

Baptism Renewal

by Todd Atkinson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of baptism as a sacrament that represents our union with Jesus Christ, and encourages listeners to prioritize repentance and baptism as a response to the gospel message.

Duration: 59:39

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 2:1-4, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, Romans 6:1-5

Topics: "Baptism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on his own journey and how the importance of baptism in the Great Commission was overlooked. He emphasizes that baptism should be given the highest priority in fulfilling the command to make disciples of all nations. The speaker then poses the question of how to respond to the message of the Gospel, using the example of Peter's response in Acts 2. He challenges the audience to consider their own answer to the question of what is required of them in light of the Gospel. The sermon concludes with the speaker introducing a passage from Romans 6 that he has struggled with for many years, exploring the tension between sin and grace.

Transcript

It's been a very, very close friendship from that time till this. And, um, and now to think here this summer after all these years, I've been here three times this summer. Um, had the privilege of, of staying with Sam and Maddie at their mansion in the woods.

And, um, I just love it how some relationships are for, for a short time and some are for a life, long time and some are for a lifetime. And, and this is one that, um, has just been growing more special by the years. There are a couple things I'd like you to speak to Sam about.

We went shoe shopping. He was wearing a pair of shorts and I caught him looking in the mirror and it wasn't in his shoes, he was flexing his calf muscles. Just thought you should know that.

He has created calf envy in me ever since. Had nothing to do with shoes. I caught him, I said, you're not looking at your shoes, you're flexing your calf muscles.

And, um, so I thought you might, might want to have a little word with him. And secondly, I was in his office doing some preparation and there's all kinds of things in his office. I mean all kinds of photos of Maddie and of the two of them kissing.

How's he supposed to get any work done looking at photos like that? More books than you could read in a lifetime. He has weapons of mass destruction down there. There is swords of every description and not a single photo of me.

That's a blazing nut, it's hard. Yeah, so just a few things to bring to public attention. I know, of course, many of you from the past, from revival conferences, from preaching at Cowichan Camp, and so I wouldn't blame you if it crossed your mind sometime, is this the same guy that was at Cowichan Camp? And what's with the purple shirt? And he's been ordained into the historic office of bishop.

Is this even the same guy that used to preach with such fire at Cowichan? So maybe a couple things. I think I am. And yet, like the rest of you, Jesus has been a work in my heart, taking me from glory to glory.

And so I think I'm the same, I hope I'm the new improved. But I'd say pastoring, I've been pastoring for 11 years, and that's been very good for me. Because when you're itinerating, you can get away with all kinds of things.

But for me to pastor for the long term is, I hope it's been good for our congregation, but it's been very, very good for me to gain Jesus' shepherd's heart. Not just his evangelistic heart, not just his revivalist heart, but his shepherd's heart. And I think one other thing that has happened in me is when I was preaching in revival conferences, one of the things that people would say to me is that you're kind of a balanced revivalist, because you have a strong emphasis on the Spirit, but you also have a strong emphasis on the Word.

And I have been both a lover of the Spirit, but a lover of the Word. And that created, I think, a sense of balance. And in the last numbers of years, there's been a third emphasis added to that, and that is a love for the roots of the church.

And I feel even more grounded and established now, because a man with one emphasis is a man on a pogo stick. A man on two emphasis is a man on stilts. I feel like I'm on a tripod.

Not on a pogo, not on stilts. But I feel more established and grounded, adding that third emphasis, than I've ever been before. When I was preaching at revival conferences in Western Canada for many years, I was seen as an Elijah kind of figure, and I think I understand what people were meaning by that.

But I've also had to learn to exercise the wisdom of Elijah. And if there's one thing from Elijah's story that I pass on to you this morning, is this, that he made one very important decision. And that we all must make this decision.

There was a juncture in his life where he was on Mount Carmel. You all know the story. And he called for fire.

The fire of the Lord came. But if we're not careful, we want to camp on that same mountain. And he didn't.

He actually went on from there and then saw other manifestations of the Lord in terms of an earthquake, and rain, and all kinds of wonderful, miraculous activities of God. But then he made an even wiser decision. One day God tested his heart.

