

Now I've tried to keep a steady pressure on since the middle of August on this idea of the supremacy of God in all things, the size and scope of God being beyond what most people really pay attention to and most people dwell upon. In fact, it seems the default of the human heart to dwell on God only inasmuch as God can do something for them. So we think and dwell on God not for who God is, but rather for what God might be able to do for us. As we've discussed, some of that is okay and some of that's not. But from mid-August, we have tried to start answering the question: What are we doing here? And we framed it around a singular statement so that we can keep it simple and keep it ever before you. The statement just read like this. We exist, this church in particular, to bring glory to God by making disciples. And then we began to teach through our discipleship process. So as we've walked through that, I've tried to continually press on you that ultimately God is about God. So every week I want to come back around to that reality. Because the other pieces that we discussed are just pieces, but the hole that they fit into is that ultimately God is about God. And yes He loves you, yes He provides for you and yes He cares for you, but all of that is predicated not upon your value but rather His. And ultimately, although that offends our sensibilities, that is good news. It's good news because that means God is for you; He's not against you. If God is after the praise of His glorious grace, then what He wants from you, in glad submission to how He designed the universe to work, is for you to worship, thus making much of Him. And then it also sets you free from you. As I've tried to pound on this these last three months now, no one has been a greater threat to your joy than you have. No one has robbed you of joy more than you have. You are your own greatest enemy.

So we dug into those things, and then we moved into what it means to be a maturing man/woman of God in this place. So we talked about gospel-centered worship. Everybody worships. There was a lot of worship going on last night around the Rangers winning the ALCS. That's not bad. It was worship. Some of you had an epic, full on sports weekend. Everything you wanted lined up. And for some of you, it didn't. But there was a lot of worship last night. I could see it on Twitter or just from texts I received. So that's worship, but in the maturing man/woman, their worship is fueled by an understanding of the perfect life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And then we talked about what the gospel does to community in our relationships with one another. And then we talked about how the gospel sets us free to make much of one another and not sit at the center of our own universe. And then we talked about the fact that gospel-rootedness actually leads to multiplication of the gospel. And it's not because you feel guilty, but rather you talk about what you love. Everybody talks about what they love. They share what they love. Apparently the iPhone 4S came out. Apparently that happened last week. Now I'm not due for an upgrade for a long time, so that's not in my world and not on my radar. I don't drop coin on stuff like that. So ultimately I know that it came out, and I know that it has artificial intelligence. By the way, this is how the Terminators win. I don't know why you think this is a good thing. But I know that because everyone appears to be talking about it. Those who have it are talking about how cool it is, those who don't have it are wishing they did, and those of you who don't know what I'm talking about might not have a cellphone. So you talk about what you love. So when we experience the beauty and power of the gospel, we're prone to share it and that creates multiplication.

And then last week we left the mission statement and began to talk about what I called the mortar that holds all these things together. We talked about salvation, how it works. And I pressed pretty hard on purpose so that, for those of you who believe in Jesus Christ, for those of you who are Christians, for those of you who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, for those of you who love Jesus and follow Him, for those of you who have been given affections for God and Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit of God, for those of you whose lives are shaped by who Christ is, for those of you

who have been regenerate believers in Jesus Christ, this is how that occurs. I'm not talking about those of you who are conservative in your nature and come to church on the weekend. That does not make you a Christian. So we talked about how salvation works. And that should have done two things. It should have created humility in that you didn't do anything to get it. Salvation is an act of God, not by you. In fact, I tried to even dissect how we even think about it. Because some people go, "No, got saved. I heard a message, I excused myself, I walked down an aisle, I shook my pastor's hand and I prayed a prayer after him." I just want to push on you. Biblically, God saved you in your seat. The faith to believe in what was preached was given to you in your seat, which is why you got out of your row and came down forward. The regurgitation of that prayer didn't save you. If it could save you, that's an incantation and it's witchcraft, not Christianity. So I really pressed on this idea that God owns salvation and how it's His. And then we talked about why that's good news.

