

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

September 7, 2014

Baptism 2014

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, once again, we just thank you for the opportunity to come together, to corporately worship you in song and prayer and recitation of your word and now by opening up your word and looking into it. And again, Lord, today we want to just reach out to those who are going to follow the path of obedience to baptism and we just want to pray that as we look into what exactly baptism is you would give us the presence of your Holy Spirit, guide us into this truth, move us, enable us to make it again a permanent part of our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, as you know today is our baptism picnic, and once a year we get together, we get together for fellowship and food and to provide an opportunity for folks to get baptized. And we meet at Spears pavilion which you all have instructions to how to get there, directions to how to get there. It's a great place to have a picnic but this year the pond is so low and weed choked that we're actually going to be baptizing in a pool at Spears pavilion. If you have never been baptized, there are three questions that you

really need to have answered before you consider taking this step. Number one: Just what is baptism? Number two: What is the point of baptism? And number three: Why should I get baptized? I want to reprise my baptism message of last year to answer those questions.

And the first one is: What is baptism? Well, the word "baptize" is really a transliteration of the Greek word "baptizo" which simply means to immerse in liquid. You know, if the Greeks wish to dye a piece of cloth, they would just plunge it, they would baptize it by plunging it into a vat of dye. So the word "baptize" means to immerse in liquid. So what is the point of immersing someone in water? Well, the actual ritual of baptism consists in being plunged beneath the surface of the water and then immediately being brought up out of the water. It is a powerful symbolic act that demonstrates three different aspects of a believer's new life in Christ. There is death, there is burial, and there is resurrection all summed up in that single act.

First, there is death. God says in *Romans 6: The wages of sin is death*. He also says in *Ezekiel 18: The soul that sins, it shall die*. That's a spiritual pronouncement of fact that is more certain, it's more set, it's more determined than any physical pronouncement we can ever see. What God is saying is when we sin,

we die. Now, it might be hard to convince people of that. Because the judgment of sin isn't immediate, folks tend to think that that judgment is really nonexistent. God told Adam in the Garden of Eden in *Genesis 2:16*, he said: *"You may surely eat of every tree in the garden but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* God was very plain, he said you eat the fruit and you will die. Well, Adam and Eve both ate and guess what? They didn't immediately drop dead. Now, they had instantly changed from being the flawless creatures they were who had shared perfection itself with their creator to now becoming flawed, fallen creatures, no longer perfect, no longer suited for fellowship with their creator, but they didn't realize the full extent of what had happened. I mean, there was certainly immediate but non lethal effects. They instantly realized that they were naked, they were filled with guilt, and they were also filled with fear, but there seemed to be no immediate physical effect. So they didn't realize it. They didn't realize it but from the moment the fruit touched their lips, they began the process of dying. And in their case it took hundreds of years to complete. For us it takes considerably less time. But every one of us knows that we are all in the process of dying. And it's that separation of cause and effect that allows people the fantasy of thinking that their sin somehow is not going to find them out.

You know, if the moment that you sinned, you died there'd be no sin because there'd be no people. And because God withholds his judgment and because he gives us time and opportunity to repent, we frequently blur the connection from sin to death. Well, that wasn't the case for Jesus. He knew precisely that the wages of sin is death because it was our sin that led to his death. In *John 3:16* it says: "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*" See, make no mistake about it, we -- all of us -- are on our way to perishing, because sinner is who we are and sin is what we do. It is the direction our fallen nature bends toward because all of us have inherited Adam and Eve's predilection for law breaking.

