping over each other and our conflict, somehow we are still able to edify each other.

Now if it is not edifying for [?] Baptist to be in the same room with a non [?] Baptist, then I guess they are just going to have to leave. Somebody is going to have to separate. Somebody is going to have to go up the creek and somebody is going to have to up to Asia Minor and I guess we are just going to have to do that. But in the meantime, brothers and sisters, if we can make it edifying, if we can grow as a body in love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, I think it is worth it. I think it is worth it.

If it forces you to be more patient, loving, more forgiving, then maybe it is a good idea.

Do you know is that a judgment call? Yes, that is a judgment call. But I think we have been edified.

So, brothers who confess to not knowing it all, strive to keep the unity of the Spirit in the body of peace. And by that means we accomplish some unity and God is pleased with that unity.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.<sup>3</sup>

Will Jesus looked down upon us this afternoon and see somebody who generally prefers to be up here, pouring or sprinkling, out there up to my waist in water, dipping somebody else in the water? Will Jesus be pleased with that this afternoon? And don't just the Baptists say yeah.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"<sup>4</sup>

You know, Ken Sandy, our brother from Montana said something I will never forget at a meeting at the HSLDA a couple of, five, six years ago. He said, "It is interesting that God could have resolved the baptismal mode issue with three words. I mean, he could have fixed the 2000 years, the debates, the denominations, the 400 years of division at least on that particular issue could have resolved it with three words. Now why didn't he know that?"

You know, think about it. I mean, God... shouldn't God have known that he could have resolved it. He could have made it so much easier if he had just said he was baptized by [?]. If he had just said that, and, by the way, if you haven't thrown out the βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo) in Hebrews 9:10, I mean, why in the world would he stick Hebrews 9:10 in there where he refers to the sprinkling of the Old Testament by the word βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo) in the Greek in Hebrews 9:10? Why did he do that if he meant for it to be [?]. Why did he confuse us with these things? Why did he do it? He knew that we would be split on this. If he had just said, "They walked into the water, Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch walked into the water, they walked into the water." How many walked into the water? Two walked into the water. Then it says, "They walked out of the water." How many walked out of the water? Two walked out of the water. How many were baptized? One was baptized.

Let's say it one more time. They walked into the water. Two walked into the water. They walked out of the water. Two walked out of the water. How many were baptized? One. Why didn't he say they baptized by [?]. Why not? Because he wanted 240 people in this building to learn to love each other and get down to that river and do a little immersion this afternoon. That is why.

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<sup>3</sup> Psalm 133.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 133:1.

I don't know, good call? Bad call? God have mercy on us, amen?

Well, I went back into it this weekend just for fun, again, should say, "Ok, maybe we have the mode wrong again."

So I went through and it is kind of a hassle, you know. You have got to read all of these things again. I went into all the Baptist documents and books and then I find on internet and then went into all my Presbyterian books and things and the thing that bothers me is that there are mistakes being made everywhere. It seems to me there is an awful lot of bending going on.

See, here is an excellent example. Hebrews chapter 10 you have a verse where it talks about our hearts being sprinkled, our bodies washed. Hearts sprinkled, bodies washed. The immersionist jumps on that and says, "Oh, that is my text. That is mine."

Don't you see? Don't you see? You have got hearts get sprinkled and bodies the immersed.

Well, now wait a minute. Let me see that. Hearts sprinkled, body immersed. I am looking for the word immerse. Oh, I don't find it anywhere here. I find washed. I don't find immersed.

I mean, again, being the idiot saying, "Ok, what is it? Do you know?"

Bending the text my way. Bending it my way. Bending it my way. Bending it my way.

The sprinkler takes the text and says, "Yo ho, it is there. Does everybody see that? Heart sprinkled, bodies washed." Get it? Sprinkle, wash, sprinkle, wash, do you see it? Do you see it?"

I said, "Well, I don't see it."

Sprinkling in it. No. I don't see it. I see sprinkle and I see washed. I don't see bodies sprinkled. I see bodies washed.

Can't you keep your stinking manipulating hands off the text?

Romans chapter six. Don't you know that all of us were baptized in Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were therefore baptized with him through baptism to death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead we, too, may live in newness of life.

Now what this says is we are baptized into his death. We are buried with him in baptism in order that resurrection will happen to newness of life.