Now here's what the rest of this series looks like. This weekend I want to talk to you about baptism and then next week I want to talk to you about the gifts. And I don't mean your money. What I'm talking about when I say gifts is that the Bible says that the Holy Spirit gives to each member of the church gifts for the building up of the body. So we're going to talk about how those gifts work, how they are given and what we believe the Bible says about them, and we'll set up a framework for how those gifts flesh themselves out in our covenant community. And then from there, the plane will be landed, and we'll be getting real close to starting Advent. But for this weekend, let's talk about baptism.

Open your Bibles to Matthew 28. We were here just a few weeks ago. We're going to pick it up in verse 18. "And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Now, several weeks ago, when we were in this exact text, I pressed on two different things in this text. I pressed on the authority of Christ in this text. So he says, "All authority is Mine." So I really said and pressed for quite a bit of time that, regardless of what comes after that statement, what comes after is going to occur because all authority is His. And then we talked at length about this idea of making disciples, not just converts. Ultimately to say, "I'm a Christian because, when I was eight-years-old, I did this," but not have a track record of following Jesus Christ, is not biblically what it means to be a believer in Christ. God is not after converts; He's after disciples, those who follow Him, those who, in glad submission to His reign and rule, love and make much of Him. So I pressed on those, and we read very quickly over this idea of baptism.

So here's what I have found as I watched things unfold in my ten years here. People tend to make two erroneous mistakes about baptism. One mistake is making too much of it, and the other is making too little of it. So there are those who want to make baptism a means of grace. What I mean by that is they stake their salvation on the fact that they were baptized. So if you ask them, "Are you a Christian?" their response is, "Yes, I was baptized at this point" as though baptism is what saved them. Now maybe that's what they mean and maybe it's not what they mean, but I have found people who do believe that the baptismal waters are somehow fire insurance and because they were baptized in those waters, God and them are cool. It's not about Jesus, it's not about His blood, it's not about His cross; it's about being baptized. And since they were baptized, they're in. And that's one error. And then the other error is that people think that Christ here is making a suggestion, not a command. "Hey, it's no big deal, but if you have a chance, why don't you get baptized and maybe even baptize others? All authority has been given to me, but I'm not trying to make that a rule. I'm just saying, you can do that if you like." So what ends up happening is you get these two erroneous positions and you really miss out on some really spectacular things.

So as best I can, I want to answer some questions surrounding baptism. There's no way I can address every one of them. We have a baptism class that does that if you're interested. So I'm just going to hit the highlights. I won't be able to give much of a defense in this place, but I promise you we're not afraid of the questions. This just isn't the forty minutes for it. So let me just try to set it up like this. I wear a ring on my left hand. It's not an expensive ring. At the time Lauren and I

