

Grace to You :: esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time

Case for Believer's Baptism: The Credo Baptist Position

Scripture: Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 2:38; Acts 16:15; Romans 6:3

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PAUL SAILHAMER: If you have read the material in the program, you know that this Pre-Conference Seminar has stimulated a lot of interest because it's on a topic that was dear to the heart of our Lord and of the Apostles and is such an important topic in the Scriptures and so today we have our Pre-Conference seminar, *Born of the Water and the Spirit*.

There is much disagreement in the church concerning baptism and it says in our program within the Reformed and Evangelical circles some espouse infant baptism while others oppose it. In this seminar, Dr. MacArthur and Dr. Sproul will each present one side of the issue and then this seminar will conclude with a question and answer time later this afternoon after our break. So you need to be writing down your questions now during the seminar and during both of the presentations and then turn those in at the registration desk and we will go through and try to deal with as many questions as we can with John and with R.C. a little bit later in the afternoon.

Let's have a word of prayer together and we'll get right under way.

Our Father, we thank You for the hospitality of the people of this church. We thank You for the beautiful day that we enjoy and the safety of those who have arrived to this seminar. And now we stop and we give You thanks and acknowledge Your presence with us and we say thanks for the opportunity together to talk about such an incredible subject and open our eyes, enlighten the eyes of our hearts that we may understand Your Word and Your will a little bit better because of being here today...we pray in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ we pray...and everybody said...Amen.

John MacArthur will be our first presenter. John is a graduate of Talbot Theological Seminary, pastor of Grace Community Church here in the Los Angeles area for the last 27 years, president of Master's College and Master's Seminary, author of numerous books, recently editor of the MacArthur Study Bible, on the radio every day, *Grace To You* for over the last two decades. I thought it was interesting, and I asked John, and he was baptized by his father who is a minister, when he was about the age of twelve. I think all of you are familiar with the ministry of John MacArthur and we are looking forward to hearing his presentation as we begin this-afternoon. Let's welcome him for our first presentation on our Pre-Conference Seminar. (Applause)

JOHN MACARTHUR: Well, thank you, Paul. I had the joy when I came to Grace Community Church in 1969 of having as the only staff member there, Paul Sailhamer. And we served together for many

years before he got promoted to the ministry of Chuck Swindoll and then drove Chuck out of his church (Laughter) and the rest is history. It's a joy to be here, it's always a tremendous privilege to fellowship with R.C. and other compatriots of the faith to sit and share a little meal today with Sinclair Ferguson, such a noble servant of the Lord and such a formidable advocate for the faith. Just a real joy to be able to minister to you and also especially I think this kind of discussion.

It seems to me today that the climate is such that you're just not allowed to disagree with anybody without being considered as divisive and unloving and unkind and shattering the body of Christ and all of this. And that's sad because that disallows us to call into question those things that are important and essential to the faith that need to be discussed. And I'm grateful for this opportunity.

I looked around at lunch today and I think I was the only person there who believed in believer's baptism, so I know why I was selected to do this. But I do count the opportunity a privilege. I'm glad that a lot of the amenities are over because I do want to use the time most helpfully in this discussion and that means getting at the point, trying to say as much as I can in the time that I have.

Obviously many trees have died in this discussion. And it is just an immense chore even to try to read the literature that has abounded through the years on this discussion, trying to sum it up and condense it down is a challenge. And that's what I'm going to try to do in this session.

Obviously related themes about covenants and sacraments could also be brought into the discussion but at some point you've got to get focused. And we don't want to go beyond the purview of the immediate discussion with regard to baptism, even though those are certainly related themes.

I also want to start by assuming the evangelical view that baptism does not save by whatever mode or manner it is administered. And I think we will agree on that, all of us will agree on that. I'm not talking about any regenerating rite here. It's important for us to understand that this is within the context of our evangelical conviction that salvation is by grace through faith alone, apart from works, even the work of baptism.

Now with those things aside to sort of launch the subject, a little bit of a personal testimony, to begin with. For years over radio, Grace To You has internationally aired believer's baptisms with the most amazing responses coming from everywhere. To my knowledge, this has never been done, at least not in modern Christian radio. And we've had an amazing response to the regular airing of the testimonies of people standing in the waters of baptism.

Also, for nearly twenty years we've conducted Pastors Conferences at our church and through all of those years we have launched every Pastors Conference with a service of baptism in the opening evening. And that too with tremendous blessing as we hear the testimony of those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ being made public in the waters of baptism. Also in our church, every Sunday night of the year we have a baptismal service. The Lord is adding to His church daily such as are being saved and we have a full congregation every Sunday night in our church who have come to hear the testimonies of those who are proclaiming their faith in Jesus Christ which is usually followed by the preaching of a biblical exposition by myself.

So this is a very important part of my life and ministry, from top to bottom it serves as a component of ministry which is at the very heart of the declaration of the gospel which is so precious to me. The domination, I think, of the church in recent years by psychology and in more recent years by pragmatism has produced, I think, a significant disinterest in baptism. Media ministries which so

powerfully define and control evangelical consumerism are void of those ordinances. And that's one of the reasons why we've introduced baptism into our radio format because I don't want to be a part of that kind of disinterest.