Now immediately what the immersionists say is, “Well, now, see? Baptism equals death and resurrection.”

No, it doesn't say that. It says you are baptized into his death, buried with him in baptism in order that resurrection will happen. The equation is you are buried. You are dying with him in baptism. That is as much as it says. The text doesn't go any further than that. It doesn't say that baptism equals resurrection as well.

Sometimes we change things. As I read an immersionist he reads Acts 8:38 and he says, “And the Ethiopian eunuch, he came out of the water.” Well, I went up to Acts 8:38 and said, “Oh, he came out of the water, did he? Well, let me see who came out of the water? Oh, they came out of the water.”

Well, now why would the immersionist say he came out of the water? Why? Because they are lying. Does everybody understand they are lying? Four hundred years of division on this very minor issue has brought so much flesh into the church that people lie over these issues.

Ok. Well, there are so many other examples. The immersionist looks at Isaiah 52:15 and Christ will sprinkle the nations. And then he points out that sprinkle can be translated [?]. Christ [?] the nations.

It just seems like we are bending things a little further than I can handle right now.

Ok, the sprinkler also points at Acts nine where Paul arose and was baptized. You see, he was standing when he was baptized.

No, it doesn't say that. He arose and was baptized. Well, he... ok, he arose and he was baptized. We still don't know. You say, “See, he was standing when he was baptized.”

No. I don't see he was standing while he was baptized. I am only reading that he arose first and that he was baptized. I don't know whether it was like 10 minutes later, whether it was like two seconds later, whether... I don't really know. But, again, here is the sprinkling. These are very respected men, very sharp men, very intelligent men. They go to [?] seminary to put all these 400 page books together. Then this is amazing. In Acts eight he writes concerning the Ethiopian eunuch. It is all together possible that the Ethiopian eunuch didn't stand in the water at all because the idea, you know, he went into the water and he wasn't standing in the water. Evidently was he sitting in the water? I mean, standing, not standing?

He wants him standing in Acts nine. He doesn't want him standing in Acts eight. So which is it, you know?

And then we look at the Naaman baptism which is a very, very powerful text for immersion because remember that the Hebrew word is dip for Naaman's seven dips in

the river. The Septuagint, which is the Greek translation to the Hebrew Old Testament translates the word immerse or dip to mean βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo). So βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo) is used clearly in that text as the most clear text by a long shot, the most powerful text, the most convincing text of all and it uses it, no question at all for the seven times that Naaman was dipped.

And so here is what the sprinklers say about the Naaman baptism. Ok, it is, number one, they give it like two lines. They write 100 pages on mode. They say, "Oh, yeah, there is the Naaman baptism. But he could have just dipped like a finger [?]."

So that was the explanation. Now don't count it.

Or here is the other explanation. The LXX writers weren't even thinking about mode. They just mistranslated the word. So on that one they mistranslated the word.

All right. So as I read this, to be honest with you, I think we have got a lot of misapplied dogmatism, highly sectarian fleshly division in the Church of Christ. It is diversionary. It is confusing. It is destructive to the Church of Jesus Christ. We have got to be so careful in examining these things.

Now here are eight data points and I will try to end on this, eight data points that I think are 97 percent clear. Allowing for some of you, if you want to come back afterwards and say, "Now, wait a minute."

But I think there are eight data points we can say are really, really clear in the Word of God concerning baptism in terms of a mode. And so, again, we are going to put the guess work and the approximations and the bending and the changing the words and this, the idea that the LXX guys were really dumb and they don't really know how to translate the word dip into something. We are going to put all that aside and we are just going to say, "What does the Word of God have to say for us?"

Number one, there was water involved. Ok? Is that clear? I think we can all go with that. Yeah, we got one. There was water involved.

Number two, people in the Bible were baptized in, at, whatever preposition you want, rivers, because we get a lot of debate on prepositions. But they εἰς (ice) rivers. εἰς (ice) is the word. They εἰς (ice) rivers. They went to rivers, into, in to, at rivers, whatever. They went to rivers. Evidentially river water involved.

Number three, Spirit baptism involves an action the Hebrew language refers to as pouring, as Joel 2:28. The Spirit was poured out upon this people. So the idea of Spirit baptism prophesied by the Old Testament indicates that the Spirit baptism would actually be called pouring.