God gave him an earthquake, or there was an earthquake, but this time God made sure his presence wasn't in it. And then there was a storm, and God wasn't in it, and fire, and God wasn't in it. And then a

still, small voice, and God was in it.

And so Elijah made sure that he didn't walk forward looking back over his shoulder. And as people of a charismatic tradition, we can be like that, is that the way that God moved in the past, we can just want to live on that spot, live on Mount Carmel. And wouldn't we know it if God wasn't in it the same way he used to be? So I'm actually always looking.

See, I watch the young people. You know, they're newer than I am, and so I'm watching and going. I remember when I was an itinerant preacher, I'd preach this message at a place, and it would just be so full of fire.

So afterwards I think, okay, what did I do that made that? And I've got to tell that story, and I've got to make sure I growl in the right place, and spit in the right place, pause for effect in the right place, so the next place I'd go, and I'm going to see that happen again. And it took me years to think, why is it so full of fire at one place, and so flat the next place? So perplexing to me. The exact same message, delivered in the exact same way, and that's why it was flat, is because I misplaced my trust.

My trust was placed in my methodology. It wasn't placed above. It wasn't placed in him.

And so that's a dilemma we'll always have to watch out for in the charismatic movement. It's just when we hold our mouth the right way, God came once. So isn't he going to do it again? But could we tell? Could we even tell if he wasn't in it? And how easy would it be? How easy would it be for us to go, okay, here's the ways he has met us.

What is he leading us into? What are the ways in which he wants to meet us? Okay, so always remember, you know this from revival history. The greatest persecutors of the next move of God were the leaders in the last great move of God. So that was helpful to us when we were in the last move of God and we were being persecuted.

But we never saw ourselves as the ones that could resist the next one. Okay. And so very helpful for our hearts to remember.

And so I am being led by God into new things and into old things made new again. The renewing of certain things. And in time, maybe tonight, we'll talk more about such things.

I'd like to take a reading from the book of Romans, Paul's letter to the church that is in Rome. I'd like to look at a passage that for 30 years now I have wrestled with. And for most of the years I lost that wrestling match.

I could not crack this passage. How frustrating. So we're going to read just from Romans 6, just the first five verses.

Paul writes these words. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin? That grace may abound? If it's true that when I sin there's grace, then what would stop me from wanting to sin? If God would give grace. By no means should we continue in sin.

How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus, that we were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death. In order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, that we too might

walk in newness of life. I'm going to end our public reading there, but I do commend to you the rest of this chapter.

And I encourage you to spend some time there later today. When you first became a Christian, was it your experience that some sins fell away almost immediately? Almost effortlessly, without even working at it? But that one or two of them didn't fall away quite as effortlessly? That one or two of them had staying power? And that there's a bit of a battle on your hands? And even that created questions like how could some fall away? I never even prayed about them. And others, how could you pray about them for years and wonder why they won't go away? I think I'm not the only person probably to have experienced this.

And have you ever wondered what God's purpose could be in that? Is it purely random? That somehow does God have some sense in all of this? And I wonder if it's because those ones that stay and seem to plague the soul, that it requires some seeking of us. The ones that went without me even praying required nothing of me. No, I didn't even have an expression of faith.

But they required some faith. They required some seeking, some wrestling. Oh, I love preaching on wrestling.

Some heart searching. Sometimes some heart healing, don't they? Some healing of the heart. Because it's those wounded places that give them their staying power.

Sometimes it requires some understanding. I love one of the translations of 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, is that you may know how to be holy. Some forms of holiness take some knowledge, some know-how.

So some learning, some gaining of some answers to some very important questions. And so for me, my seeking led me through the years again and again to a passage of Scripture. And it was this passage.

And it's a little bit of a love-hate relationship with it. I loved it because I know it's got the answer to something I really want to know. But a bit of a hate relationship because it doesn't matter how many times I get back in that chapter, I know the answer is there, but I could not understand the answer.

