

One Baptism

by Tim Conway

This sermon emphasizes the unifying reality of being baptized into one body, highlighting the importance of being fully immersed into the realm of Christ and His people. The speaker delves into the significance of spiritual gifts, individual roles within the church, and the responsibility to build up the body in love. The imagery of baptism into the body of Christ is portrayed as a powerful and unifying concept that calls for active participation and engagement within the community of believers.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 4:4, Romans 6:3, Galatians 3:27

Topics: "Unity in Christ", "Spiritual Gifts and Community Engagement"

Description

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Transcript

Let's pray. Father, I pray that You would make our brother David Butterbaugh a blessing to the church down there in Corpus. Father, I'm thankful not only has one of the elders from Corpus gone to Lebanon, but the other is constantly providing oversight to Reynosa.

We pray that You'd, Lord, use our brother Mark there, our brother Diego. Pray for that church in Reynosa. And may You strengthen them and grow them and may they be a lively witness there along that north border of Mexico.

Lord, we think of our sister Bethany as she's overdue in birth, and I just pray, Lord, that Your hand would be upon her and may this birth go well and may You strengthen her, give her endurance through this. Bring the baby soon. Father, we pray now that Your hand would be upon all of us as the Word is opened up.

I pray that as I try to form words with my mouth and proclaim them and give utterance, I pray that Your Spirit would grant me utterance and grant us something profitable and good for us. I pray in Christ's name, Amen. Okay, Ephesians 4. Verse 1, I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing

with one another in love.

This really, verse 3, summarizes all the way down to verse 16 what the primary focus is of the Apostle. Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And then here are the building blocks, if we could put it that way, of this unity.

Maybe the foundation blocks for this unity. This is upon what our unity is built. There's one body.

Our unity is not separate from theological realities and doctrinal realities, but it's built on them. One body and one Spirit just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

But grace was given to each one of us. Now notice that. What I want you to see here is that unity is built on these doctrinal realities.

One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. It's built on that, but notice where he's going. But it almost seems like if you just dive in right here, it almost seems disjointed.

Verse 7, but grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Well, where did that come from? But here's the thing, this is precisely the same thing Paul is dealing with over in 1 Corinthians 12. I don't want you to turn there right now, but we're going to go there eventually.

You see, unity and gifts are connected in Paul's thinking. Why? Because gifts vary. We're different.

We're not clones. And the Spirit hasn't made us clones. The Spirit has designed us with different gifts, different strengths, but we are all in one body.

And so even though there's differences, those differences, he's calling for the unity of the Spirit for us to be eager to maintain that. So it's not a strange thing that all of a sudden we would get hit by this. Grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

You see, spiritual gifts is what's on the table here. Therefore it says, when He ascended on high, He led a host of captives and He gave gifts to men. Now, what I want to deal with today is one baptism.

Yeah, I was really tempted to include that with one God and Father of all, or maybe even more than that and just kind of shoo it on. But here's the thing, the term baptism is a powerful word. I think of that word a lot because it's used in Scripture and it conjures imagery.

The meaning behind it is really a strong one. And so I just want to take a little bit of time and deal with that today. One baptism.

Now, it would be really interesting to ask you all separately to tell me what you think that is. And the reality is controversy abounds. We might think that Paul would say that if we're eager to cause division in the church, then just insist on the fact that there's one baptism.

Because baptism is a highly volatile thing. If ever there was anything that has a tendency to divide people, even in this church, people have left over the issue of baptism. And I'm not just talking about some of the most recent situations, but we've had different issues with baptism.

Even some ongoing presently in our church, there's questions and discussion. One baptism. What is this? Look, if you look back historically, the salvation army, and I'm not talking just about what we think about it today.

I'm talking about back in the days of William Booth when it really was a salvation army. They ignored baptism altogether. Quakers.

And I'm not talking about the guy on the oatmeal thing. There was a day when Quakers, they were probably good and godly. But you know what? They didn't baptize.

And then, on the other hand, you get the reformers, and what did they do? They basically did not reform at this point. They held on to the Catholic practice of sprinkling unsaved infants. The church of Christ, Catholicism, Mormonism, they all have a sort of baptism.

That's what they call it. And they somehow attach this reality that it's an essential component of our salvation. When I say reality, it's a reality to them.

Many embrace what's called baptismal regeneration. And we might include the Catholics there. But Anglicans, Episcopalians, Lutherans, there's basically this mindset that baptism regenerates.

So you've got that. Some immerse. Some sprinkle.

Some pour. Some do things that are in between somewhere. The Mormons baptize for the dead.