It is safe to say, also, that there is presently probably the largest unbaptized population of professing Christians in the history of the church. And for most of them it isn't really something they're too concerned about. This reality, failing to take baptism seriously, is also, I think, likely symptomatic of the independence and unfaithfulness of professing Christians who function autonomously like consumers, rather than under church theology and authority and at the same time, a few things could be more unmistakable than the fact that the command of Scripture is to baptize and to be baptized. On that we will agree. Jesus said, "Go into all the world and make disciples, baptizing them." And on the day of Pentecost Peter said, "Repent and be baptized." And we remember that Jesus engaged in the baptism personally, then the Apostles followed, involving themselves in baptism. And, of course, you know the rest throughout the book of Acts in the New Testament.

In spite of this command, in spite of this mandate, in spite of New Testament clarity, there is still widespread non-compliance. And at the same time, a rather strange paradox in that you have a very large population of baptized unregenerate people. So if there's anything that needs some clarity, I think it's this.. I would venture to say that a person who claims to be a Christian and has a disregard for baptism, has not been baptized, would have to fall into one of several categories. Number one, they are ignorant, that is they have not been taught or they've been wrongly taught. Secondly, they are proud, that is not willing to be humbly obedient to what is clearly a biblical mandate. Thirdly, they are indifferent, not considering obedience a priority. Fourth, they are defiant, just unwilling to obey. Or fifth, they're not converted at all and therefore they have no desire to publicly demonstrate the significance of baptism in behalf of the honor of Christ.

Surely, most of the mass evangelized TV, radio stadium converts have been left to themselves without the benefit of guidance and without the benefit of accountability for baptism, or a lot of other things under any church authority. But I think that is no excuse for not following what the New Testament says clearly and I think strikes to the conscience of every believer, whether or not they understand church authority. Baptism is therefore critical, important, must be understood and must be practiced. It is not a minor matter and thus it commands our attention today, I think, justifiably. It is a major matter. It has in the past been even a more major matter where on some occasions people actually engaged in blood-letting over this. I'm happy to be discussing this in a much nicer time, otherwise it could cost me dearly and cost R.C. dearly for even tolerating me.

I think the time has come, however, after all these years of history since the Reformation, and here I'll show my colors, to strip off the tradition and return to the simple New Testament design. It is my own conviction that the Reformation is not yet complete. And that consideration should force the argument, I think, to be a scriptural argument. I'm really not interested in arguing on any other level than the biblical one, and that does present some interesting dilemmas, but we're going to attack them, nonetheless. I don't want to deal with the historical issue since I am convinced that while history certainly plays a role in understanding things, history turned against tradition at the Reformation, and we're grateful for that. And history has to make such turns against what is a wrong tradition. In my judgment, history needs to reexamine tradition at this point again as well.

Now to sort of summarize and obviously there are a lot of ways that you can go, but to sort of summarize I want to give you five reasons why I reject infant baptism as biblical baptism, five reasons why I reject infant baptism as biblical baptism. And really, these are categories of

introduction for you that want to dig in deeper and read the voluminous amount of literature that is available on the subject. But I would at least like to formulate the argument, or the debate, if I may, around these five statements.

Number one, infant baptism is not in Scripture. Against this fact, there is no clear evidence. Scripture nowhere advocates, commands or records a single infant baptism. It is therefore impossible to directly prove or support this rite from the Bible. Schlermaker(?) wrote, and I quote, "All traces of infant baptism which one has asserted to be found in the New Testament must first be inserted there," end quote.

And a host, I think, of German and front-rank theologues and scholars, including those of the Church of England, have united basically to affirm not only the absence of infant baptism from the New Testament but from apostolic and post-apostolic times. It first arose and arguably, I suppose, in the second and third centuries, the conclusion, for example, reached by the Lutheran professor Kurt Allen(?) who has written on this after intensive study of infant baptism is that there is no definite proof of practice until after the third century. This he believes cannot be contested.

A Catholic professor of theology, Haggelbacher(?) writes, quote, "The controversy has shown that it is not possible to bring in absolute proof of infant baptism by basing one's argument on the Bible without the help of tradition." And even the notable B.B. Warfield affirmed the absence of infant baptism from the Scripture.

It would be my conviction here though not necessarily at all points that this is a good place to apply the Calvinistic regulative principle which says, "If Scripture doesn't command it, it is forbidden." Now that sort of tells you where I'm at.

Given the Sola Scriptura commitment of the Reformation, given the fact that the Reformation was predicated upon that and given the Bible as the singular and therefore supreme and only authority in the matters of faith, we might assume that the discussion was over, at this point. But in spite of all such testimony, infant baptism is still defended and practiced as if biblical. One expects Rome, I think, to engage in such practices were used to that, to defend as divine and essential rites and dogmas not in the Bible. They do that. They have a Mass, the Magisterium, a tradition, as we all know. They do so because they believe that the Church continues to be the unique recipient of post-biblical revelation which carries equal weight with Scripture.