You know, folks think that God gave us the law, that he gave us the ten commandments as a set of guidelines, a structure that we need to work on to kind of improve our lives. It is not that at all. The ten commandments were a set of non-negotiable demands the king placed upon his subjects. God is the king, and we are his subjects. And violating any one of those commands in any way is a capital offense for which all of us have earned the death penalty. *Romans 3:19* says: *Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped,*

and the whole world may be held accountable to God. Now, most folks don't consciously think of themselves as accountable to God and certainly most folks don't think of themselves as guilty of a capital crime, because all of us think of death as simply a natural process when it was never supposed to be that way. It was Adam's rebellion that introduced us to sin and brought death into our world. *Romans 5:12* says: *Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.* You see, death may seem natural because we accept it as such but it's not. It's not natural at all. You see, we were intended to live in a world where there was no death, but because of Adam we are all born under a death sentence that takes literally a lifetime to execute. It's the distractions of living that make us forget that we are all literally in the process of dying. I used to visit a friend in a nursing home which was an incredibly depressing place. They would bring all these folks out and they would sit their wheelchairs in a circle. They would either just sit and stare, some of them would talk to themselves, some of them would play cards or bingo, and it was certainly clear to me, and I think it was clear to many of them that they're all sitting there just waiting their turn to die. I mean, it was their turn today, it'll be our turn tomorrow. It was George Bernard Shaw who said the statistics on death are one out of one. You don't avoid it. It's there for everyone. Every one of us is going to at some point

come face to face with the fact that every one of us is facing the death penalty for our sins, and the fact that we're able to put such a distance between the sin in our lives and the death penalty that that sin demands, well, it only serves to hide the obvious, that we are born and that we live under a sentence of death. God hates that. God sent his Son into the world to rescue us from the curse of that death, so that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Jesus came to perfectly fulfill what the ten commandments demanded and having done that, he then stood in our place to bear the guilt of our sin. We did the sinning, he did the dying. And death is the very first thing that baptism is all about. You see baptism first symbolically represents death.

Now secondly, going under the water represents burial. But there's good news about death and burial in baptism, this is a death that you choose to die. It is a death that is also the door to life. Jesus said in *Matthew 10:39*: "*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*" And baptism represents your willingness to lose your life for Christ's sake and Christ's partnering with you in a new life. So when you go under the water you are representing not just one burial but two. You see, in baptism, you do not go under that water alone. Now you are there but also there with you being symbolically buried in that

water is Christ. This is what he said, this is what God says in Romans 6:3, he says: *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.* So we are dead and we are buried with Christ as we go under the water.

So first we have death to our old life, secondly we have burial, we are buried with Christ in our sins, and thirdly, there's a resurrection when we come back out of the water. And the resurrection is: *"In order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."* See, we are raised and released. In Christ we are now dead to sin. And as we come back up from the water, we are literally visibly demonstrating that truth.

Now, people would say well, just really what does that mean personally to me getting baptized? I lust, I envy, I lie, I gossip, I steal, and then I get baptized with Christ and it all just goes away? Is that how that works? Well, the answer to that question put that way is no. In fact, baptism doesn't do that at all. Baptism does not confer new life because only God can do that. Baptism simply demonstrates that new life has already taken

place. Paul tells us in *Ephesians 2* that we were all by nature dead in our trespasses and sins, that no matter how hard we try, we still lusted and envied and lied and did all the other things that God's law had forbidden. He said that we had hearts that were dead set against the will of God. Baptism is a symbolic way of demonstrating that that person with a heart that was once dead set against the will of God, that person has died. He or she is the one being buried with Christ under the waters of baptism. Some folks mistakenly think that the waters of baptism are designed to cleanse us from sin. Well, those waters don't have the power to do that. The only power to do that is the blood of Jesus Christ. Baptism cannot cleanse us from sin. It is instead a sign that that cleansing has already taken place.