Now, sadly, that refers to Spirit baptism, not water baptism so, you know, we were getting excited as pourers, but, you know, now the immersionists come up and say we



can't use that because, you know, it was Spirit baptism and now water baptism can be different than Spirit baptism. And so Spirit baptism involves some pouring.

Ok, number four. Naaman's baptism was an immersion. It was a dipping into the river. Now whether or not his whole head went under or just eight toes, two arms. I don't know and I don't think I really care. All I know is that the Hebrew word that is used is translated βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo) in the Septuagint.

All right. So Naaman's baptism was an immersion, a dipping into the river. Now, granted, it was an Old Testament baptism so whether or not it applies to the New Testament, you know, I guess we could say it doesn't hold enough water.

Number five. Boy, I can be funny when I don't want to be.

Number five. The mode of baptism used for the Old Testament baptism referred to in Hebrews 9:10 was sprinkling. And there is another, I believe, undeniable verse that deals with Old Testament baptisms. It says βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo) the Old Testament βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo) were for the most part sprinklings. You are going to find some pourings. I am not sure you find an immersion anywhere in the Old Testament, but you most... in terms of the ceremonial cleansings or pourings or washings that were going on in the Old Testament. The Old Testament sprinklings were referred to as βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo) in Hebrews nine and verse 10.

Number six, the eunuch and Philip walked into and out of the water. We don't know what they did while they were in the water. We have no idea what they did while they were in the water. Some believe that they just walked up to the water because the word εἰς (ice) could sometimes mean to. But, you know, I think they were in the water. I think they went into the water. I believe they were sitting there standing in the water, whatever. They are in the water.

Ok, number seven. The word βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo), at least in some places, should not be translated into a word indicating mode of water baptism or water application. Isaiah 21 verse four uses the word, at least in the LXX, the Septuagint, lawlessness overwhelms them. My soul stands in fear. Lawlessness overwhelms and the word is βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo). I don't believe it means a water baptism there. It just simply means lawlessness is overwhelmed.

And the word βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo) is as very well translated overwhelmed. The word βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo) also used for dying cloth. When color permeates a cloth permanently that color is overwhelming. It has an overwhelming influence upon the cloth. The cloth will never be the same again.

Does everybody agree if you dye a cloth, that is, you βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo) a cloth, which is a term used in the Greek for dying, when you dye a cloth, will that color ever come out of the cloth? Will it be a long, long, long time before you can get that color out

of the cloth? Yes. When you dye something you turn it over to the power of the dye. So it is overwhelming. The dye is overwhelming the cloth. It completely overwhelms the cloth. There are also examples where whole cities were baptized by the sword. That means that somebody came with swords and overwhelmed those towns by the sword.

So, again, the word baptism tends to involve the world overwhelm.

Now, if it involves the world overwhelm do you understand how it could be easily translated immerse? Because an immersion or a complete immersion of somebody in the water doesn't seem like it is an overwhelming sort of an experience. Don't you all agree, at least if the water is going like 100 miles an hour. I am not sure if the water is going to be flowing that fast this afternoon or not.

But, ok, the final point that I think is inescapable, Acts 22 and verse 16, Paul is told to be baptized and wash away your sins. Be baptized and wash away your sins. Baptism signifies or has something to do with washing away your sins.

Now here is my conclusion. My conclusion is that baptism is... now wait a minute. Before I talk about baptism, children, you all. Have you all seen water? You all know what water is? This water? That is water. Ok, everybody understand water? Yeah, you have seen water before? Good.

Now what do you use water for generally? Drinking, ok. Very good. Good water. You can drink water. What else do you do with water? You wash stuff with water, right? Here. Here we go. See, I am washing myself with water in a good clean there. Yeah, see that? I am giving myself a bath. There are two things you can do with water.

Now this is very simple, simple stuff. Take away your ThD, your Phd. You know, put away your 600 page books on these topics for just a moment and answer the really, really obvious question. What do you do with water? Do you drink water and you wash stuff with water? That is what you do with water.

So, again, this is not rocket science. Baptism is a bath. I just gave my hand a bath. I got it good and scrubbed up. I gave my hand a bath.

Now don't make this too complicated. Don't make it overly technical. Baptism is a bath.

Now, as far as I am concerned, baptism the mode is not [?].