In fact, the Roman Catholic Church not only asserts that it is the ongoing recipient of divine revelation, but that it is also the only and infallible interpreter of all revelation, biblical and traditional. Church history, in one sense then, could said to be Rome's hermeneutic. But it is not the hermeneutic of Reformed theology. In fact, history is no hermeneutic. The Bible is not interpreted by history. God is not interpreting the Bible by history. We would have to ask if that were true, which history? Whose history? Traditional rites, traditional ceremonies, traditional doctrines are true not because some Church said they were true, not because some Counsel said they were true, not because they have been traditionally affirmed as true, but because the Scriptures affirm their validity. And I believe only honest hermeneutics in exegesis can yield the meaning of Scripture. History again, I say, is no hermeneutic. Reading traditional history back into the Scripture is not a legitimate way to interpret it.

It is also true that Scripture nowhere forbids infant baptism. That is obviously true, since it doesn't discuss it at all, it neither affirms it or forbids it. That fact obviously provides no basis for acceptance

of or mandate for infant baptism as the ubiquitous ordinance that it has become. There are many who would argue that because the Bible doesn't forbid it, God somehow condones it. But to justify that sprinkling of babies because it is not forbidden in Scripture is therefore the divine will, is to standardize and imprint with divine authority other ceremonies which are not in the Bible. And where does that end and open the way to any ritual, any ceremony or any dogma or any teaching also not forbidden specifically in the Scripture? Not just to the point where you would allow it or tolerate it, but where you would standardize it and infuse it with grace and efficacy. That's a large leap in my judgment.

Actually, it was such traditions concocted beyond the pages of Scripture and without scriptural support and warrant that Luther had in mind when he himself drew the line in the sand and said this, and I quote, familiar quote, "The church needs to rid itself of all false glories that torture Scripture by inserting personal conceits into the Scripture which lend it to their own sense. No...he said...Scripture, Scripture, Scripture for me constrain, press, compel me with God's Word," end quote.

Now at this point, some of you have some Scriptures running around in your minds and you're saying, "Wait a minute, MacArthur, this is a biblical issue and there are biblical passages that bear upon this." And I'm not saying they don't, I am simply saying there is no mention of infant baptism in Scripture. Those who advocate infant baptism want to advocate it from the Word of God and so they use Scriptures in which infant baptism is not mentioned to support it because that's all they have. And that is not a criticism, that's a fact. If it's not there, you have to use what's not there to make the point.

In Matthew chapter 18 we read in verse 3, "Truly I say to you, unless you're converted and become like children, you shall not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child on the ground of My name receives Me." And you know the text. And some have said, "Well, what you have here is evidence that children are in the Kingdom." I beg to differ with that. I think what you have here, if you put the synoptics together and see the scene, Peter is in Capernaum, he may well be in his own house there and he has in his lap an infant. He picks up a little child because the disciples are debating who's the greatest in the Kingdom and the debate has reached a fever pitch.

We know how serious this debate was because John had even...and James had enlisted their mother to go plead for them to be at the right and the left hand in the Kingdom and they were all seeking the ascendancy and the prominence. And in the middle of that debate as he anticipates, of course, what the reality is to be in the future, they all gather around Him, He puts a little baby in His lap and says, "Look, while you're arguing about who's the greatest, let's get to the real issue. You're all little children." Verse 2 says, "He called a child, set him in the midst and said, 'You better become like this if you want to enter the Kingdom.'" And then He proceeds to preach a great sermon, one of the great discourses in Matthew on the childlikeness of the believer. And in this chapter He is not talking about babies, He's talking about childlike believers. And that is pretty clear, I think, all the way through because He refers in verse 6 particularly "these little ones who believe in Me." He's talking about how we treat each other as believers.

So this is not a Scripture that deals with anything that deals with actual children and their role in the Kingdom, but rather using a child as an illustration of the necessity of entering His Kingdom as a child would. What does that mean? With no achievement and no accomplishment, having done nothing, learned nothing, gained nothing, accumulated nothing, bringing nothing to bear upon that

entrance. He is simply saying you come the way a child comes, and a child has nothing to offer, having achieved nothing, to come bare and naked with no accomplishment and no achievement and you come totally dependent. I think that's the issue that He's talking about, offering nothing to commend yourself to God, realizing your utter bankruptcy, it's really a Beatitude Attitude.

Then you have another passage which is often used in the next chapter of Matthew, verse 14, "Let the children alone, do not hinder them from coming to Me, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these." Some make a strange connection between the word "hinder" here and the word "hinder" in the book of Acts chapter 8 where the Eunuch is baptized and says, "What does hinder me?" You know, here's water and they find in this some baptismal formula which is a serious stretch, as far as I can tell. But the text here says, "Let the children alone, don't hinder them from coming to Me." As you know, that's in Mark 10 and Luke 18 as well.