Baptism is actually a celebration and a demonstration of a successful heart transplant undertaken by God himself. That event God makes perfectly clear in *Ezekiel 36*. I mean, you've heard me quote this scripture countless times but what you might not realize is its connection to baptism. *Ezekiel 36* says: *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you*

to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You see, when God speaks about burying the old life in baptism and coming up out of the water celebrating this newness of life in Christ, he's talking about something far more profound than simply cleaning up our acts. He's literally speaking about dying to one way of living and being re-created to living in a new type of life, of having an ice cold heart of stone surgically removed and a living, breathing heart of flesh surgically implanted. God says: *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.* For all of us, this is a brand new way of walking. You see, God's law said: You must do this, you must not do that. And we all felt bound, we all felt imprisoned by that law. Not only could we not do it, we had no desire to do it in the first place. We were what you call prisoners of the law. You see, fallen mankind's default drive of rebellion is actually a unique form of slavery. It's a slavery that resents liberation. It is a slavery that fights tooth and nail to remain enslaved. It's a slavery that completely blinds those enslaved to what their status really is. They think they're free as a bird, and they're not.

You know, the best illustration I can give for this occurred over 38 years ago when I was living in San Francisco, and some of you have already heard this but it bears repetition. I was working with a group of non-Christian carpenters, and we had frequent

discussions about spirituality and about my faith and it was an opportunity to share my faith, and a lot of those discussions centered about on how they thought that my faith took my freedom completely away. In fact, the way they saw it, if you're a Christian, your life is over. If you're a Christian, that's it, no sex, no drugs, no partying, no fun. Why in the world should we want that? I mean, that was basically the line. I was working with this one fellow named Tom, and we went to his apartment for lunch, and we sat down at his kitchen table and I immediately noticed he had a whole stack of Penthouse magazines that were piled from the floor up to the level of the table, and Tom pointed to his magazines and he said, "You know, you Christians don't have the freedom to look at a girlie magazine." And I noticed that right there on the table was a brand new copy of his Penthouse magazine, still had the brown wrapper around it, it was with his mail that hadn't been opened. I pointed to the magazine, I said, "And you don't have the freedom to not look at it." I said to him, I said, "Look, I can look at the cover of that magazine, I can just walk away, and you know you can't." Well, he instantly got this grin on his face, and he got the grin because he knew that what I said was true. He knew he did not have the wherewithal to not look at that magazine, and he hadn't realized it before but he now realized that he was in fact enslaved to it. And at least he had the honesty to recognize with that grin what he had been touting as freedom was

really a form of slavery. And whether it's lust or envy or bitterness or jealousy or gossip or any other sins that plague us, without Christ all of us are helplessly enslaved to sin.

Listen to how Martin Luther put this. He said: "Scripture represents man as one who is not only bound, wretched, captive, sick, and dead, but in addition to his other miseries is afflicted, through the agency of Satan his prince, with this misery of blindness, so that he believes himself to be free, happy, unfettered, able, well, and alive." See, my friend Tom never realized that he was in fact a prisoner. But here's where the prisoner part becomes self-evident. See, Tom knew where he was. Now, he may have even hated where he was or not, it was really something that he was just curious about, but he knew that he lacked the will to change where he was coming from. He knew what the right thing to do was, he knew how you're supposed to do the right thing, but he didn't have the ability to want to do the right thing enough to do it. He is by definition a prisoner of the law. Paul said in *Romans 7*: *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.* You see, as long as we live, that law has the power to demand of us what we cannot supply. And in baptism, the plunging under the water is a living picture of what it means to die to the

power of that law. We're talking about dying to one way of living and being re-created to living in a totally new way. And when we say we are dead to sin, we mean that the power that sin used to have over us has now been ended by our death, because once a person has died, he's been freed from any power that any law has over him.