What do we have [?]? We have a [?] an obvious pouring in Spirit baptism in Joel chapter two. We have sprinkling in Hebrews nine. We have immersion in Naaman's [?]. We have three very clear.

Ok, when you put away all the little dumb arguments, all the little, well, it looks like he might have been standing in the water. I am not sure. I am not sure. Put it all away. What do we have? What is left? What are the basics?

The Spirit is poured, Joel chapter two. Sprinkling is Hebrews nine. And immersion in the [?]. That is what you have.

Ok, now how do you think you should take a bath? How many of you have taken showers before? Ok, you wash yourself in the shower. Well, that is very Presbyterian of you. Well, you know, all these Presbyterians taking baths and showers. Well, that is wonderful.

How many of you get in the water and immerse yourself in water? Oh, we have got us some Baptists here, good. Oh, I didn't realize sorry.

We wash ourselves in different ways.

Now here is my position and if, brothers and sisters, if you take issue with me on this issue, now take issue with me on some of the obvious stuff, you say, "Well, it is not water, but really kool aid."

Ok, I am going to probably have a discussion with you, a longer discussion. But if you say, "I am not really with you here on this, pastor Swanson."

I am ok with that, but I believe as I read the Word of God that the Spirit baptism, the Spirit is applied like a flood coming over the person. That is the way I see it. The way I see it in Acts chapter two, the way I see it in Joel chapter two. You don't climb into the Spirit.

You know, when you get baptized into the Spirit you don't climb... Let me get into the Spirit here. Oh, yeah, I am in the Spirit now. You don't climb into the Spirit. The Spirit is poured on you. Do you see the difference?

When the Spirit was poured out on those people in Acts chapter two did they all go, "Ok, it is time to climb in the Spirit. The Spirit is over here, big pool. Everybody climb into the Spirit now. And climb into the Spirit."

We don't get that imagery, do we? You see, the fire of God coming down on the heads of his people in Acts chapter two.

The Spirit, according to Joel chapter two, is poured out on these people. There is an application of this of God's cleansing power upon a person. And that is why I believe people are baptized in rivers because in rivers you have moving water where it is not very aggressive here in Colorado, but in other places where they have real rivers I understand the water pours over it. As you immerse them into that then that water just sweeps over them. And it is the application of that water upon them. And that is why in Acts chapter 22 we read to be baptized and wash away your sins.

See, the eastern people do not like to sit in their own filth. Now I have experience on this because I grew up in Japan. You never climb into the [?] in Japan, the big wood thing, the [?] where there is nice warm water. You sit there and you feel good for about a half an hour until you all shrivel up like a prune, whatever that is called. You don't get into the [?] with all the filth on your body. The first thing you do is you scrub yourself down and then you pour the water over and just kind of get all that filth of you and then you get all the soap off and you get all that gone and then you get into the tub. And you soak and feel good for a half an hour until you are a prune.

Ok, that is the way the eastern people handle that. They look at us as very strange for getting into these tubs and sitting in our muck, you know, scrubbing this all off, getting in the muck and, ok, and then some of that muck winds up on you and you get up and you get your PJs on. See, they don't understand what we are doing. The eastern concept—and I think the reason why you had all these rivers involved in baptisms is because the idea of washing is washing away. You are supposed to take the sins off of you.

Now, people who make a really big deal about the fact that you have got to get every single baptized. You have got to get in there and every single little hair on your toe, on your big toe, you know, four hairs on your big toe. You didn't get all four hairs of your big toe submerged and washed, then you didn't have proper baptism.

I don't agree with that and here is the reason I won't agree with that. Because the purpose of the external washing is to just mirror the internal washing, whatever... I mean, if I ... if I took on [?] to the river and I just scrub him, man, I put him under like 18 times. You know, ok, I am going to get you clean [?] buddy. I am going to get you clean [?] and and whatever it takes, Jim, get me more scrub brushes. We are going to scrub this guy down. And I just keep working AJ over and over again. And he goes down like 40 times. You know, I mean that is kind of stupid.

We are doing what we can, what we do when we do baptisms. See, we do externally what we believe will be hope with confidence in that God is doing on the inside.

Ok, you all see that. Do you see the picture?

All it is, is it is a thing on the outside that mirrors what is going on on the inside [?].