Some people have this idea. We come across this on a regular basis. Some people have the idea that because they're coming from somewhere else, they're coming from another denomination, that somehow maybe their baptism isn't good or valid.

And some people have that mindset. Well, you need to be baptized in the circles that you're a part of. Some believe baptism is only for the saved.

Some believe that it includes our covenant children even if they're not saved. So would say Congregationalists and Presbyterians. EVFrees, they kind of go both ways.

There's toleration for Baptists and non-Baptists. You know this, if you look at the Charismatic circles, they insist on baptizing in whose name? The name of Jesus. And then you get other people, oh, you have to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

I have a book at home on my shelf by Conrad Murrell. He believes that there are four baptisms. He believes that there is a baptism into Christ, baptism into water, a baptism into the Spirit, and a baptism in fire.

Other good men disagree with his take. Is he right? Is he wrong? Who's right? Who's wrong? And in the midst of all of it, what in the world is the one baptism? Because that sounds like there's a whole lot of different ones. Now I recognize in some of those circles, you may say, well, we don't even put them in the category of orthodox Christianity.

Okay, that's right. We would agree. They don't even have the Gospel.

So let alone do they have the one baptism, but among people who we would consider orthodox, there's all manner of opinions and ideas. But here's Paul in Ephesians 4-5. And I can just see him.

So cool. So certain. So confident and collected.

And he just says it. There's one baptism. I wish he was preaching this sermon, not me.

I mean, I'd be sitting on the edge of my seat. Wouldn't you? I'm hoping I can be just as truth-delivering as he would be. Because the truth is, we do have what God wants us to know Paul taught preserved for us in here.

And so somewhere in here, there must be the key that unlocks this. If I have it on good authority, inspired authority, that this book is sufficient to equip the man of God, and I believe it is. I believe that every answer we need to living our spiritual lives is to be found in this book.

God left us with a complete guide. We don't always feel that. I mean, I'm constantly saying, Lord, more light, more light, more light, help.

You know what most people do? They do the same thing with one baptism that they do with one faith. I was talking to a sister last week after the service, and she was telling me about her dad. And I said, you know, what everybody does is they basically take what they believe and say that's the one faith.

And she said, yes, that's exactly what my dad does. And you know, a lot of people do that with baptism too. What's the one baptism? Well, certainly, it's what I believe it is.

And then the next guy says the same thing, and he believes something different, and then this thing isn't unifying. You've got your idea. I've got my idea.

I remember watching something. I think it was that movie called The Radicals, and it was about the Anabaptists. And you know, the Amish and the Mennonites and those kind of folks put this thing together, and at the end there when they're breaking away from Catholicism, they've got them kneeling in the river and they're dumping water on their head.

I'm thinking, no! It's immersion. Why are they doing that? These are supposed to be the descendants of the Anabaptists. Everybody's got their ideas.

Whoever made that has their idea about what's the baptism? What's appropriate? Well, so much controversy. I know this. There's no way I can preach on this subject without somebody taking issue with me.

Brethren, hear me. I remember back when we were at Hackberry, and I don't remember what compelled me to do this, but I'm just trying to lay some of the foundational things in place for the church back in those early days. I preached on the Sabbath.

And you know what? I had listened to messages. I had listened to the most prominent series that Reformed Baptists had done on the Sabbath. Because I thought, well, I just haven't come across the proof for the Christian Sabbath yet, but these guys, they certainly know where it is.

So I'm going to listen to all of them and I'll find it. They know lots more than I do. But you know what? I found that they conflicted with each other.

I found that their arguments were not strong on many points. And you know what? I was convinced, when I stand up before this church, I am accountable to God. And I am not accountable to denomination.

I am not accountable to any man. And when I preach on the Sabbath, I am going to say what I can clearly find in Scripture. And if it's not clearly in Scripture, I'm not going to say it.

And you know what's not in Scripture? That the Sabbath went from being on the seventh day to the first day. That text doesn't exist. And so, I couldn't stand up and preach that.

It's kind of the same thing with baptism. I'm going to tell you what is in this book that I can see. Now I recognize there are things in this book that I can't see.

But what do you expect me to do? I can't preach on what I don't see. All I can do is preach on what I see. But I want you to see it in Scripture as well.

I mean, that's where I'm at. That's the safe place to stand. So let's start with the definition of baptism.

We can't even define the word without entering the realm of some emotionally charged controversy. And here's why. Here's one of the reasons.

The word baptism was purposely left untranslated in our Bibles. Translators chose to do something that wasn't translation. They chose to do something called transliteration.