It did not make any sense to me. Here's the answer. We died to sin.

How can we live in it any longer? Do you not know? Apparently not. Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? And I just was left with this dumbfounded look. I wanted to know the answer.

How do you not sin anymore? How do you come out from under the power of sin? Do you not know that the secrets of it are locked up with your baptism? And I was like, no, I don't get that. Because how does something that happened to me in the past give me power over sin in my present? How does something that I never even put a lot of thought into now bring me freedom into something I put an awful lot of thought into? Something that's plaguing my soul. I could not see the connection at all.

All it did was raise more questions. Let me tell you why I think this was so for me. Because at the age of 15, I became a believer.

My faith and trust in the person of Jesus. I wasn't baptized. Well, not at least to my knowledge.

My mother told me only in the last couple of years I was baptized as an infant. But I didn't undergo adult baptism. No one ever spoke to me about baptism or compelled me to be baptized.

At the age of 17, I wanted to go on a short-term missions. And I applied with a missions organization. They sent me back their literature.

And there were questions. And one of the questions is, have you been baptized? No. They required it of me.

Very responsible of that missions organization. So I inquired to my church. I said, I want to go on a short-term mission.

I need to be baptized. Will you baptize me? Sure. I was given probably about seven seconds of catechism, of instruction before I was baptized.

They asked me, do you know what this is about? I just know I got to do this to go on a short-term mission. And I got to check the box. Well, it's about Jesus' death and resurrection.

When you go down, it's something to do with his death. And you come up, it's something to do with his resurrection. I timed it.

Seven seconds. Okay. I'm ready.

What's there not to understand about this? So they baptized me. I could tick the box. But it was treated like a symbol.

Not as a sacrament. Notice the beautiful symbol on the front of this pulpit. What's the symbol there? Okay.

Now, here's the difference. If you remove that symbol, my preaching will be no less fiery. And it will be no less truthful.

So a symbol is nice. It is not critical. That's the way my baptism was treated.

You might want to do it if you want. It could be nice. But people weren't willing to send me into ministry without even being baptized.

So more than I could unpack in that one sentence, it was not treated like a sacrament. It was not treated as something of spiritual significance. It was treated as a symbol that you could take or leave.

And many years later, I was horrified to find out how out of sync that approach to baptism was with the preaching and the practice of the early apostles. That they're that far apart. Modern practice and ancient practice.

And that's horrifying to me. Because if in any way you believe that the church is called to have an apostolic nature, then you don't have an apostolic nature. If you do something different than the early apostles would have did if they were there.

You have an un-apostolic nature or an anti-apostolic nature. And I found out for certain we did not follow their practice. And I believed that it had discipleship implications for me.

My journey was started not in a more faltering way than it could have been. Matthew 28, it's the Great Commission. It's got to be one of the most celebrated passages of scripture in all of evangelicalism.

Go and make disciples of all nations. How do you do that? What's the next phrase say? Baptizing them. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

So baptism in the Great Commission is given the highest preeminence. And in my journey, it was treated like a subscript. When you get around to it, if you feel so inclined.

It was not given the highest priority. This is the Great Commission. It's not some obscure passage of scripture that nobody's ever heard about.

It's the one we quote all the time. And in that passage of scripture, baptism is given the highest place. And in my early days of Christianity, it was given almost no priority.

Acts chapter 2 is the first recorded sermon in the book of Acts. So some of you are feeling a little comforted now. Just you think, well, I wonder if Todd lost any of his fire.

I guess he didn't. First recorded sermon in the book of Acts is in the second chapter. In fact, it's really the first sermon after the Holy Spirit falls.

Today at Pentecost, after 10 days of tearing, the Holy Spirit falls with tongues of fire. Crowds in Jerusalem are watching curiously, wondering what's happening. They've gathered under the upper room.

Peter steps out onto the balcony and represents the apostolate, the rest of the apostolic number. And he preaches to this crowd the gospel. There's so much to learn from this sermon.

Good gospel preaching. And he preaches in such a way. The Bible says, this crowd are cut to the heart.