Is Jesus saying something here about infant salvation? Well the answer is no. What He is saying, I believe, is this, God cares for children. God has a special care for children. You never see Jesus gather a bunch of unregenerate adults and bless them. That doesn't happen. But He does gather these little ones. He has a special care for children...and not just children of believing parents. There's nothing to indicate that these children were children of believing parents or unbelieving parents. There's nothing to indicate whether in fact there might have been a few Gentile children of Roman soldiers splattered in there who hadn't even been circumcised. There's nothing to indicate whether or not they were children of true Israelites who had had their heart circumcised or whether they were those of just the nominal Pharisaic legalists who seem to dominate the society. Jesus neither baptized them, nor caused them to be baptized.

This is a dry verse, and so is Matthew 18 dry. What He did show, there's no baptism in either place. He did show clearly that children are precious, and they're dear to God and that God has special care and concern for them.

Another passage that, of course, is used would be the list of passages with regard to household baptisms in the book of Acts and also noted in 1 Corinthians. There are five households that are mentioned to have been baptized. Some would say that babies were baptized with those households as an act of family solidarity. However, none of those Scriptures mentions any babies being baptized, none of them at all. I read one interesting writer who said that he had as much right to say in the case of the Philippian jailer that there was nobody in the family under sixteen as somebody had a right to say there was somebody in the family who was a baby. In other words, there's purely no basis for concluding that there was any infant baptism going on there because it doesn't say there was. The idea that a father served as a surrogate for the faith of the children might be something you believe but you can't find any such children for whom surrogate faith may have been exercised in those household baptism since none are mentioned.

And if you look at them collectively, as I have, this is sort of a summation of them rather than going in to all the detail. In Cornelius' home it says, "All heard the Word, the Spirit fell on all and all were baptized." And I simply note that the "all" is defined as those who heard the Word and upon whom the Spirit fell which demands cognition and faith before baptism. In the jailer's case it says, "All heard the gospel and all were baptized," again the "all" is defined as those who heard. In the case of the house of Crispus, all believed and all were baptized, Acts 18. In the accounts of Lydia and Stephanas where you have less information given, we must understand the same thing as in the more explicit text. All hear the gospel, all believe, all receive the Holy Spirit, all were baptized.

The household then are thereby collectively defined as those capable of hearing, understanding, receiving the Holy Spirit and believing. No infants can do such, nor are any mentioned. In the case of Stephanas' household, all who were baptized, it says, were then devoted to the ministry of the saints, 1 Corinthians 15:16, and were helping in the spiritual work of the church, the next verse, verse 16, which is impossible for infants and children. In the case of Lydia, I think it's quite amazing in the case of Lydia that she's the hostess, she invites men into her home, she is a traveling woman who went as far as three hundred miles away would be a real stretch to believe that she was married to start with, or it would seem like her husband would be the host in the home and would do the inviting if men were to be invited in. Strange to imagine a woman traveling in the course of business if she had nursing children in the home. It most likely appears that this is a single woman and it's again, I think, arbitrary to assume there were any children there in that environment.

The text of John 4 verse 53 says, "And he himself believed and his whole household." And in that case where you have household used in John 4, speaking, of course, of the nobleman whose son Jesus healed, again he himself believed and his whole household, clearly the household there must refer to the believing. There's no mention of baptism there. There the household believes to the believing. And I think that is a normative expression for the representation of the household. Certainly couldn't refer to babies at that point because they couldn't have believed. Household is defined as those who believe.

Another text that is used is in Acts 2:38 and 39, just so we remember these, where Peter says, "Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And then verse 39, "The promises for you and your children and for all who are afar off." Some would see here "your children" as representative of babies in the family. I would take it as "your children" here simply means that the condition by which you have received the Holy Spirit, that is repentance and faith, the condition by which you have received the Holy Spirit, will be the same condition by which your offspring will receive the Holy Spirit, repentance and faith.

In other words, it's for your generation and every other generation. And he's speaking to Jews, of course, at that point, and then He adds, "As well as the Gentiles," who are defined as those who are afar off. So what you have here is just a very generic statement about the fact that there's going to be one basic means by which you come into a relationship with God, that is by the hearing of the gospel, responding to the gospel in repentance and faith, and upon that act of repentance and faith, being granted the Holy Spirit and it will be the same for all the generations that come out of your loins. That's not going to change. And for all peoples, both Jew and Gentile. They will be called to the same salvation which will be with the same salvation blessings.

And then one other text, 1 Corinthians 7 is often used because it does make an interesting statement. In the context here, you must understand, I think, first of all the context of 1 Corinthians 7 is about marriage, we all understand that, right? And the underlying problem was in the Corinthian church people were coming to Christ and they were having problems trying to sort out what to do if they were still married to an unregenerate person. I mean, this was before there was real explicit teaching on this obviously, and now you've got a believer married to an unbeliever. Is this aligning with Satan? Is this unequally yoked? Am I in a terrible compromise? Would God speak to me in the same way that He did, you remember, in Ezra's time and said, "Divorce your idolatrous partner and get out of that relationship." What should be my attitude in that environment? That's what's behind this.