All that means is that the translators took the Greek word baptizo. In English, that basically is B-A-P-T-I-Z-O. Baptizo.

You know what they did? Well, just remove the O, slap an E on the end, and voila! We got baptized. That's what they did. That's transliteration.

They basically anglicized the word. They Englishized the word. They didn't translate the word.

And there's reasons why they do that. I think all that begs the question, why would a translator do that? Why would they ever get a word and decide not to translate it and instead just tweak it a little bit and make it sound English? Listen, it wasn't because no one knew what baptizo meant. I mean, listen, listen to even John Calvin.

And the only reason I bring him up is because if anybody is the classic reformer, John Calvin, listen to what he said. The word baptizo means to immerse. Yeah, I'm thankful he's so honest.

Because he didn't baptize by immersion, by the way. He baptized like the rest of the reformers, which isn't a baptism at all. It's just they sprinkled little babies with water.

Listen to what he says. Not only does Calvin say the word baptizo means to immerse, he says this, and it is clear that the rite of immersion was observed in the ancient church. He doesn't even argue that.

It's like you scratch your head like, well, Calvin, why then did you not conform to Scripture? According to the lexicons, Greek lexicons, all of them say, I'm sure you can find one somewhere, but all the ones I looked at, all the prominent ones, baptizo means to immerse. But here's the thing, the reason they didn't translate it that way is because there were all manner of political and religious ramifications in the days when those early English translations were being translated. You know who most of the guys were? Very

seldom did you find a Baptist among them.

Or even Presbyterians. By and large, they were Anglican. And those Anglican scholars who translated the King James Version as well as the scholars behind many of the other early English translations, you know what their practice was? Their practice was sprinkling unsaved children with water.

And so, you know what happens when you're assigned to translate Scripture? They were presented with three options. One, translate it what it is. Immerse.

But then you see their problem. All manner of problem. Because suddenly, they're confronted by their own translation that they are wrong.

And not only they themselves, they're confronting their whole denomination. They're confronting the whole church of England. Two, you could mistranslate it and say, well, we're just going to call it sprinkle.

But then you're not being faithful to God's Word. Or third, we can avoid both of those two problems altogether by just simply not translating it. So, they avoided all the political and religious turmoil they would have caused by actually translating the Word.

Listen to this. One of the classic lexicons is the Thayer's Greek Lexicon. Just very simply.

What does it mean? Immersion, submersion. That's it. They didn't need lengthy description.

The Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich Lexicon says this, Baptizo primarily means to immerse. You say, oh, there it is. There's an exception, right? No.

Listen to what they say. Baptizo primarily means to immerse. It can also be translated to dip, to wash, or plunge.

But in all instances, the result is full immersion. Vine's Dictionary adds this. It actually holds the meaning of to overwhelm with.

And I like that. Overwhelm. And it's got to do with whether the object is placed in something or whether the something comes down and covers.

Overwhelm. I like that. And here's the thing, the word for pour is found in Scripture and it gets translated, but never baptizo.

The word sprinkle, it's found in Scripture and it never gets translated from baptizo. You see, there were different words for pour and there were different words for sprinkle. So, it's not like the words for sprinkle or pour weren't available to the original authors.

They were very much. There's no confusion. It's not like, well, in Greek, there's one word that means all those things.

Uh-uh, that's not the case at all. And here's the problem. By not translating the word, you know what happens? The reader is left to basically define baptizo any way he wants to because it never got translated.

You can say, well, I think it means this. Somebody else can say, well, I think it means this. And it never got translated.

And here's the problem, once they did that with regards to water baptism, they were backed into a corner. Now, every time the word shows up, even when it's got spiritual implications, even when it's not talking about water baptism, they were locked into transliterating it. Because you don't go translate it immersed somewhere else and leave it baptized over here.

Somebody's going to say, well, it obviously means that. See, they give themselves away. Once they did it in one place, they had to do it in every place.

And you say, well, is that significant? Well, it is when you think about how it's used in some other places. Let me just give you one example. Jesus said this, I have a baptism to be baptized with and how great is My distress until it is accomplished.

Can you imagine somebody thinking I have a sprinkling to be sprinkled with? Brethren, this touches the cross. This touches the sufferings and the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, when He says I have a baptism to be baptized with, remember the word means immerse or to overwhelm.

This is the idea of the overwhelming afflictions and judgments to which the Lord was voluntarily submitting Himself to on that cross. It's a shame they're not able to express that. Only a baptism to be baptized with, we understand the word, but I'll tell you this, if you don't make that Christ being totally swallowed up by these sufferings, if you make it sprinkling, if you make it something less than being immersed and overwhelmed with, you cheapen the cross.