They are moved. They traveled the journey in the length of one sermon. They went from thinking, this is crazy and ridiculous, to thinking, you have my full attention.

And Peter, whatever you tell me I need to do, I'll do. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart. And they said to Peter and the other apostles, what shall we do? How do you respond to this message? What do you require of us? What do we need to do? You know what his answer is? What would your answer be? If 3,000 people came to you, 3,000, what shall we do? What would your answer be? I'm not asking what is Acts 2 answer, I'm asking what is your answer? They're not wrong, but they're one dimensional.

Believe on Jesus in your heart. I guess you should ask Jesus into your heart. That's not a bad answer.

It's not wrong. But it's not three dimensional. I guess we'd say something like that.

But this is what the apostles, this is his answer. What shall we do? What's the proper response to the gospel? Repent and be baptized. Every one of you, the phrases.

Not some of you, not when you get around to it. Not if you happen to think it's important. Repent, meaning there's some stuff to turn away from.

And there's a person, the person of Jesus, that you should turn to. There's a turning from and there's a turning to. There is some stuff to turn your back on.

But there's a glorious one to turn your heart to. And you will show it by baptism. Repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the forgiveness of sins.

And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. That is a response to the gospel. So now when people want to know to me, Todd, I want to become a Christian.

I want to know more. What do I want to do? Repent and be baptized, every one of you. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

That's an apostolic answer. Now, it may take you a week to explain to people what that means. But that has got to be the answer.

If our answer is different from their answer, we're in a lot of trouble. Don't you think? It's the things that... And Peter, with all the apostles, said this. So if we're out of sync with the early apostolic church, that wouldn't trouble you? Wouldn't it a little? Some of you are still thinking, should it trouble me? You know what a plumb line is? A plumb line is a string with a piece of lead.

A heavy piece of lead at the bottom. So when you're building a house, there's only one thing to measure straightness with. To see if a wall is straight, measure it against something that you know is straight.

So you have a plumb line. Gravity will cause it to be a straight line. So you can measure it up against something.

Measure something that might be straight and might not be against something that you know is. That's what the early apostolic church is for us. It is a plumb line.

And without it, we will never know when we are out of order. We will never know when crookedness has come in. When we have departed from certain important things.

And so we have to have something to measure ourselves up against constantly. So that when we know we're like, oh, I'm getting a little off track here. I need that like daily.

Amen. Because we're prone by degrees to ending up in places we shouldn't be. I need it every day.

So why? Why did the early apostles have that kind of priority? Why did they think that baptism was that important? I'm gonna give you just a little taste. Romans 6, someone much better than me, Pastor Samuel and Pastor Randy, they'll unpack Romans 6 for you in some detail. But let me just give you a small nugget from Romans 6. What is baptism about? Baptism is the place where you were given what's called union with Christ.

Some people have called it mystical union. In the language of this passage, it says that baptism we are united with. We become one with.

We become one with Jesus at baptism. That's exactly what the passage reads. I'm not making it up.

We are united with Jesus at baptism. So in some ways, when you go to buy a house and you find the one that your heart is fixed on, I love this house, but it's not a done deal till you sign on the dotted line. Then it's sealed.

Because it takes more than just the intentions of your heart to make that thing work. You can drive past that house as many as you want, as much as you want, but it does not become yours until there's a legal document and you sign it. And at that point, the transaction is sealed.

That's what baptism is to the Christian faith. Which we become united with Jesus. What does it mean to be one with Him? To be united with Him.

In short, it means this. When you are united with Jesus at baptism, everything that you have and are becomes His. And everything He has and is becomes yours.

Sounds a little like marriage. No, marriage is meant to be a picture of baptism. It's meant to be a picture of the church, Christ in the church.

So everything at baptism, when you become one with Jesus, everything you are and everything you have actually becomes His. So what does that look like? What do I have? What does He get? Well, it's an all-star lineup. My sin? My wife still teases me.

When I married her, I didn't get a dowry. I got her debt. I got her student loan.

Small price. Jesus got way more than my student loan. So when I got married, my wife's finances and I had become one.