This is not a passage about children. In fact, they're only offhandedly mentioned in that one place. This is an issue about, "Should I leave my unconverted spouse?" And in verse 12 he says, "If any brother has a wife that is an unbeliever and she consents to live with him, let him not send her away." It's an expression for the word divorce. Don't divorce your unconverted partner. Simple.

Verse 13, "A woman who has an unbelieving husband, he consents to live with her, don't divorce him." Stay together if there's consent. Why? Why would I do that? "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified." Now in what way could a believer be sanctified? In a limited way, would you agree with that? In a limited....we're not talking about salvation sanctification. We're not talking about the sanctification that we understand as that process by which we are increasingly conformed to the image of Jesus Christ by the work of the Spirit of God. We're not talking about that. We're talking about some kind of setting apart, that's what that word means. They're set apart in some limited way. And, then verse 14 says, "The unbelieving wife is set apart through her believing husband."

In other words, set apart from the full force of ungodly environs. They're set apart. We are fully set apart as being sanctified in Christ. They're sort of minimally spared the full blast of ungodliness because they're in an environment where God's grace is being poured out on their most intimate companion. And therefore, the spill over of that marvelous grace accrues to the comfort and the betterment of life temporally for that unbeliever. And, of course, there is always that possibility of their coming to faith through that influence. First Peter, you remember, where the unbelieving wife is told to win her husband by her godly conduct. The spill over of blessing on godly conduct can influence that individual not only for the betterment of temporal life, but toward faith as well.

Then also adding just as a passing comment, the end of verse 14, "Otherwise your children are unclean but now they are sanctified." Same term, they are set apart. So what happens is, in that home where you have one believing spouse, you have God pouring out the means of grace, God blessing the virtue of that individual, God being good to His own child and consequently mitigating the full blast and the full force of worldly, Godless, Christless, influences and therein lies the manner of that setting apart and nothing more than that. The meaning is don't divorce your unbelieving partner because both that partner and children in the home will feel the goodness of the grace of God upon you. If in fact this is a mandate for infant baptism, and there is no baptism, this is another dry verse again, if this is a mandate for infant baptism, it must be also a mandate for the baptism of that unbelieving partner as an adult cause you can't have one and not the other. And nothing is said at all about anybody being baptized. The issue here is a passing comment with regard to the influence of godliness and that's why you want to stay together.

So the full counsel of God is either expressly set forth in Scripture, or, and I stand on Reformation soil when I say this, the full counsel of God is either expressly set forth in Scripture or can be necessarily compellingly and validly deduced by good and logical consequence but it has to be necessary, compelling, and inescapable, such as the doctrine of the Trinity. I don't see necessary, compelling, inescapable information on the text of the New Testament to include infant baptism.

Second, infant baptism is not New Testament baptism. Infant baptism is not New Testament baptism. Here is a second incontestable fact really. While the Bible is absolutely silent on the matter of infant baptism, it speaks clearly and repeatedly and precisely on the matter of adult believer's baptism. Nobody can miss this, its meaning is crystal-clear in the New Testament. Baptism was a ceremony in which a believer was placed into water and taken up out of that water as an outward sign of their salvation. Two verbs express this reality, bapto and baptizo which mean to immerse, to dip into and they are the word, by the way, for drown. The noun baptismos is used in Acts always to

refer to a believer being immersed into water. The Latin equivalent is *immersio*(?) and *submersio*.

The Greek language has a different word, it's the word *rhantizo* for sprinkle. And the mode does come in because of the imagery involved. Every New Testament use of the *bapto* family requires or permits immersion. Even John Calvin said, and I quote, "The word baptize means to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the early church." And if you mess with that word and you make it something less than immersion in water baptism passages, then you're going to make it something less than immersion in Romans 6 when it means to be immersed into Christ. And now you will confound the meaning of what is the heart and soul of the Christian gospel and that is the sinner by way of justification coming into union with Christ. We cannot mess with the word, we can't...it's like the people who want to deny eternal hell, they just denied eternal heaven at the same time because if you're going to redefine what eternal means in terms of perdition, you've just redefined it in terms of glory also. This ordinance was designed by God and conveyed by the correct inspired words to fit the symbolism that God intended. Water immersion commanded of every believer is a picture and an object lesson and a symbol and a visual analogy of a spiritual truth. It is the way God has designed to teach the truth of personal salvation.

Now what does it symbolize? Well you all know, unmistakably throughout the New Testament, Christian baptism is presented as a picture of the central spiritual truth of salvation. Do you understand that? The central spiritual truth of salvation is this, that one who was a sinner is now IN Christ. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me." I don't even know where I end and He begins we are so immersed. I have been united in His death and resurrection. Romans 6 is unmistakably saying this. And Romans 6 is not talking about any water rite. Romans 6 is talking about a spiritual reality in which God places us spiritually into Christ that we die in Him and we rise to walk in newness of life, Galatians 3, Colossians 2, you know the passages. To be placed into union with Christ, that is the baptism that saves, 1 Peter 3:21. To be spiritually immersed into Christ, this is the washing of regeneration, Titus 3:5. This is the washing away of sin, Acts 22:16.