See, there's consequences when you don't translate this word and then you leave it for people to basically define however they want to. Because whatever you say it means in one place, you better say it means everywhere. And we could look at other places.

But let's talk very quickly about baptisms that we find in Scripture. You probably, your minds can think of some. You've got John's baptism.

But remember this, John said, I baptize you with water, but there's One coming after Me who is before Me whose sandals I'm not worthy to touch or to unlatch. And what did he say? What did John say that Jesus Christ would do? He's going to baptize us with the Holy Spirit. So when you start looking at Scripture, you've got John's baptism.

You have Jesus' baptism, which He's going to baptize us with the Holy Spirit and fire. See, that's one place where there's lots of controversy. Conrad Merrill would say, well, that's a total separate... Spurgeon would disagree with that.

Jameson Fawcett Brown. I tend to believe that that's the fiery operations of the Spirit on the soul. I think it's synonymous.

Being baptized with the Holy Spirit, being baptized with fire. That it's not something separate. But then you have Jesus' disciples were baptizing with water.

So you have Jesus' water baptism, which we might say is Christian baptism, which when we go to all the nations and we make disciples, we're to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. You've got that water baptism. That water baptism is clearly different than John's baptism because remember what happened when Paul found some disciples there at Ephesus? He said, how are you baptized? Well, we only know John's baptism.

Well, he re-baptized them in the name of Jesus. So you've got Jesus' water baptism. You've got John's water baptism.

You've got Jesus' spiritual baptism with the Holy Spirit. But we heard about Jesus. Jesus had a baptism to be baptized with.

What else? Have you ever read there in 1 Corinthians 10 that it talks about the people in the wilderness were baptized into Moses? So we've got the baptism into Moses. What else? But then you've got the spiritual realities that seem to be portrayed in water baptism. We are baptized into Jesus Christ.

Right? That's Romans 6 and Galatians 3.27. Baptized into Christ. In Romans 6, it talks about being baptized into His death. And then in 1 Corinthians 12, you know what you have? You have the Spirit baptizing us into one body.

And the Word shows up in a lot of different ways throughout Scripture. Okay, so in light of all that, which one is the one? Which is it? What do we do? Flip a coin? Before I tell you what I believe Paul is talking about here, let's just think about baptism for a second. There are three essential components to baptism.

Think about this. When we do what we would consider Christian baptism here in this church, we've got water out there, right? We've got water. And then we've got the person who's being baptized.

What should we call them? Baptizee? And we've got the baptizer, right? Typically, two of the elders do the baptizing. You have the individual being baptized. The active persons are the ones doing the baptizing.

If you are baptized, that is a passive verb. The action is happening to you. And then there's a medium into which the individual is placed.

Now those three components are important any time we're talking about baptism because we want to think about who is doing the baptizing, who is receiving the baptism, and into what medium are they being and this is where the meaning of the word is important, immersed into or overwhelmed with. So you think about it. John's baptism.

John is the Baptist. He's the baptizer. The individuals that were coming out to him, they're the ones being baptized.

The medium is water. Now when Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit, Jesus is the baptizer. We are the ones being baptized.

And we're being immersed into the Spirit. Remember, you know what the argument is of 1 Corinthians 10? The argument is this. Don't be so bold, Christian, to think that just because you were baptized and just because you're part and parcel with the people of God and meet in the same place and cart around the Bible, that it's going to go okay with you if you're sitting down at the table with demons and you're still involved in idolatry and the idolatrous practices.

Because here's his argument. He said, you know what? Those people that were out there in the wilderness, that's for your instruction. Us, upon whom the ends of the world has come.

That's for our instruction. And he said, you know what? You've been baptized, but they were baptized too. They were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

What does that mean? Baptized into Moses. It means that the medium into which they were placed was Moses. You say, what does that mean? Think about what it means to go into water.

When you go into the water, the water takes you in. You go into the sphere of the water. You go into the realm where the water is over you.

It covers you. You're immersed into that. You see, the idea here is if you're immersed into Moses, it means you're submerged into that realm where He's leading, He's guiding.

It's the realm of Moses. You're identifying with Him. And this is what he's saying.

They identified with Moses. And yet, they went out there. They had all these benefits.

They ate the manna. They walked behind that pillar. Cloud and fire.

God took them through the Red Sea. But he says in the end, they all perished. And he's saying, just because you were baptized and just because all these things happened to be and you sit down at the Lord's Supper, don't think you can provoke the Lord.