Ok. There is liberty in application, brothers and sisters, liberty in application. And different situations call for different applications. And, you know, maybe this is where we go wrong. But if you are out in the middle and the desert and you don't have like six cups of water, you are going to have a really hard time immersing unless you do a little honey I shrunk the kid thing and get the kid real small and then put him in it. You know, you only have a little bit of water out in the middle of the desert, then ok. You know, do what you can. God will take care of the rest.

And, again, my encouragement and my commitment is more and more and some of you have noticed used just a little bit more water now because I like the idea of running water.

The *Didache* which is one of the very, very first documents after the canonization of Scripture, if you want to know a really, really important document, ok, the Scripture is number one, but if you want a Christian document that is very, very, very, very early and not as important as the inspired Word of God, but you need to know, you need to read it, basic Christian manual from very, very, very early on, the *Didache* talked about living water. Living water is important. Moving water was important. They considered that to be important and I think it carries the imagery very, very well.

So that is why I tend to do the pourings when I am up here. I, you know, I take a lot of the water. You know, I want to see that vertical shower going on versus the horizontal shower that is happening within, say, a river.

Ok, so that is where I am.

Let me also say that since we have a liberty in this and we are exercising liberty. I believe that this afternoon I am exercising liberty that I have in Christ. I believe that. I am liberty to go to the river and baptize in a river. Hallelujah.

But let me say one more thing. Use not your liberty as an occasion to the flesh. And this is a little caveat that we as elders want to leave with you. When a child takes every opportunity to buck his father's wishes, his father says, "Son, we want to play a game this afternoon. We want to go to the park and have a picnic."

"Dad, I don't really want to participate with the family today because I am preparing my heart for worship and I just want to sit at home and just kind of read my Word and pray this afternoon."

And their son just does that every time dad wants to... hey, let's do this.

"Dad, I just need to pray right now. Dad..."

After a while, ok, you get the impression that maybe your son is bucking you. Are you all with me there?

So that is the kind of thing you have got to watch out for. Even as you exercise your liberty, be sure that there is honor going on and there is [?] going on within the body of church.

Now, let me read it one more time.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the

mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.<sup>5</sup>

Well, what Jesus [?] this afternoon? I trust he will, because we will take this as an opportunity not to the flesh, but an opportunity for loving the brothers, for loving different brothers who have slightly different perspectives on some of these things.

As we strive for unity, brothers and sisters, there are three kinds of churches. There are churches where so many people walk into the church and say we are all right here. Everybody is right. I am right. You are right. What are you, a homosexual? What are you, a transvestite? What are you, an incestuous person? What are you? You know, [?] one big happy family. We are all right here. Everybody is right here. You know, there is that kind of church.

Ok, now I trust that we are not that kind of church.

There is this second kind of church where you walk in and you say, “Well, I am right. You are wrong. I am right. You are wrong.”

That is kind of like the church we are here. And usually it is the same thing. You know, Jim says the same thing. I am right and you are wrong and everybody says, “I am right and you are wrong.” And there is that kind of church.

And then there is the kind of church where we say, “We are both wrong.”

Do you follow me here? Here is the kind of church where both is right. Here is the kind of church where I am right and you are wrong. This is the kind of church where we say we are both wrong.

Now sometimes it is hard to decide exactly or understand where we are wrong. Unfortunately our weak spot tends to be in our blind spot so we can't always identify where our weak spots are because they are in our blind spot. But if we come into this church and we assume, man, there is a bunch of screwed up people. And I am one of them. And, brothers, if we come at it with that perspective that we are just so messed up [?] I think we will have a great church, amen? Hallelujah.

*Heavenly Father, God, we are so interested in cultivating [?] and we may be wrong in some areas, right in other areas, but, Father, I pray that we would have humble hearts acknowledging our own weaknesses and also, Lord with something towards other brothers. Lord, to make this recipe happen, Father, it is almost impossible to have a church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with all these opinions and all these different divisions and all these constant squabbles going on all the time that our hearts sometimes rooted in bitterness. God, I pray that you would give us humility. Give us that incredible blessing from heaven, that dew from heaven that would enable us to embrace people who disagree*

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<sup>5</sup> Psalm 133.

*on baptism. Father, what a challenge, but oh I pray that you would give us that humility  
[?] in Jesus' name. Amen.*