So immersion into water was and is the inseparable outward sign of that spiritual union. It's the only outward sign that depicts the death, burial and resurrection so clearly defined in Romans chapter 6. And it becomes synonymous with salvation in so far as Jesus used it instead of the word for salvation when He said, "Go into all the world and make disciples." That was the substantive verb and the following verbs are participles that define that. How do I do that? "Baptizing and teaching." Some people would say, "Those words should be converting and teaching," but baptism had become so synonymous that not only could Jesus use it as if it referred to salvation because it did, Paul could use it in Ephesians 4 so explicitly as to say one Lord,....what?...one faith, one baptism.

And so baptism and the Lord's table become the two solemn acts which the Lord appoints for His church. Both give to the believer opportunity to proclaim the death of the Lord who has died for us and with whom we have died so as to walk with Him in a new life. Both of them depict that. The church has had the sacred duty to preserve and administer those precious institutions and legacies of the Lord with conscientious faithfulness and according to the meaning of their founder. But the church has not done that. She has introduced arbitrary changes into the communion, and I think arbitrary changes into baptism. And in the course of time has surrendered the privileges of the saints to the whole world and even forced them upon people. The sacred documents of primitive Christianity, the writings of the New Testament, I think, are pretty clear on that. New Testament baptism today must have the same significance it had then and it is clear what its significance was at that time.

A third point, infant baptism is not a replacement sign for the Abrahamic sign of circumcision. Now we're getting in to the nitty-gritty here. Infant baptism is not a replacement sign for the Abrahamic sign of circumcision. Simply Scripture never makes such a connection. You cannot find such a connection in Scripture. Nowhere does the New Testament ever say infant baptism replaces circumcision. No such connection is ever made. Pedobaptists(?), nonetheless without any specific statements of Scripture claim some inferential evidence connected to circumcision also without any specific statement of Scripture. And the argument simplified sort of goes like this, "Circumcision was the Old Covenant sign of faith while baptism is the New Covenant sign of faith." Since the Old Covenant sign of faith was applicable not only to adults, but and primarily and eventually exclusively to children, the same should be true of the New Covenant sign.

Now I understand that reasoning but I think it's simplistic. I think it way understates the issue. The fact that the Abrahamic Covenant serves as a foundation of faith in which all who are in Christ participate, I will not dispute. I am a spiritual son of Abraham by faith, though I am not an Israelite. I'm not a Jew. But I am a son of Abraham in the sense that I follow his faith. But that circumcision was a sign of personal faith, I reject. I do not see circumcision in the Old Testament as a sign of personal faith. I believe it was something else. I believe it was a symbol of the need for cleansing. There were people who were circumcised as adults who had faith and there were people who were circumcised as adult proselytes, probably Gentiles, who came into Israel who never really had faith in God. They were joining the nation of Israel for whatever reasons. We don't know the genuineness or not of their heart. But circumcision is certainly not to be defined in itself as a sign of faith. I believe that if you look at circumcision honestly, it is more a sign of the desperate depravity of man and the need for God's salvation.

What do you mean by that? Well, if you wanted to identify the depravity of man, how would you do that? If you wanted to say, "Well here's ample evidence of man's depravity, here's the endemic issue of iniquity and here's how I know how deep it runs, what would you point to?" You say, "Well maybe what he says, maybe his speech would betray him." Well some people are dumb and can't talk at all, are they depraved? How do you know they're a manifestation of depravity? And some people guard their speech pretty well. The Pharisees did. Somebody else might say, "Well by what they do." Some people guard what they do fairly well, Mormons do.

No, if you want to know how deep and endemic and systemic and profound depravity is, you don't look at what people say, you don't look at what they do, you look at what they produce. You might not see my depravity. I'm pretty good at covering it up. My life is controlled by preaching and teaching the Word of God and you might not see my depravity, but I'll tell you where it's unmistakable. I have four children and they are all depraved. Not only that, they couldn't kill it either. I have eight reprobate grandchildren. You want to know how depraved you are, you look at the progeny, right?

And I believe by the circumcision of the reproductive organ, God was saying you need a profound cleansing. This one has some health benefit throughout history. It's interesting to read that Jewish women have had the lowest rate of cervical cancer because of the benefit of circumcision physiologically because disease is less readily passed on, but the real issue I believe there is that this was a sign for the need of cleansing at a deep, deep level and that God by His mercy and grace would provide that. I don't think it offered or brought that cleansing, I just think it demonstrated the desperate need for that cleansing.

And furthermore, not only did circumcision not apply as an act of faith or as any kind of cleansing in itself, it wasn't applied to girls at all. They were completely outside it. So I don't see it as some kind of sweeping rite of faith which is normative for everybody, certainly just the elimination of all the women in Israel would be enough to convince me that it was not a normative thing somehow tied to faith.

All the adult members of households had to be circumcised, also. Do you remember reading when Abraham was circumcised? When Abraham was circumcised, so were all the adults in his family. Now if this is going to be the normative pattern, if Abraham's adult circumcision is his normative pattern, then the whole household of new converts would have to be forced to be baptized immediately, which I find an impossible thing. And again, there is no such connection made between circumcision and baptism in the Scripture.