Anyways, that's what's behind all of that kind of talk. But what I'm talking about right now is these three essential components. And I'm wanting to hit on the influence of the medium because that's so important.

What we're being baptized into. Sometimes in water baptism, it signifies something. It's portraying something.

But typically in these baptisms, there's a reality. There's something that is not just being portrayed. There's something that is actually taking place.

The medium is the sphere of influence into which you're being submersed. It's where you're identifying. You think about the person.

When you lower them down into the water, what happened? They're going from the place they were before, which was where? Out of the water. And you're taking them, you're separating from that place of being out of the water and separating them into another realm. It's the idea of influence, realm, sphere.

That's the idea behind all of this. It's literally to yield yourself up to or to be given up to the water. The water takes you.

I mean, this is one of the reasons why I don't like to leave any part, not even their hair, outside of the water. Because I want to capture the picture. And when we're putting them down, we force them under there, into the water.

We want them to be swallowed up by the water because that captures the picture. This is what's behind. Look, if you're not even straight on the definition of baptism, then you can't capture what is actually happening in baptism.

It is a strong word. It is an engulfing word. It consumes the person.

It swallows them up. They are plunged in there. They are submersed.

They are immersed. Overwhelmed with. That's the idea.

And I'll tell you, we've got to move beyond the water baptism because the realities behind it are most glorious. Spiritually speaking, you think about Jesus saying that I have a baptism to be baptized with. Think about that.

Who's the baptizer? Well, He talks there about a cup. At the same time, He's talking about that baptism. And He says something about drinking that cup.

Well, what was in that cup? We talk about the wrath of God being in that cup. Who is the one that is baptizing Jesus? We read in Scripture that God gave Him up. God His Father is the baptizer.

Jesus is the baptizee. And what is He being immersed into? Sorrow, pain, suffering, wrath. Death.

It's a strong word. It swallowed Him up. He was in distress until He accomplished it.

You read Psalm 22. This thing overtook Him. His soul was poured out.

This was no sprinkling. To even think that way is to so misrepresent this word. Think about this.

Spiritually speaking, we are said to be baptized into Christ. That's Romans 6.3, Galatians 3.27. We're the baptized. Christ is that into which we are immersed.

Who is the baptizer? You know, in those places where that's found, we're not told specifically in the context in Romans 6 or in Galatians 3 who the baptizer is. Perhaps the Father. Maybe more likely the Spirit.

Christ is that into which we are immersed. What does that mean? You see, when you go in the water, you come under the influence of the water. I tell you, you can't breathe under there.

You're under the influence of the water. Oh, in Christ, you can breathe. The air is good there.

But think about to be immersed into Christ. The idea is we come under His influence. We come into His sphere.

We come out of that realm of darkness and we are immersed. We are contained in. We are swallowed up.

We're overwhelmed. Would you want to leave part of your body out? I mean, this is the picture when we baptize. Would you want to leave part out? No, this is totally coming into that sphere and realm.

Okay, but now think with me here. In 1 Corinthians 12, what it seems like is the Spirit baptizes us into one body. The Spirit is the baptizer.

We are the baptized. The medium is the body. The church.

Okay, so Paul says there's one baptism that unites all of us as Christians. Which of these is he talking about? I can confidently say that he is talking about the last one that I mentioned. Now, look with me at 1 Corinthians 12.

Leave your finger there in Ephesians 4 because we're going to go back to it. Leave your finger in Ephesians 4. Go to 1 Corinthians 12. I want you to see this.

I want you to feel the parallels between Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12. 1 Corinthians 12.13 Now, if you've got the ESV, it reads this way. For in one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body.

Jews are great, slaves are free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit. There's some discussion as to which preposition is best. Though the ESV does not demonstrate this, the majority of English translations are in agreement that this should be read by one Spirit, not in one Spirit.

Most English translations put, by. But, whether you put in there or whether you put by, you can't get away from this reality that in the original, this reads this way. By one Spirit or in one Spirit, we all into one body were baptized.

In the original, that's the order of the words. Into one body, we were baptized. How can I be so certain that this is what Paul has in mind? Well, think with me here.

Just notice the parallels. In Ephesians 4.3, he talks about being eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. When you come over to 1 Corinthians 12.25, that there may be no division in the body.

He's talking about no division. He's talking about unity. That's his concern.

That's why he's writing. In Ephesians 4.7-8, grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. It's talking about spiritual gifts.

It's talking about the fact that each one, notice, each one of us has the grace that is according to the measure of Christ's gift towards each of us. He gave gifts to men. In 1 Corinthians 12.11, all these different gift types are empowered by one and the same Spirit.