got married, I was making \$12,000 a year. So you don't drop a lot of coin, specifically on the guy's ring, when you're only making \$12k a year. Now, I like it. Lauren was thorough in how she thought about it. It has some type of silver substance and then some type of gold substance around it. Lauren liked this one because regardless of what watch I would wear, it would match. I would have never thought, "I can't wear that watch. It doesn't match my ring." But my wife thought that way for me, and praise God for her. I would be in a blue t-shirt and some Op shorts right now if it weren't for her. So she has been a gift to me in that area. So I'll be straight with you. It's a cheap ring and it probably wouldn't mean much to you at all if you found it. If I were to toss it out there and you were to take it to a pawn shop, you're not going to get much for it. And it doesn't hold in your life and in your mind any type of significant reality at all, but for me it represents some significant promises and some significant realities. So let me unpack just a couple of those. To this day, it still blows my mind that Lauren Walker knew my strengths and my weaknesses and said yes. Because I think at times we have an unhealthy relationship, but surely you can see that my passion and confidence might be a double-edged sword at times. So let's not romanticize my gifts. My confidence, my quick wit, my mind and my passion serve the kingdom of God well but also can be a very damaging thing. And Lauren Walker knew this. She saw it. She had at times bore the brunt of it. I was far less sanctified fourteen years ago than I am today. So I said, "Will you marry me?" I did what I was supposed to. I talked to her mom and dad, and they said sure. And so I came back and asked her, "Will you marry me? Will you covenant with God and me to spend the rest of your life with me, regardless of how it goes?" At the time, I was living in a house where, if you flushed the toilet after it rained, sewage would back up. It was not a sexy world I was living in. And when you're getting a degree in theology, you have no idea what's ahead of you. For me, I'm going where the Lord wants me. So I'm going to be miserable anywhere other than where He wants me. So did that mean we were going overseas? What did that exactly mean? And Lauren said yes. So six months later, we stood in front of God and everyone, and she made a vow to her God and to me that went something like this. "If we have money or if we don't, if this goes well or this goes badly, I'm in." And she slid this ring on my finger. And here's what I've seen. The first six years of our marriage were not easy. I came in with a lot of issues. Lauren came in with some issues. I have learned that publicly that's her story, and I am not to share those issues. I learned that the hard way actually. So I had my issues, she had her issues and the first six years of our marriage were difficult. Now ultimately I'm owning that, because there is a way I should have led and a way I should have engaged that I didn't. My passion, wit and all of that ruled out a glad submission to the grace of God that should have been extended to her for an extended period of time. So that was one of my failures. It's not my regret, because I've laid that at the feet of Christ and He has redeemed and reconciled those things. But the first six years were rough. Now when Lauren and I got married, she was nineteen-years-old. At nineteen, through all that difficulty, what kept her from just going, "You know what? There are cuter guys with more money who are a better man than this one" and just bailing? She's in her early twenties, she's beautiful. What stopped her? She made this promise to the Lord and to me, and she was steadfast in it, despite her idiot husband. And then just a couple years ago, I get diagnosed with malignant brain cancer, and all that I bring to the table for about six months in regards to help and provision vanishes. And Lauren stays steadfast and does nothing but submit to her King and love her husband. Now what was to stop her from just going, "Man, I'm not going to watch this man disappear and vanish"? What was to stop her from leaving? In our culture, nothing. It wouldn't even be viewed as cold-blooded. It would be viewed horrifically as normative. And yet she stayed. What was to stop her from getting someone else? Well I've tried my best to put man repellent around her in the form of three small children. If she keeps getting more attractive with age, I'm just going to add a fourth one just to keep that barrier up. But in it all, Lauren has stayed true to her King and true to me as her husband. And every time my ring clinks on my coffee cup or when it take it off and tie it to my shoe before I work out, I've got this reminder of these significant realities. So let me be straight. I don't love the ring. It's not the ring that I love. The ring doesn't make me married. If I take it off, I'm still married. I'm not Gollum and this isn't Lord of the Rings. I'm holding it in my hand, and I'm still married. So it's not the ring that I love, but the ring does represent something that has my affection. And baptism is kind of like that. It is a picture of significant realities. It is not the realities themselves, but it is a picture of those realities.

Now what are the significant realities represented as we are baptized? Let's go over to Romans 6. Starting in verse 1, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! 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 were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Now let's talk about the significant realities present when we're water baptized. There are two of them that I want to point out. Number one is union with Christ. When we are being baptized, it is a picture of, it is a shadow of a significant reality that, as the Holy Spirit opens up our hearts to the beauty of Christ, as we are saved, we have union with Christ. We discussed this last week when we discussed justification. So here's what it looks like. Our identity ceases to be socioeconomic status, it ceases to be Conservative/Liberal, it ceases to be white/black/Hispanic and it begins to be, "I am His. I am a child of God." So that union with Christ is Christ giving and granting His righteousness to me and taking onto Himself the wrath due to me because of my sin. So Jewish identity, Israel's identity, the covenant community's identity was built out on their obedience to the law. So you could spot an Israelite not always just by ethnicity, but also by how they chose to live their lives. So there were dietary laws, there were laws around government, there were laws around rest, there were laws around marriage and there were laws around how you could harvest your crops. There were six-hundred laws around and governing the life of an Israelite. And you could spot their identity by how they obeyed their law. Now the truth is they kind of stunk at it, and we're going to find in Romans 8 that Jesus says, "No, I fulfilled the law completely. So your identity now isn't in the law. Your identity is in Me." Everything can be taken from me except that. If we look at what I do, I am a husband to Lauren, but that can be taken away. I can die, she can die and there are scenarios that can play out where that's not true. I am the father of my children, but that can cease. I am a preacher, but that can stop. I am a leader, but surely that can stop. All these things can be taken, but who I am in Christ can't be taken from me. It will always be there regardless of circumstance. His delight, His favor, His love never can be taken away from me. And we covered that at length last week. Because He has justified me, I am more than a conqueror through Him who loves me. Since I have been justified and am being glorified, then what can separate me from the love of Christ? And we read that list. That's a nasty list: famine, nakedness, sword, persecution and death. None of those things are going to separate me from the love of Christ. Why? Because I have union with Christ. He is in me; I am in Him. This is Paul's whole point when he says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is not longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loves me and gave Himself up for me." So it's Paul's understanding that what Christ has done wasn't external to him as it's an idea to be believed, but it was actually present inside of him. Colossians 1:27 would say it this way, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." So again this isn't some ideology outside of us, but it's something that has occurred inside of us that affects how we see, how we live and how we walk, because Christ is in us, the hope of glory. So union with Christ is one of those.