Circumcision was a sign of ethnic identity. This is very important to understand. It was a sign that one was a Jew and was participating, and this is the key, in physical temporal features of the Abrahamic Covenant, not necessarily spiritual ones. Not all Israel is Israel, circumcise your hearts, the prophet said. The spiritual promises and realities of the Abrahamic Covenant were only efficacious to those who later believed, right? There can be no efficacy at the initial point of circumcision, that is purely entry into the ethnic, social, earthly participation in temporal features by which God blessed or in some cases cursed Israel. And if you were in the nation, you got them both. In fact, you got more curses than blessings.

In terms of circumcision, Paul in Philippians 3, called it excrement, just to use the word. Ethnic identity and participation in an earthly covenant did not provide him the righteousness of God which you receive by faith in Jesus Christ. And when he saw that, he said that's manure, that's dung. A person born in Israel of Abrahamic covenant seed then was physically related to temporal and external blessings and nothing more.

The New Testament, however, changes that dramatically since in the New Covenant, listen, there is no such thing as a physical participant in temporal and earthly features attached to the land and the race. The New Covenant knows nothing of physical temporal limitations. The Scriptures, for example, nowhere refer to a remnant of the faithful within the New Covenant. There's no such thing as a doctrine of the remnant in the New Testament. You don't have a whole group of covenant people in which there's a little believing remnant in the New Testament. And if you ever do question that, then you need to deal with the text of Jeremiah 31:31 to 34 which is the watershed issue, I believe, on this whole discussion.

In Jeremiah 31:31 to 34 he promises the New Covenant. And here's what Jeremiah says. "There's a covenant coming, it's not like the covenant you know, it is a New Covenant." And he says this, "Here's how it's different." And of all the options that Jeremiah picked, of all the things that Jeremiah could have said, of all the choices that he could have made to distinguish the New Covenant from the Old, this is what he said, verse 34, "They shall all know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them." The essence of the New Covenant is everybody in it knows God savingly. That is the, I think, the significant distinction between belonging to the Abrahamic Covenant ethnically, and belonging to the New Covenant savingly. And so a sign that suited an ethnic covenant is not parallel to a sign that suits a saving covenant. And therein baptism is to be made distinct from circumcision.

And again I remind you, the Scripture does make no such connection. If there were to be a connection made, I would think the better connection, just a suggestion for you Reformed folks who hold to infant baptism, if you want to make a better connection, you should connect New Testament

baptism with the baptism of John the Baptist. If anything serves as transitional, that does. And you find in the baptism of John very clearly a pattern of baptism the likes of which you also see in sort of intertestamental proselyte baptism, but I think John's is even unique from that. What you see in John's baptism is repentance, first of all, conscious repentance and a preparation for the Messiah. And in fact, he blistered with a malediction hardly without equal until Matthew 23 those leaders of Israel who came out there and he called them snakes and asked them what in the world are you unrepentant people doing here? Trying to get in on this baptism.

So if you want a parallel New Testament baptism with anything, you're on much safer ground with the baptism of John because it's a baptism of repentance and because it is a baptism of immersion which can prefigure and demonstrate the death and resurrection of Christ and it is a baptism in which Jesus Himself participated, I think, not only to fulfill all righteousness, but also to fill it with the meaning that Christian baptism would eventually have. It is clear in my mind that John the Baptist did not regard membership in the Messianic community as a matter of birth right, did he? He refused to baptize Jews who were not repentant. I think that's a better partner for New Testament baptism.

Fourthly, and this will just be a brief point, I think I have about seven or eight minutes left. Infant baptism is not consistent with the nature of the church...infant baptism is not consistent with the nature of the church. What happens with infant baptism is you now have confusion as to the identity of the church. Confusion stems from the failure to distinguish between the visible local church, including unbelievers, and the invisible universal church which is only believers. In fact, it is true that pedobaptism(?) strikes a serious blow against the doctrine of a regenerate church. Further confusion lies in the failure to differentiate clearly between what it means to be a little member of the Covenant, as a baby, and what it means to be a true child of God. It is my conviction that the Scripture teaches the true church is made up of only believers. That's unlike Israel. You can't make a parallel. It's unlike Israel.

The rest of people apart from believers whether baptized or not baptized, whether confirmed or not confirmed, do not belong to the redeemed church. And they are at best tares to be burned. They are at best branches fruitless to be cut off and burned. And I really believe that infant baptism confounds the clear identity of a redeemed church because you have a world full of Catholics and Protestants who have been baptized as babies, ranging all the way from hypocritically religious, apostate religious through indifferent to outright godless, Christ-rejecting and blasphemous. And the question is...are they in the church or are they not in the church? If they're out of it, when did they get out of it? Infant baptism, I believe, is a holdover from the absolutist state church system and an evidence of an incomplete Reformation which incomplete Reformation I believe sentenced that new redeemed community in Europe to the terrible, terrible death that it died, the death of which we can see even today.