I recognize in Ephesians, Christ is shown as being behind the gift. Over in 1 Corinthians 12, the Spirit is the one who apportions to each one individually as He wills. But in both of them, it's each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Each one of us apportioned as the Spirit wills. This unity idea and spiritual gifts is the same reality in both places. You have the same emphasis.

Notice Ephesians 4.4-6. You get one Spirit. You get one Lord. You get one God.

When you go to 1 Corinthians 12.4-6, varieties of gifts, same Spirit. Varieties of service, same Lord. Varieties of activities, the same God.

You see, he's talking in the same terms here. Oh, it's different. I recognize.

But it's the same if you've got eyes to see. Ephesians 4-6... excuse me, let's look at Ephesians 4.11. He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers. These are some of the distinct gifts that Christ gave to men.

1 Corinthians 12.28, God is appointed in the church. First, apostles. Second, prophets.

Third, teachers. You see, same thing. Not exactly the same, but definitely similar enough that we feel the thrust here that Paul's going down the same path.

In Ephesians 4.4-6, there's one body and one Spirit. And in v. 5, there's one baptism. Well, when you go to 1 Corinthians 12.13, there you see one Spirit, one body, all baptized.

Yes, no, he doesn't call it one baptism there, but he's saying what the baptism is. This is the most defining statement in all of Scripture concerning a proper interpretation of Ephesians 4. You're not going to find clearer. So, 1 Corinthians 12.13, by one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body.

And then he gives the same thrust that I was focusing on last week. All of these things in Paul's mind really have to do with bringing Jew and Gentile together. And that's what he says.

Baptized into one body. Jews or Greeks. Slaves or free.

All were made to drink of one Spirit. Now, this is all a passive verb. We don't baptize ourselves.

It's done to us. Now, think with me here. We have these three components of baptism.

You have the baptizer, the baptizee, and the medium into which we are baptized. And when he talks about one Spirit, one body, and this baptism, the Holy Spirit, most of the English translations are going to take that preposition and make it by. If you make it by, He's the baptizer.

Even if you said in one Spirit, into one body we are baptized, it may not put the same kind of dogmatic focus on the Spirit being the baptizer, but nevertheless, what is it we're baptized into? It's one body. And you can't get away from that however you do the preposition concerning the Spirit. You... see, the picture here is this.

The baptism that he has in mind is that you are being immersed into the body of Christ. One body. That's the church.

God's people. That's the idea. Now, many would say being baptized into one body is exactly the same thing as being baptized into Christ.

People say that. And you know, there's the text. Do you not know that all of us have been baptized into Christ Jesus? We're baptized into His death? Galatians says for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Colossians 2, having been buried with Him in baptism. Look, I certainly won't fight with those who are dogmatic that all these spiritual realities portrayed in water baptism are the true baptism and that is the baptism that unites us all. It's the baptism into Christ.

But here's the thing, I know and I've read, there are a lot of guys that say, oh, the baptism into the body is really just the same thing as being baptized into Christ. Well, I would say this, if Paul's been talking about being baptized into Christ, why say it differently? Because here's the truth. The body of Christ does not equal Christ.

Now, the body of Christ is attached to Christ. The body of Christ is united to Christ. And if you want to really argue for that, I'm not going to fight against you.

Obviously, that's included in what it means to be baptized in the body. You can't be baptized into the body without being baptized into Christ. One body is the body of Christ.

But listen, the picture presented to the mind, that's what I want to hit on. The picture presented to the mind is different. When you think about being immersed into the sphere of Christ, the realm of Christ, if you think about the person being baptized and you imagine them being immersed into His death, you can see

that.

If you think about being immersed into the realm of Christ and yielding to Him, being overwhelmed by Him and His sphere and His presence, that has a certain picture. But I think we all have to admit that when we say somebody is baptized into the body, one body, now that's a different picture in your mind. Though they may be, oh, so integrally connected, but it's a different picture.

It brings a different picture into your head. Like you disappear into the water. I mean, if you're baptizing into Christ, you disappear into the water.

Your identity is lost in the water. You're baptized into Christ. Your identity is lost in Him.

You're no longer separate from Him. You were separate outside of the water before. But now you've entered into this realm.

The Christ realm. That's being baptized into Christ. But the body is different than Christ.

Attached to Christ. Christ is the head. But think with me.

This is a sampling of the one body. The one body. All of Christ's people.

But you think about that picture. You are submerged into the one body. You are immersed into the one body.

What does that look like? You take yourself. You're the baptizee. What is the medium? The medium into the church, into the water.