And then the second thing that is represented in the baptism waters is newness of life. So if you have some Baptist roots, historically when the Baptists would baptize you, they would say, "Buried with Christ in His death. Raised to walk in the newness of life." That's straight out of Romans 6. He says that we're dead to sin. Most of us, if we were honest, would go, "You know, I don't always feel dead to it. In fact, I kind of feel very alive to it at times. I don't feel like it's somebody who has been removed from my house; I feel like it's a guest that won't leave." Am I right? Most people aren't going to say, "I feel dead to it." So I want to try to explain what's happening here. What's happening in this text is the Bible is teaching you that you're not longer a slave to it. You are not longer enslaved by it.

So I'll unpack it like this. If Christ does not reign and rule inside of you, what ends up happening when conviction or guilt rears up in your heart, you tend to go one of two directions. The first direction is to try to choke out that conviction, to choke out that shame. So what the majority of us tend to do is try to numb it with some momentary pleasure. So whether that's entertainment, food or lust, we just want that voice to shut up. So we pursue things that aren't going to make it shut up but actually make it louder vs. pursuing the thing that will make it shut up, which is that it has been crucified with Christ. So what ends up happening is you actually embolden sin inside of you by running to sin to try to

silence the guilt from sin. So this is that cycle that so many of you are in where you feel shame, so you run to (more often than not) what created the shame to begin with. Think about how pornography works. That's exactly how pornography works. You feel stressed, you feel guilty, you feel angry, so you run to what's going to give you a temporary reprieve. But then what happens? You feel guilty about that. You hate that you did that. So you throw up your hands. "Well, forget it." And then you go on a binge. The same thing can happen with food. You feel guilty, you feel stressed and you feel shame, so you start to eat. Then you start feeling guilty and shameful about what you ate, and then that leads you to just eating more. So by trying to silence guilt and shame, you simply give it a megaphone. And that's how the majority of people deal with guilt and shame who are enslaved to sin.

The other way people go is a little bit of a darker way. They simply just give up. I don't know if you've ever come across somebody who has a great deal of self-hate, but they wallow in pity, and they let themselves go. They don't even know they're doing it. They try to destroy their relationships, they try to manipulate their surroundings, they isolate, they run and they wallow in self-pity. "No one could love me. No one could care for me." So if you try to care for them, they actually try to sever that. Trying to love people who are stuck in this is extremely difficult, because they're going to constantly give you the stiff arm and try to make you hate them so in some sick way they can control rejection. This is the other way people go who are enslaved to sin.