I am convinced that unless you have a regenerate church, you have chaos. But with the absolute church system in the national sovereign church, which, of course, the Catholic Church had all that power and the Reformers wanted some power to counter Rome, and so while Luther started out with a good intention of freedom of the conscience and all of that, eventually they started imposing everything on people and they...I think they forced back in the infant baptism thing to create the state church control that could allow them to have a power base to fight against not only each other, the Lutheran fought the Reformed, but the Roman states also. State Christendom in every form, Catholic, Protestant, Lutheran and Reformed, I think, misunderstands New Testament church doctrine. And it's sad to think that Luther abandoned his original lofty idealism where he contended a Christianity of freedom and renouncing force and living by the Word and the Spirit and backed up

into a state church perspective.

But Luther said this, and I think this is maybe the truest expression of his heart. "I say that God wants no compulsory service. I say it a hundred thousand times, God wants no compulsory service. No one can or ought to be compelled to believe for the soul of man is an eternal thing above all that is temporal. Therefore only by an eternal Word must it be governed and grasped for it is simply insulting to govern in God's presence with human law and long custom. Neither the Pope, nor a Bishop, nor any other man has the right to decree a single syllable concerning a Christian man apart from his consent. All that comes to pass otherwise comes to pass in the spirit of tyranny," end quote.

Sadly he allowed, I think, what he hated to take place. There's no...there's no tragedy greater, I don't think, coming out of the Reformation than the fact that the true church got executed, got stamped out under the massive weight of the state church system. There is no doctrine of the remnant in the New Testament, no such teaching. And I believe with sad darkening of Reformation light was the secularizing of the church, they brought back the very thing that Constantine had brought in it, they tried to get rid of. Sadly, modern Protestant Europe is as dark as old Catholic Europe. A state church and biblical Christianity are and always will be completely opposed to each other. The true church is not of this world, does not incorporate the unconverted. Infant baptism served the state church well, but horribly confuses the true church. And then you have to bring up the question...how do you do church discipline? How do we do church discipline on these people?

Well, a final point, number five. Infant baptism is not consistent with Reformational soteriology. Now that ought to rancor a few folks, but I'm just doing my part here on my side now. Infant baptism is not consistent with Reformational soteriology.

I have through the years, I'm being a little personal, I have through the years tried to help fundamental evangelical Bible believing Christians understand the gospel. Isn't that a sad thing? But that's what I've tried to do. I have...if there's any one single subject I have worked more diligently on than any other it's the clarity of the gospel. And when you spend years and years and years of your life coming to a crystal-clear understanding of justification by grace through faith alone, and what it means to affirm the Lordship of Christ and all that is bound up in salvation, that becomes a very precious reality to you. And I don't want to be anecdotal and I don't want to make a point personally, but I can only tell you from my understanding of the broad picture of salvation, I cannot for the life of me find anything that infant baptism contributes to that but confusion.

Because there is no faith in the child, there is no comprehension of the gospel, there is no repentance in the child, what then is this and what do you have? And they talk about, "Well you have sort of a peremptory election act, or you have a peremptory salvation act in the child." You can read the strangest kind of statements that are made. I wrote down about 25 different statements from books I read on what the baptism of an infant meant, and they were all varying shades of all kinds of things, but all agreeing that it didn't save but it put them in some place where they were more fortunate and likely to be more blessed by God. And I say that's no different place than any child would have, baptized or unbaptized living in a godly environment.

And that's the point of 1 Corinthians 7. It is a needless thing to do because it ministers no saving grace to the child, it guarantees no future salvation to the child. And on the other hand, it perpetuates a misconception in the mind of parents that against all evidence, this child is somehow saved because of some event that occurred at their baptism. Luther had to go so far as to finally say they have unconscious faith because he knew salvation was by faith. Children are children, they do not

understand. I cannot for the life of me understand why you'd want the convolute, the purity and the clarity of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone to the one who comes and repents of sin and embraces Jesus Christ with this act which admittedly has no saving efficacy, delivers no redeeming grace, infers no faith, is not symbolic of any union with Christ. The only point of it is to confound the person about what this meant and to confound the church with an unregenerate membership. Why not defer the sign until the reality of saving faith? Nothing is lost. Certainly doesn't change election. And I think it helps...it helps to wait until a calling and election are sure. It doesn't change anything for the child, but rather could hamper a child's true understanding of their spiritual condition.

The confusion in Christendom would be greatly lessened. The church would be instantly purged. Christ would be honored if there weren't millions of people outside salvation running around with a false security and bearing an untrue symbol of an unreal condition. I really feel that we Reformed folks need to finish the Reformation here and I see this as a way to do that.

Two ways are before us. I really believe one embodies ritualism, institutional church mixed with the saved and lost. Christianized pagans, as one writer said, is a relic of potpourri. The other leads to faith alone, the glory of the cross and resurrection and the true identity of the redeemed church. Baptism is at the crossroads. The cry of the Reformation was not tradition, tradition, tradition...the fathers, the fathers, the fathers...but Scripture, Scripture, Scripture. Thank you. (Applause)

Part 2: [Case for Infant Baptism: The Historic Paedo-Baptist Position](#)

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