So I did get her debt. No, I got the privilege of paying off her Bible school. When I became one with Jesus, some stuff that I had become His.

My sin. My shame. You might still be carrying it if you want to, but it's actually not yours any longer.

It's actually His. Guilt. You may choose to hang on to it.

I wouldn't recommend it. Pain. Actually, legally became His.

Now, we're still learning to hand it over to Him, but it's actually His. Your pain. Failure.

Disappointment. Your past became His. I mean, literally His.

Your present. And your future. I mean, those of us, you that live in anxiety, you need to learn this lesson.

Your future actually isn't your own. And so you don't have to figure it out. You hear that? If it's His, He can figure it out.

Your spirit, your soul, and your body. Which is why baptism is such a physical thing. It's why we practice by immersion.

Because all of your body is touched. So there is no part of you untouched by water. There is no part of you that is undedicated and is not His after that.

Your body is actually His. The Bible says, Therefore, glorify God with your body. Your mind is His.

Your will is His. Your emotions are His. Your private life.

Your professional life. Your social life. Your public life.

All of them are His. That's why there is no segmentation of our life. This part belongs to Jesus and this part doesn't.

Your passions become His. Your possessions, they become His. Your aspirations, they become His.

Everything you are and have passes over to Him. Now consider the other side for a minute. Just in case you think this is a rough deal.

I feel like the poorest man on the face of the earth who met the richest man on the face of the earth and said to me, Why don't we become one? Everything you have becomes mine. Everything I have becomes yours. I'm like, what do you get out of the deal? And you know what he said? You.

You got my poverty. I get your riches. But really all you want is me.

And so all that he has becomes yours. So you gain his purity. You gain his standing before the Father.

So sometimes in Charismatic circles, there's probably nothing we like more than worship. But the more you understand this, you'll understand why you have certain rights, privileges and responsibilities with the presence of God. See, because right now we love it when the door of heaven swings open.

The more you understand about your baptism, you'll understand how to open that door. And that is you are given the same standing before the Father as Jesus the Son has. Passes on to you, which is why we are called sons and daughters.

Because we are given the exact same standing. John chapter 7. Jesus' high priestly prayer. He prays for us.

Father, that you would love them even as you have loved me. How much does he love Jesus? How much does he love you? He loves you as much as he loves Jesus. He loves you that much because he first loved Jesus.

Because the standing that Jesus has, the place he has in the Father's heart. Jesus says, I'm going to die so that you will be given the exact same place. I was preaching in India a year and a half ago.

Felt like the Lord told me, just preach this. I know it would be a little foreign there. So I did.

And when I got to this place, I'll tell you what, those people from northern India, they got this so quickly. So I asked them, how much of the Holy Spirit did Jesus have? I said, that's how much you've got. How much of the presence of the Father does the Son get? That's how much you get.

And their faith, literally they built, their faith built until, I said, why don't you just ask right now? If it's all yours, let's ask for it. I'll tell you what, a revival of God hit that place. So the people said it was like out of the history books.

I've seen a lot of revival. I've never seen anything like this. And afterwards, I stand back and marveled, and I was just like, in all my years of revivalism, if you had told me that the secrets to revival were in something like baptism, I would have thought you were crazy.

Here I had the key all along, and it was in my back pocket. And I was looking for some new fandangled key, some shiny and sexy looking key. We were all looking for the keys.

Come on, this is not language you're unfamiliar with. Romans chapter six, it was saying, dummy, do you not know? Why? Do you not know that the secrets were in something right under your nose? Really, the Lord, I asked the people, how much of an open heaven does the sun live under? And that's what, until the Holy Spirit was poured out with such power, it was, I absolutely marveled. I couldn't believe what I was

seeing.

I remember one day, we had a baptism at church on Sunday, and I, it was the next Tuesday morning, I was in early for prayer, walking around the sanctuary, and I was actually feeling very tired, and not really myself, and getting nowhere in prayer. And I remembered what we'd done on Sunday, and, you know, because I, I remember what baptism was about, and the great baptism we had, and thought, I wonder if it works when you're all by yourself on a Tuesday morning. So I just said, Lord, here's, everything I have belongs to you.