But for those who know, believe, trust in Jesus Christ, we're dead to sin. That doesn't mean we don't sin; it means that when we do sin, we don't try to numb it with temporary pleasures that only make it louder and we don't wallow in self-pity. It means we acknowledge our sin before the Lord, we feel the weight of rebellion against God, we confess it to God and others and we repent. Six months ago, I went down to Houston to teach at a church planting conference. Between sessions, I had the opportunity to run down to where I graduated high school. The second I pulled into town, I began to pass things that were shameful for me. I passed by a field where I got into a fight. Just by looking at me, you probably know that I need to cheat if I've got any chance to win at all. Fighting fair usually ended up with me bleeding. So I had to learn just to either get the first shot, grab a weapon or something to win. So I passed the field where I got into a fight with a kid named Sean, and it was just a bad, bad deal that day. To this day, if Christ has not done a work in that man's heart, if you say my name, I guarantee you he fills with rage. And then I passed the home of a young woman where our relationship was far from godly. There was divorce going on in her home. She was just so insecure and I preyed on that. I passed by a house where the 16th birthday party of a friend went very depraved very quickly. I was like, "I've got to get out of here." So I get back in my car and start heading north. The entire way of me going back up to preach the gospel to pastors, to press on pastors that they must remember the gospel just like everyone else must remember the gospel, here's what I'm thinking in my head. Here's what the enemy is doing in my heart. Here's what's happening with that old man inside of me. "Huh, I wonder what Sean would think about your little cute gospel message you're about to give. I wonder what those pastors would think if they knew about your relationship with Holly and what that looked like. I wonder who would listen to you, who would care about anything you had to say if they knew what took place at that party that night." And I began to feel for the first time in a long time the physical effects of shame. Do you know what I mean when I say that? I could physically feel them. I could feel disgust and nausea. I could feel the shame. Now praise God that I have memorized enough Scripture and I know the Bible well enough that the Holy Spirit simply reminded me that that Matt Chandler is dead, that I was guilty for every one of those things, but it was already paid for and, with my union in Christ, He sees me as perfect, spotless and blameless. And I stand in front of those pastors and in front of you not as a perfect man, but as a redeemed man giving glory to Christ, not glory to myself.

So not only do I have union with Christ that is represented in the baptism, but I also walk in the newness of life, and that's represented in the waters. So when you get in the water and someone puts you under the water, you are dying with Christ and being raised with Christ. It's a symbol of being raised with Christ to walk in the newness of life. These are the significant realities that are on display when you are baptized after you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord. Those

realities would not be true if you were baptized before you made that confession of faith. Those realities are not present if you were baptized before you were a believer in Christ. Now let me be clear here. We love our Presbyterian brothers. Some of my best friends are Presbys. Some of the guys who have mentored and trained me are Presbyterians. I have nothing but respect for how they see baptism in regards to covenantal theology. They would say that baptism in the New Testament is the same as circumcision in the Old Testament in that circumcision was given to Israel as a sign of the covenant, despite the fact that not all Israel were elect. Not all Israel were God's chosen people. Only a remnant of them were, and yet all of them had the sign of the covenant. Well the Presbyterians would then say that baptism is like that, which is why they sprinkle infants into the covenant before their salvation. They don't believe it's a means of grace. They don't believe it saves. They just mark them as a sign of the covenant and then say, when they're saved, they'll be a part of the covenant community in a real spiritual way as opposed as just a marked way like with circumcision. I hope I did that justice. Ultimately, I love how they view their Bible and how they see certain things, specifically the nature and character of God. I just can't join them biblically with baptism. What baptism is a significant reality of is not present if you are not saying, "I have been blood bought by Jesus Christ. I am dying with Him and I am living with Him from here on out." So that's why we practice here believers' baptism, which means you don't get baptized until after you profess faith in Christ.