You know, one of the horrors of the collapse of Libya was the parading around of the body of Muammar Gaddafi. I mentioned before folks expressed their hatred of Gaddafi by showing off his bloody corpse, but you know, displaying that corpse was all that they could do. I mean, you can beat a corpse, you can desecrate it, you can threaten it, you can torture it, but you all know it's only symbolic because for all practical purposes the law can no longer touch a dead man. Now, in one sense he is absolutely free and the only problem is, of course, he's dead. But what if you had the same freedom? What if you had that freedom that the law could no longer touch you because it saw you as a dead man but you're still very much alive? That's what baptism represents. *Romans 7:*

Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

Now just imagine you work for some incredibly perfectionistic boss who not only did everything perfectly but demanded that you do it

perfectly as well. And you ask him, "Will this ever get better?" He says to you, "Not until the day you die." Well, in baptism you symbolize that the day you placed your faith in Christ is the day you died to that law and its demands of perfection. You died to that law because Jesus Christ stood in your place to receive your punishment. You are now dead to its demands. You've been buried with Christ under the water and you've been resurrected with him as well. *Romans 6: We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

Now, all of this talk of death and burial and resurrection might sound way too spiritual, too up in the clouds for some, so let me make this as practical as I can. I raised the issue about dying to sin this way. I said, you know, I lust, I envy, I gossip, I steal, then I get baptized in Christ and it simply all goes away? Well, actually this is what happens. When we look under the hood, this is what we find. By the power of God's grace, I become born again first. I have a conversion experience and God's Holy Spirit then takes up residence inside me. *Romans 8 says: You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.* So when I'm born again I become a temple where God the Holy Spirit now chooses to live. In the old testament he

lived in a gigantic building of stone, now he lives inside living stones, human beings. And when he takes up residence inside us, he now begins to change my sinful desires. They literally begin to go away. Baptism represents the dying of the old man with those old sinful desires. It means that not only can the law legally no longer touch you because you died with Christ, but you also find out now that your very desires are brand new, and they're not the desires that you had all along. These desires now begin to line up with God's desires. You start to do what the law used to require but you do it now for the sheer pleasure of doing it. You know, worship and giving and praising and singing and praying, these are all things that I could have lived quite nicely without, thank you. And so could you in your non-Christian days, but now that's unthinkable. I mean, we now do those things not because we have to, but because we want to. The difference is now that our heart of stone has been replaced with this heart of flesh and we freely do now what the law requires. Jonathan Leeman in his book on the church sums up nicely the freedom of a heart transplant. This is what he says. He says: "Biblical freedom is this remarkable state in which we want what God wants. How does this happen? How are we set free to want what God wants? At one time God's righteous law imprisoned us, but now, we are free to be 'slaves of righteousness.'" And Jesus and Paul want to call that 'freedom.' How is that possible? It is possible because of the new covenant.

The spirit gives us new hearts. He creates new desires in us so that we desire to love God and love our neighbor which is to fulfill the law."

You know, I'm 65 years old and for 41 of those years I've been a new creature in Christ, but I can tell you the first 24 years of my life I, too, was a prisoner of the law. I mean, I hated my life but I hated the idea of God even more. If someone had ever stopped me back then and described for me what my future life would be including what my likes and dislikes would be, I wouldn't have believed him. I wouldn't have believed him for a second. If somebody told me at age 24 that in the second half of my life I'd be going to church, I'd be studying scripture, I'd be praising and praying for the pleasure of worshiping God, I would have burst out laughing. I'm sure I would have laughed in their face. See, the newness of life in Christ means a new set of appetite that God has placed within us. But let me make a distinction. You know, if someone said to me, as I grow older I would begin to feel the need for God and church and religion, I might have as a 40 or 50-year-old man paid some attention to that. I might have seen some positive benefit for my kids, maybe for my family, you know, in doing the God thing, and so perhaps I would have been willing to hear that. You know, I might have even done the religion thing for its obvious benefits. And make no mistake about it, religion --