It's not really that nice today. I give you my anxiety. I'm feeling pretty dead.

And I just went through the list. I said, it's, it's yours. I give it to you.

And he took it. And I said, now everything you have belongs to me. I want as much of the Holy Spirit as you have.

I want as much of the presence, I'll tell you what, three minutes praying like this, I, I had to go to a staff meeting. I was so drunk in the spirit. Literally, I staggered, I staggered into my meeting.

This is not unfamiliar with our staff, but I, and I just thought, this, it really works. I love Paul's phrase, do you not know? These people have been baptized years earlier and did not know the power of their baptism and they did not know how to unlock it in their present. I'm comforted by that because I did not know most of these years.

I've enjoyed through the years when couples have renewed their wedding vows. Isn't that a beautiful thing? Because in some ways, it kind of says it all. You don't have to get married again, but the renewing of wedding vows, the making new of something you did long ago makes perfect sense.

It's really beautiful because it's a picture of a marriage that's going from glory to glory. Nice, nice picture. You don't get married again, but you renew it.

Do you know what the history, the history of the Christian church, this was a practice I didn't even know about. For thousands of years, Christians have renewed their baptismal vows. Some of you know my story.

When I was in England at university, the Lord led me into a ministry with some of the British royal family. Some of you know this story and I won't bore you with the details, but it was very fun. It landed me in Buckingham Palace and meeting the Queen.

One of the younger members of the royal family became one of my best friends. At some point, I think I came to faith, I think, through our friendship, but years later, he converted to Catholicism. I went down to visit him when I lived in Scotland and spent some time with him.

Then he ended up actually moving to Italy. I met him and his wife there in Italy. We were around looking through some of the streets and churches and it was just the time I was learning some of these things about baptism.

We came into a church and he did something maybe I've seen before but never noticed and certainly never took any stock in, but there was a bit of water and he came in and he crossed himself with the water. So I said to him, Nicholas, it's Lord Nicholas Windsor. This is his phone title.

So I said to him, Nicholas, why do you do that? The imperfect truth seemed a little bit like nonsense to me. So I said, but he said, I knew I could ask without, he wouldn't be offended. Why do you do that? And he said, because we're coming into God's presence and I come in because of my baptism.

So this is water and I'm reminding myself the reason I have access into God's presence is because of my baptism. I said, that's what that's about? Suddenly it didn't seem so crazy and so I realized right there, I don't know how, I mean, he's had a good teacher. I'm sure lots of people do that and didn't have good teachers and they don't know why they do it even.

In his case, he had a good teacher, but I thought we don't have any equivalent. Most of our Christians have never even heard of good teaching on baptism, let alone renewing your baptismal vows, let alone having a weekly practice that every time you come into God's presence, the reason I come in here is because I am clothed in the purity that Christ gave me at baptism. Therefore, I am welcome to come into his presence.

That's not a bad idea. So if you don't like the way they do it, find another way, but don't have no way. So, this morning, yeah, I'm going to introduce you into a very simple, one of the practices that's been very customary through hundreds and hundreds of years in the church.

We're going to renew our, our baptismal vows if you would choose to do that. So at baptism in the ancient church, if you ever get a chance to study it, I think you'd find it thrilling. Baptism was not something that was taken lightly.

It was something that was taken very seriously. They would work with people for sometimes months to prepare them for baptism, to build excitement and anticipation. Baptisms were very, very big events, particularly when you, I mean, you, it was, it's putting your head on the chopping block.

At a time of great persecution, being, being, being baptized publicly was a way of showing who you were. And, and you were being welcomed into Christ, welcomed into His church. They're, they're huge events.

So people never forgot them. And just like a marriage, you know, it's not just that maybe ten years later you renew your baptismal, your, your wedding vows. A good marriage, you know, you should do, find a way to do it every day.