Now I want to talk with you about some things I need you to hear me say. I said that this ring is a symbol of significant realities. It is not the significant realities themselves; it simply is a symbol of or a marker of those significant realities. So let me say a couple things about baptism so I can make sure that you hear me well. Number one, baptism does not save you. It is not a means of grace. It is a sanctifying grace, not a grace unto salvation. Let me try to explain the difference between the two. When I am obedient to the commands of Christ, what I am doing in taking a step of obedience is showing to you externally that my trust and hope is in God. It's not in anything other than God. So when God says, "Do this," and I say, "Okay, I'll do it," what I am showing externally is that God has done something internally. Some of my favorite moments here at the Village are when we were running six services over at the Highland Village campus and turning away from almost all six of those. We had even gone to video on Sunday nights, and it didn't even matter. We were willing to lose 1,400 people over it. We were running ragged. And then Dell Steele called and said, "Hey, we found out that that Albertson's is going under, and we can get in early on it. But we're going to have to move fast." So we started the second giving campaign we ever had at the Village, and I stood up and said, "We need \$4 million in 60 days." That was the campaign name. "We need \$4 million. You know we need it. Let's do this. Let's go." And crazy things happened. Some people downsized their car. Some people cast in their retirement. There were a couple people I know who actually downsized their home. They literally sold their house and moved into a smaller house in order to give to the purchase of this building. Now, none of those things saved them, but because they are saved, they're moved to live in such a way that shows where their treasure actually is. So when you get a late 40-year-old cashing in their retirement in order to give to what he believes to be a move of God, that's not his salvation, but it does reveal where his heart is. So when you step out in obedience and say, "I'm going to obey the commands of God," those are not acts of salvation but rather acts of sanctification in that they don't save you but reveal where your heart actually is. So baptism is a sanctifying grace; it is not a saving grace. So just because you've been baptized does not mean that you are a believer in Christ. It simply means that you got in water and you were dunked or sprinkled upon. So baptism, according to the Scriptures, is not saving grace but sanctifying grace. And maybe some of you have a Church of Christ background and you're going, "What about 1 Peter? What do you do with John?" I'm not afraid of that conversation at all. Again, I'll push you toward the baptism class. I just don't have space to address it in our time together. Baptism does not save you.

Not only does baptism not save you, but it also is not necessary for salvation. So we learned last week that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, and the faith to believe in the grace was given to you by God so that no one may boast. So not only does baptism not save you, but it's not even necessary for heaven and eternity with Christ. With that said, let me press here. Maybe I'm judgmental, and if so, God help me. But I am nervous about a married man or married woman who doesn't wear their ring. There might even be legitimate reasons. Maybe you've got arthritis, maybe you don't like

jewelery or maybe it doesn't match your watch. Maybe you have legitimate reasons, but I'm just telling you at first blush, I think you're shady. If you go, "I just don't like to wear my ring when I go out," if I were your spouse, I'd hack your e-mail. I think you're shady. So you're going, "No, I'm in, but that's our business. I don't need some ring telling me where my commitments are at." Anytime I hear a guy saying that, I'm just like, "Man, you're an idiot." "That ring doesn't define me." No, it doesn't. You're absolutely right. So wear it. The Bible says, "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord." If you have a spouse, that's a gift from the Lord. Who doesn't like to flaunt their gift? And as men and women, we flaunt it in different ways. Men talk about how they married over their heads. Women never do that. Men are just like, "Can you believe what I did there? I'm a drooling idiot, and look at this woman. How crazy is this?" I've never heard a woman do that. It's funny how it works, but why would not want to go, "No, I'm in a covenant relationship. I'm walking in a relationship that is a gift of God for my sanctification and ultimately my joy. In the same way that you make me a little bit nervous if you don't want to wear the sign of the covenant, people who go, "No, I love the Lord, but I just don't really want to do what He says," just makes me a little bit nervous. I'm not saying you're not a believer. I'm not saying you don't love the Lord, but I am compelled to wonder a bit about what's really happening in your heart when you're just like, "I would just rather everyone not know. I would just rather not have everybody in my business."

So that leads me to this. Why should we be baptized? I'll start with just the easiest one that's a lob out of our first text. Because Jesus said to. That's not given to interpretation. You can't take it and say, "Well what he really meant was. . ." No, He says, ". . . baptizing them. . ." If you moved over into Acts, you would see Peter dropping that first message at Pentecost, and the people say, "What should we do?" They believed, were filled with the Holy Spirit and asked, "What should we do?" "Repent and be baptized." It's this refrain that what happens to us after our surrender to Christ is we are baptized. It is the command of Christ. Number two, it shows and reveals our obedience to God. It shows before a covenant community, "I am following Him. This is not a whim. This is not some one-time decision. I'm in and I'm in to follow." And the third is it literally lines us up with the example of our King Jesus. Let me read Matthew 3:16-17 to you. "And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'" Christ, as our example, is baptized and then commands us to also be baptized. It is a sign of the significant reality of what He has done for us in the cross. So we show the covenant people, "I'm in."