any religion -- has its benefits. Now Romans 3:10 tells us no one, no one seeks for God. And yet on any Sunday morning there are hundreds of thousands of churches and synagogues, mosques and temples that are filled with people who are apparently seeking God. Well in reality many are seeking the benefits of seeking God and not necessarily seeking God himself, because God says no one seeks him on their own. And in fact all religions do offer a sense of security, a sense of belonging, a sense of social structure, an identity structure, and that could make them very attractive. There's a benefit there that could have nothing to do whatsoever with seeking God. And there's lots of contemporary westerners who now choose a religion like you would make any other life-style choice, on the basis of its perceived benefit. You know, I was thinking about Buddhism but that Dharma thing is a little bit unrealistic for me. I thought about the Kabbalah, it's a little too weird. I decided to go with kundalini yoga because I can lose some weight by doing that. I mean, it sounds like I'm mocking and I don't mean it to be mocking because this is the way many westerners now choose their religion. God's got nothing to do with it. And had God not intervened in my life, had he not done a spiritual heart transplant, I, too, might have made such a lifestyle choice. What I never would have believed is someone telling me that I would be worshiping God not for the benefit but for the pleasure of worshiping him. And if someone had told me

even later in life that the joy and the deep satisfaction of a relationship with Jesus Christ would far surpass anything I'd ever imagined, I would have dismissed it as the rantings of a mad man. But that's what newness, the newness of life in Christ is all about. We start loving what Christ loved. We start hating what he hates. We start valuing what he values because the Spirit of Christ is now inside us having taken up residence within us. He tells us in *Ezekiel 36: And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.* All of this is symbolically captured by the act of baptism. You see we are dead in our sins, buried with Christ under the water then raised with Christ as we come back out of the water.

So to review, what is baptism? Baptism is nothing more than plunging something underwater. What is the point of baptism? It is a symbolic picture of our death, burial, and resurrection in Christ. It is not a cleansing from sin but rather a picture of a cleansing that's already taken place through the blood of Jesus Christ. And finally question three, why should I get baptized? Well, the simplest answer by far is because God tells us to. Peter's first sermon made that crystally clear. It was on the very first day of Pentecost when of the gift of tongues had descended on all these assembled people and everyone spoke and was understood in their native language. And Peter spoke and his words were

extremely powerful. He said this in Acts 2:22, he said: *"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know -- this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it."*

Well, apparently Peter never got the memo that you're not supposed to be so blunt, that you're not supposed to make people feel guilty by telling them exactly where they stand, that you're not supposed to directly accuse them of murder. Peter just opened up and he let the people have it. He went on to say this in Acts 2:36, he said: *"Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."* Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, *"Brothers, what shall we do?"* Now it's important also to note here that Peter did not say in response to their question, *"Smile, God loves you."* He didn't say, *"God loves you and has a perfect plan for your life."* We know what he said, we have a quote right here, it's verse 38: *And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive*

the gift of the Holy Spirit." Peter said that because shortly before that day, shortly before Jesus had ascended into heaven he gave a final parting message to Peter and the rest of the disciples, and this is what he said in *Matthew 28*, he said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." So Peter in his first sermon is doing exactly what Jesus commanded him to do. And God evidently was pleased with Peter's approach. *Acts 2:41* says: *So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about 3,000 souls.* See what's important to understand there is baptism also did something that we don't think of, baptism marked the birth of the local church. 2,000 years later we're still repeating the same process.

And that leads me to this third question this morning: Why should we be baptized? And I want to add to that another question. The question is really the most basic one you could ask: Why are you here? You see, if you're a member of the kingdom of God and God the Holy Spirit is living inside you, he is uniquely conforming you into the image of Jesus Christ, he is shaping and molding the very appetites that you have, and that includes the appetite that caused you to want to be here in the first place. I've said it many other

times, there's a thousand other places that you could be this morning than here. So why are you here? Well, is it not because God has placed within you a desire to meet with other believers, to share worship and the word of God, to become part of a chosen called out group of fallen sinners that God has elected to pour his blood, his grace, and his mercy into for his glory? That's the living body of Christ. That is the church. That is all part of the newness of life that is represented when we come up out of the water in baptism.