So I actually, my way of doing it is I take my, my wedding ring off at the end of every day. Only so that the next morning I can put it on and I, and I renew my marriage covenant every single day. Now, now you may have your own other way of doing that.

I know some of you think, oh he takes his wedding ring off. Okay. You may have your other way of doing it.

Find some way. That's just my way. I put it on and so when I put it on, I tell myself, this is not just a piece of jewelry.

This is a reminder that I am in covenant with my wife. And Lord, would you make me a good husband? Every single day. We are going to do that with baptism today.

So at baptisms, there was a confession of faith. Particularly based on the Apostles Creed. Always through baptisms, there was, there was a renunciation, a three-fold renunciation of the world, the flesh, and the

devil.

And there was a coming into union with the Lord Jesus Christ. But first of all, I'd like us to take us some time to pray. Maybe you could, you playing some music? Yeah.

And so before we do this, let's walk out something of our baptism this morning. I want you in your own way right now, in prayer, to say, Jesus, all that I am and all that I have belongs to you. If you're here this morning as a visitor and you're not yet a Christian, this would be an ideal time for you to say, Jesus, I want, for the first time, to offer you all that I am and all that I have.

I don't just give you my heart. I actually give you my body. I give you everything.

I give you my mind. You can tell me how to, what's a right way of thinking, a right way of living. Okay? And so in prayer, Lord Jesus, all that I am and all that I have, I give to you.

I give you my past, my present, and my future. My spirit, my soul, my body, my mind, my will, that it would not be set against you. And my emotions, I give you my private life, my professional life, my social life, that you would be above all my friends and even above my family.

I give you my passions, my possessions, my aspirations, all that I am, all that I have. I gladly give to you, and I will leave it with you. The next time I begin to worry about my future, I'll say, no, it's not mine.

My future belongs to Jesus, and he can carry the weight of it, and he can figure it out. And so I need not be anxious. And so just now, if there's anything that we didn't cover, something that you just feel like you're caring, then just give it to him.

Say, I want you to make your own prayer. This belongs to you, Jesus. And whatever it is that troubles you, that preoccupies you, that distracts you, if you are baptized, then say, because of my baptism, I give this to you.

If you're not yet baptized, say, Lord, I'm going to prepare for baptism so I can become one with you and give this to you. But the one we haven't named that's very personal, you name it now. That thing that lives in you like a regret, give that to him.

You have carried that for too long. If you're carrying it, it's because you still believe it's yours. The Bible says, he went to the cross, he was made sin for us.

That we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ. He was made something that he wasn't before. Some of you limit yourselves.

There's a glass ceiling over you. You tell yourself, I'm okay, but I'll never go further than this. That is not true.

That is a lie. Give that lie to him. I just sense over some of you that there's just life's disappointments.

And so you have settled and there are healthy, glorious forms of contentment, but there's something that we think is contentment that is resignation. Give over to him your sense of resignation. It'll never be better than this, so I'll just give that to him.

And the charismatic church in our country has suffered a great sense of disappointment because it didn't pan out the way we thought it was. And that, for some of us, it's hard to get up and believe again. So you must give him your disappointments.

His plan will play out. It is bigger than you. Sometimes we try to make God the center of our plan when we've been invited to become the center of his.

Give him your disappointments. Tell him, these have ruled over my heart too long. They're not even mine.

I give them to you, Jesus. If everything I have belongs to you, if that's what it means to truly be one with you, some of you know that in the last few years, I'm giving words of knowledge. I will not pick people out, but there's a hardness of heart that has settled into you.

It's not just a seriousness. It is a hardness of heart because it felt safer to shut down something in your heart. I encourage you, I exhort you in prayer to say, my heart does not belong to me.

I do not have the right to shut it down. My heart belongs to Jesus. Jesus, I give it back to you.

Would you open it up? It's like a flower. It's only when it opens does fragrance come out. And now we're gonna begin a spiritual exercise that will not, it'll take place beyond today because it'll take some time for you to get your head and faith around.

But we'll begin taking steps in a right direction today and that is continue with me in prayer. Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, not only does everything I have belong to you, but at baptism when I became united with you, all that was true of you became true of me. And I want to walk in that.