Now maybe you've got some hitches in your spirit about it. Let me just go over a couple of them. Maybe you're just afraid. Maybe fear kind of governs you and you just don't know what to do. Let me just help you. Being afraid is never a sin. It's never a sin to be afraid. Living in fear however is a sin. Do you understand the difference between the two? It's not a sin to be afraid, but it is a sin to live in fear. I'll explain why. Fear, if you boil it down and take away all the external ideas around it, is simply a failure to trust in the goodness and reliability of God. The reason fear dominates your life is because you don't trust God. That's the bottom line. "Well, no it's my background. It's things I've experienced." Yeah, you've experienced those things and you think that God's not good enough to see you through those things if they ever happen to you or that He loves you so much that maybe that won't even happen. But maybe He loves you so much that it would be the best thing for you to let you go through that. You simply don't trust the Lord, so you're afraid and you give into fear instead of attacking it. Fear in the life of a believer should be hunted down and killed without mercy. At any point you see, smell or sense fear welling up in you to where you're basing decisions off it, to where you're allowing it to seep into your relationships, you need to attack the root of it, which is a failure to trust God.

The second reason people delay being baptized is a failure to understand the grace of God. Three weeks ago, we did baptisms across all our services. My favorite story through the weekend was a man who was baptized on Sunday morning here in Flower Mound. He was a guy who had a long history of drug abuse, primarily crack. And then for whatever reason, there was this extended period of time that crack was gone in Dallas. They ran out of crack in Dallas for

this little window of time. So all the dealers he went to and everyone he tried to get crack from were like, "Sorry, we're out." So I don't know how that happens, but there was a shortage of crack cocaine. In that period of sobriety, Christ got a hold of his life. He surrendered his life, submitted and began to walk with other people. He began to be engaged and get involved with people who could hold him accountable. And then he said that he had a bit of a stumble just right before baptism. If you know anything about addicts, it wasn't a binge. He blew it and got himself into situations he knew better than, but he fell just like you and I do. No one is clean in this. And he fell. And then he was like, "Man, I can't be baptized in this." So he didn't disappear for three weeks; he just had a rough night, and it was sinful, it was rebellious and was a lack of trusting in Christ and utilizing the lanes that Christ had created for him to walk in. So he fell and was like, "I don't know that I can be baptized." But our position was like, "Are you kidding me? What would stop you from being baptized?" Because what we're celebrating in the baptismal waters is not how awesome you are. It's not how far you've come and how much you've climbed up the ladder. It's that you've been saved by grace alone through faith alone and your union with Christ is secure in Christ, not because of you but because of Him. So baptism is not a sign of maturity, but a sign of outward obedience at new birth. That's what's happening in baptism.

Now let me just close out like this. I'm not preaching this sermon to drum up more baptisms. We honestly jam those weekends. There hasn't been a sermon on a baptism weekend in seven years. We sing a couple of songs and then baptize a ton of people. We don't keep those records and go, "Last year, we baptized this many people." I don't think keeping track of those things is wrong; we just haven't done it here. So ultimately what I'm trying to do is once again put us under the Word of God and allow us to rest in His goodness and grace extended towards us in Jesus. Maybe today the Holy Spirit will show those of you who walk in fear that you're failing to trust Him and then maybe God would do a work in your heart around. Maybe some of you continue to misunderstand all that God has done for you in Christ in that His righteousness is offered to you. The wrath due you (and you have wrath due you) has been taken from you and put on Jesus. If you would but surrender your life to His affective call, you would be wiped clean of your sin and be given freedom from the slavery of sin.

Let's pray. "Father, thank You for our time together. I thank You for the picture we get to see in the waters of dying with You, being raised with You, being in union with You and being set free from the bondage of sin and decay. I thank You for the fact that grace has paid the bill. I thank You and praise You that we don't have to live in fear but that we can live in freedom, knowing that You are good and You do good regardless of our circumstances. We love You. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name we pray. Amen."