So why do we get baptized? Well, the ceremony of baptism affirms the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and my resurrection along with him. Again *Romans 6:4: We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.* Now that newness of life is always displayed within the context of the local body of Christ, the church. Baptism is often times our first opportunity to publicly affirm what God has done in our lives while at the same time affirming the church's role as an alternative reality to the world that we now live in, and baptism proves that you cannot be a lone ranger Christian because nobody baptizes themselves. See, God's baptism was designed to be a physical act, a physical declaration that you are lining yourself up with God's people in his body. He

says we are to be in the world but not of the world, and baptism represents our entry into the kingdom of God while we are here on earth, and as such, it is always a public declaration. Baptism is never a private affair. I mean, even if it has to be done surreptitiously as in persecuting countries, it's always done before witnesses and it still tells the world I am publicly aligning my allegiance to Jesus Christ and his church.

Jonathan Leeman sees baptism in athletic terms and it really has to do with publicly acknowledging, as he says, whose team are you on? And, you know, lots of times the ones who are coming forward for baptism are young men and women, boys and girls who may see it more plainly in terms of athletics, and the important point is this, conversion and baptism are two very different things. And at conversion by God's grace personally and privately, to use an athletic analogy, we change teams. We leave the kingdom of darkness and we enter the kingdom of light. We leave the dark team and we join the light team. All things become new. *2 Corinthians 5: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* Baptism takes place afterwards. Now sometimes it's a matter of hours like the Ethiopian eunuch and certainly the three thousand that were baptized after Peter's first sermon, but sometimes it's a matter of years. The fact is the act of getting baptized always takes place

after, after we've switched teams. And athletically speaking, baptism says: Now that I've already switched teams, I'm going to publicly switch jerseys. That's what's taking place.

I mentioned before last time, the LeBron James story, and that story centered around probably the best professional basketball player in the world, and he decided after many, many years to leave one team and to join another. So we had this top level athlete switching teams from Cleveland to Miami. And how do they display this change? Well, they showed LeBron who's now in Miami and he's holding up his Miami Heat jersey, while back in Cleveland they had a huge bonfire of enraged fans who were burning all their old Cleveland jerseys because LeBron had very clearly and publicly switched teams and traded jerseys. Well, most of you know the story has changed again. I mean, LeBron has left Miami after winning two championships for them and he's returning home to Cleveland. You know what he's doing? He's trading in his Miami Heat jersey and he's getting one for the Cleveland Cavaliers. He is publicly declaring his allegiance now to a different sports team, but he's doing it for money, he's doing it for fame, and it's only temporary because even the best athletes are still in the process of dying. Baptism represents a new start with a new team and this team goes on forever. And it's got a new team leader, the leader is King Jesus. It is publicly putting on a new jersey,

declaring my loyalty to this team for all time. Mr. Leeman puts it this way when it comes to what baptism represents, he says this, he says: "Whether people's decision to swap allegiances comes gradually or quickly, a point comes when they must decide to change their team: 'You've been playing for the red team. You've been thinking about switching to the blue team. What's it going to be -- red or blue?'" Well, conversion occurs the moment that decision is made. Leeman goes on to say then: "Baptism, then is putting on the new jersey. It's when we publicly identify ourselves, by the church's representative authority, with his death and resurrection. All the thinking and journeying come to a head right there. Through the church, Jesus asks whether we will die to ourselves and our own rule, be buried with Him, and trust that he will raise us up with Him according to a new power and rule."

Well today some of our people are going to publicly enter the water, go under the water, then rise up out of it having obeyed their Lord. By God's grace and mercy they have been led from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. They have already switched teams. By God's grace through baptism, we will have the pleasure today of watching them switch jerseys. Let's pray.

Father God, I want to again thank you for this opportunity. I just want to pray that your Holy Spirit would just speak loudly and

clearly to any and all who you are moving to take that step of baptism. Lord, give them the grace, give them the power, give them the courage to align themselves up with what your will for their lives are. Give them the ability to come forward and be baptized. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.