There's the picture there. It's the person being saved. The Spirit saves the person.

The person regenerates them. And what happens? Yes, there is an immersion into Christ. There's an immersion into His death, His burial, crucified with Him, and His resurrection.

Listen, the way Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 12 is unique. In fact, the only other place where you find that kind of similar talk is Ephesians 4. But it's the picture of you being submerged into the people of God. Now think about that.

When you're immersed into the realm of Christ, it's like on every hand. Above me and below me, beside me, around me. I am in this realm of Christ now.

I have been translated into a new realm, a new sphere, a new identity. But this idea is the water. The water.

The molecules of the water. The components of the water. This imagery is different.

It's like look around. What do you see? I see a sea of God's saved people. That's the imagery here.

I'm not a Lone Ranger. I'm not a maverick. I'm not solo in this thing.

I don't go it alone. Think of a person being baptized. They're being immersed into.

Think of each new Christian like that. They're being plunged into our midst. The midst of the people of God.

Into that realm. Into that identity. You don't lose your individuality.

It's not like taking a drop of water and throwing it in a lake to where it's just gone. It's absorbed. No, we still are unique.

We still have our own personal identity. That's what Paul's dealing with. We all have been apportioned differently.

The Spirit and Christ know us individually and apportion to us individually and work with us individually and have an individual place for us in the church, but it's in the church. It's immersed in. It's not being separated from.

It's losing oneself into the realm of the people of God. Not losing yourself so that you're not still you. And it's not being clones of each other.

You are swallowed and overwhelmed into a body. Remember, Jew and Gentile. Very diverse.

A diversity of the people of Christ. But you are in there. Now, what's the significance? I'm trying to be honest with this text.

There might be people who want to take issue with this and who want to say that they think the Spirit baptizing us into one body, the body really isn't the medium. Christ is the medium. Okay, you can theorize about that.

But in other places where it does plainly speak about being baptized into Christ, it speaks just that way. Being baptized into Christ. To change the imagery and say into the body, I mean, there's a difference.

And yes, Christ is the head of the body. But there's different pictures, which means I believe there's a different emphasis, a different picture that we should be conjuring. You've gone down into the waters of God's people.

Like I said before, you know this idea, you go into the water. Oh no, I can't breathe. I'm going to suffocate.

I'm going to drown. Well, you don't have to fear. You can breathe here.

How is the air good where Christ is? Christ is in the midst of His people. There am I in the midst of you is what He said. You won't drown.

Just the opposite. But this is the realm of a people who stand just outside the veil. We don't know yet what we'll be because it hasn't been revealed to us, but we do know a lot.

We look in a glass as dimly. This is where Emmanuel dwells. He says where two or three of you are gathered together, there am I in your midst.

You see, it's the place of Christ's realm. There's no question about it. But we have to think about this.

The Spirit submerging you into this realm for what reason? Well, because listen, this has to do with gifts. This has to do with who you are and how God has equipped you. And I just ask you this.

I met with one brother this week. We were talking about how he could be used in the church. How he could use his home.

That's what we have to be thinking. This picture. One Spirit baptized into one body.

Though you're gifted differently, apportioned differently, everyone has your place to play. And even if you're like the most modest part of the body, we give greater honor is what he goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 12. You have a place to play.

Look, this is essential. Get this picture into your head because this is a great unifying reality. Whatever Paul means by one baptism, you know this, it's meant to unify us.

And what more unifying than this picture that I am being plunged into the people of Christ? Not just to operate out there all by myself. And that doesn't just mean when we gather together in this place. Oh, when we gather together like we are right now, we come close to one another.

There's close contact. But this is the idea of living our life day to day, day in, day out. You have gifts.

You have that which God has given to you. You have financial resources. You have homes.

You have abilities. You have abilities to serve, abilities to teach, abilities to pour into others, abilities to lift up for the common good. That's what this is all about.

Christ gave gifts to men. Why? To equip. The body builds itself up in love.

That's where we're headed in Ephesians 4. You've been plunged into these people. Don't live like you're still outside that realm. This is a unifying reality.

Whatever you do with one baptism, you know, look, He's talking same language as Ephesians 4. He's talking one body. There's one Spirit. This is a reality.

There is one Spirit. There is one Lord. There is one Father.

But there's diversity of gifts. And in all of this diversity, there is a oneness. Where are we going? Where are we headed? And every person has to ask themselves, am I helping us get there? Am I doing what I can do? Not just I float in here, I kind of smile at other people, and I float out.

That's not the picture. When we talk about baptism, we're talking about putting that person down in the water so that the water covers them. They become part and parcel of that realm, that sphere.