And so I receive your purity. All that you have is now on offer for me. I want as much of the Holy Spirit as you have.

I want as much of the Father's presence. The thought occurs to me that just like an inheritance is often paid out in stages, so is this inheritance. And so this church, you have received installments.

At various places there was a giving of your inheritance, gifts from God. So you need to prepare yourself. That not all of what God gives, the inheritance, doesn't all come at once.

And so you need to prepare yourself and say, Lord, I'm ready for the next installation of my inheritance. And so if a very wealthy man died and his child was four, he would not give him \$10 million. He would have a responsible person who paid it out in installments.

And so you think you've received, we've barely received the first payouts. And the next payouts won't look like the last ones. In his treasure chest are many diverse treasures.

And so don't look backwards, look forwards. And so what would you ask him for? Something that belongs to the Son and is now yours because you've been united to the Son. What would you ask the Father for? For someone just, Lord, I just want a deep assurance that I even am a son or daughter.

Jesus never doubted that about himself. Do you think he ever woke up in the morning and thought, I wonder if the Father loves me? We do. I do.

And so I said, I want the same assurance you walked in. It didn't matter come hell or high water. It didn't matter if the devil himself was breathing down the back of your neck.

No, did you ever doubt who you were? That's yours. Father, we are one with your Son, Jesus. We are united with him.

As a man and woman in marriage, so is the bride and the bridegroom, Christ and his church. At baptism, we were united with you in your death. We pray that things that should die on us would die.

But we are also united with you in your life so that things that should live would live. So in us, put death to shame. Put death to all those things in us that should die.

But Jesus put life in all those things that should live. I'm going to have our our baptismal affirmation put up on the screens. They're going like this.

Okay. That's pretty universal language. And so, when you see this, it's based upon little bits and pieces actually from the ancient church.

So it's not like something, I didn't create this. I just inherited it. And so, if you have been baptized and would like to renew your baptismal vows, I'd encourage you to start to learn to make it a daily practice or a regular feature of your Christian life.

So if you want to do that, then in a minute, I'm going to get you to stand with me. If you've not been baptized, I want you to make an appointment this week with someone in the office and say, Sheesh, I want to be baptized. I didn't get baptized until years after I'd become a Christian.

And I look back now and think, What's in the world? And so, if you'd like to do this with me, and by all means, if you think, No, I want to think about it first, then do it next time. But if you want to do this with me today, then would you stand to your feet? Remember, we do this from our heart. And actually, these have been the words that have been used for almost 2,000 years.

So, do you believe in God the Father, that God is your Father? And you answer, Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God? He will come again. And do you believe in God the Holy Spirit? Really, life everlasting. You believe in that stuff, do you? You believe in eternal life? This is from Acts 2.42, almost word for word.

Will you devote yourself to the apostles' teachings, and fellowship, apostles meaning the early apostles, New Testament writings, and fellowship? Devote yourself to fellowship. And to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Will you devote yourself to those things? I will.

God's help. So, Pastor Samuel and Pastor Ronnie are introducing, aren't they a strong girl practice all the time, the breaking of bread? The early church, it says they were devoted to it. If you ever like word studies, do a word study on the word devotion.

It means to give unremitting care to something. It means to care about it and keep on caring and never stop caring about it. That's what the word devotion means.

I mean, we use devotion as a romantic language. I'm devoted to you. The early church, look what they were devoted to.

Will you persevere in resisting evil and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord? I will. God's help. Good job.

Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ? I will. Will you love Christ and all that Christ loves and especially his beloved bride, the church? I will. I love that line.

So, we're going to form a couple stations and if you'd like to come, then come forward like you would for communion. But Pastor Samuel over there and Randy, did you want to take this station? And if you just come forward, the ancient practices, we will use water as a symbol of your baptism. We are not re-baptizing you.

But we'll use it as a symbol and we will mark you with a sign of the cross. But your coming forward to receive that is to say, I was baptized, but I actually want to live in the power of my baptism.

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