That is not an accurate picture. That's more like sprinkling. You see what you've done to the word baptize? Yeah, some people, that's what their lives look like with regards to this realm into which they're immersed.

They look like they're defining baptism as sprinkling. Their interaction with the church is just a smattering. It's just a little few drops.

It's just like it's Catholic. But this is a strong word. This is a powerful word.

Because it has everything to do with the realm of Christ, but the people of Christ. Pouring, living in that realm of the people of God and doing what you can do to keep everybody going, to keep everybody in the race. Do you realize it's your responsibility to make sure that we're not disciplining people out of the church and that people aren't falling out of the race? Have you so bought into the idea of the sovereignty of God that you've twisted that, distorted that? Into something that it's not? Listen, is there any reality in Scripture that we help keep one another going? What are you thinking of? Which says, ah, what a verse is

that? There is a responsibility that we keep each other going, that we keep each other going to the end, that we all are helping and exhorting and using our spiritual gifts, not burying them in the sand.

You've been given abilities. You've been given spiritual gifts. You've been given wherewithal in this world.

And this is a reality. Baptized into one body. If you're a Christian, that is a unifying reality.

You've been baptized into that body. That's not just if you become a Baptist or you become a member of a church. This is a spiritual reality.

This doesn't have to do... Yes, there's portrayal in water baptism, but that's not what's on the table here. This is a spiritual reality. And you are the ones who have been immersed into one body.

It's like all the rest of us are the molecules of water. And we surround you. And the idea is not to try to get out of there.

The idea is try to do everything that God has equipped you to do to help build itself up in love. You see, that's a reality. It's loving one another.

It's doing what you can do to further, to quicken, to exhort, to encourage, to comfort. Do you know what that text says? That text does not say that well, God is sovereign and so whether you exhort somebody or don't exhort somebody, it doesn't matter. That is hyper-Calvinism and the Scripture just simply doesn't work that way.

Scripture assumes that the way we interact with people... Listen, the idea today where people float into churches and they float back out, they come in, oh, they love the singing, they feel the emotion, they listen to the 20-minute sermon, and out they go. And they basically have no contact, no interaction with the church for the rest of the week. Basically, their interaction is with their friends and family and lost people and coworkers.

That's not the picture of Scripture. You're immersed into Christ. You're immersed into the church.

You're immersed into the one body. You can fight. You can argue.

You can say I think you're wrong. But you've got to deal with 1 Corinthians 12 and with the fact that it is the greatest commentary in our Bibles on Ephesians 4. It is the most parallel. It is the most confirming.

It is the greatest commentary. And you have to wrestle with those like I did. But look, you can't get away from that.

Baptized into one body. See yourself plunged into the people of God. And all that that means, where are you? You see, you're not out there anymore.

Even if you are out there because you're sick or you didn't come today for some reason, if you're a child of God, you've been plunged into these people. Plunged in. Immersed in order to grow the whole for the common good.

You know one thing about this last thought. One thing about a person being baptized. You don't try... well, you may, but if you really understand the definition of baptism, you don't try to avoid contact with the water.

Right? The very idea of being immersed in something is to be swallowed up by it. It's not to try to avoid contact with it. I know in water baptism, you may have people that are afraid.

Some people terrified of water. They don't like to put their face underneath. But if you really understand what's being portrayed, you recognize the last thing I want to portray is somebody that's not trying to be totally engulfed.

Because the very picture of it is to be consumed by it. So I just say this, take that imagery. Don't try as hard as you can to avoid contact with the people in that body.

The idea of immersion. When you take a child, you immerse him in the bathtub. You want contact with the water.

You take a cup, it's dirty. You put it in the water. You want contact with it.

It's a desirable thing to get contact into the realm of Christ, being baptized into Him, into His death, into His burial. That's desirable. I want to be totally overwhelmed and consumed by that.

I don't want to try to get away from it. I don't want to try to get as far away as possible and be as little affected as possible. I want to be consumed.

I want the fullness of baptism overwhelmed with. Same thing. Same thing.

Peter, do you love Me? Feed My sheep. Peter, do you love Me? Isn't it amazing when Jesus is talking about love for Him, what does it come back to? Feed My sheep. As much as you do it unto one of the least of these, you do it unto Me.

Peter, do you love Me? Feed My sheep. Don't try to be as little in contact with the body as possible. That's missing the whole picture.

There's one baptism. You've been immersed, yes, into Christ. To be immersed into Christ is to be immersed into His body.

Father, may these be living realities for the life and health and beauty and glory of the church. Amen. You're dismissed.

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