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Sermon Notes

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## **The Blessings and Limitations of Water Baptism**

### **1 Corinthians 1:14-17**

I was baptized in the Ipswich River in Topsfield, Massachusetts in May of 1984.

At that time of year, the rivers in Massachusetts are filled with recently melted snow and ice, and have barely had enough time to thaw... the experience was – bracing – to say the least. Honestly, I was shivering from the cold when I came up out of the river. I had been a Christian for about a year and a half, having been converted at a retreat with Campus Crusade for Christ and then discipled by a Cru staff worker named Tim Schuman. Tim was a phenomenal discipler, teaching me tons about the Bible, daily quiet times, how to share my faith, how to make Christ the center of my daily life moment by moment by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. But Cru does not emphasize church involvement much at all, and therefore I didn't think about water baptism for over a year.

Then Tim and I were doing some witnessing around the college campuses in Boston – MIT, Harvard, Boston University – and we kept encountering members of a cult known as the Boston Church of Christ. I would find out later that the entire denomination called the "Church of Christ" believed in baptismal regeneration – you're not actually born again until you are water baptized. But the Boston Church of Christ went even further: they said you're not born again until you are baptized BY THEM!!

We started studying water baptism together and I came to strong Baptist convictions... that water baptism should be administered only to those who have made a creditable profession of faith in Christ. But that water baptism is not the moment of justification, or even required for heaven.

Today, I will share some of the verses we studied that led me to those conclusions...

But at that time, a light suddenly dawned on me. I myself had never been water baptized as a believer in Christ! I had been raised Roman Catholic, and my parents had baptized me as an infant. I did not realize until I was an adult and a Christian, when I was attending a Catholic baptism of a friend's infant, that the priest said that the baby was now "born again!" So the Roman Catholic people are like the Church of Christ people in

teaching baptismal regeneration: that the moment of justification is the moment of water baptism, and without water baptism, you cannot be saved!

But in my studies as a newly converted college student with Tim Schuman, I came to realize that water baptism IS COMMANDED by Jesus Christ, and that I had not yet obeyed that command. It took a while for me to find a church I wanted to join, but Mark Dever and some others were planting a Southern Baptist church in Topsfield, MA, and I sought and received water baptism from him in the Ipswich River.

Today, we return to 1 Corinthians 1.

I last preached from this pulpit seven weeks ago... and at that time I was right in the middle of a sermon on 1 Corinthians 1:1-17 when I looked at the clock... it was 11:40 and I wasn't close to being finished. Some of you may well know this is a regular pattern on my part... one missionary in Serbia who listens to my sermons online said, "You never finish any sermon!"

Ouch. That hurt!! It's any overstatement, but not without some truth and a point of improvement for me

At any rate, I was walking through the first seventeen verses of this amazing epistle to the Corinthians, unfolding how Paul greets the church he planted with his apostolic greeting and his desire and promise: "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

He then expresses deep and heartfelt thanks to God for them because of the clear evidence of the sovereign grace of God in their lives... a grace that rescued them from the darkness of their paganism, their enslavement to dark idols and to the invisible demons behind them... their chains of sin that kept them spiritually dead to God. The gospel of Jesus Christ broke in and transferred them from Satan's kingdom to Christ's wonderful realm. And Paul thanked God also for the abundance of spiritual gifts that were so clearly evident in their lives... spiritual gifts of knowledge and of speaking that continually deepened their relationship with God. He promised them of God's powerful grip of grace, that God would keep them firmly in Christ to the end of their lives... they would be empowered to fight the good fight, to finish their race, to keep the faith despite all of Satan's powerful assaults through the world and the flesh.

Having expressed these rich thanks to God for them, however, Paul rolled up his sleeves and began to address their issues, one after the other. Solving these various problems would make up the bulk of his epistle to them.

And the first one he addressed was their DIVISIONS... their FACTIONS... their DISPUTES with one another:

These divisions are a HUGE ISSUE in the life of the earthly church of Christ. Every church that we know anything about in the New Testament struggled with divisions caused by sin. Sinners don't get along with each other. Sinners divide from each other. Sinners criticize each other and argue with each other and oppose each others. Sinners are moved by deep-seated pride and cannot yield to each other. The gospel alone can cure this problem... but it is a significant problem.

In Corinth, in particular, Paul is addressing their tendency to break into factions behind specific heroes, notable leaders... "I follow Paul... he planted this church to begin with!" ... "Oh yeah?! Well I follow Apollos! He was a much better speaker than Paul!" ... "So what? I follow Peter! He was an apostle before Paul and is the leader of the church in Jerusalem!" "What does that matter? I follow Christ more than any of you!"

These divisions were a work of Satan in their midst. There is an old story from Greek mythology that the war between Troy and Sparta was started by the goddess of discord named Eris. [Imagine being the goddess of discord! That's your job... to start arguments in the heavens and on the earth!] She rolled a golden apple with the inscription, "To the fairest" in the midst of a feast of the gods and goddesses, starting a bitter argument based on vanity among Hera, the queen of the goddesses, Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and Athena, the goddess of wisdom. Their bitter dispute based on ego and vanity led directly to the epic war between the Trojans and the Spartans.

This is a myth. But Satan is truly the GOD of discord... he starts pride-based quarrels among church members and leaders all over the world. There is not a single church of any history in the world that does not struggle with pride-based factions and divisions.

But our unity in Christ is essential to our witness

So, Paul writes this epistle to unify these bickering Christians

I. Paul Puts Himself and Water Baptism in its Place

A. Final Correction: Chapter 3

***1 Corinthians 3:4-7 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men? <sup>5</sup> What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe-- as the Lord has assigned to each his task. <sup>6</sup> I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made***

*it grow. <sup>7</sup> So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.*

B. Here, Paul MINIMIZES HIMSELF... and all human servants of Christ

***1 Corinthians 1:13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?***

1. "Is Christ divided" = we're all in the same body, serving the same King
2. The focus should be on CHRIST who was crucified for you... not on the messengers, who brought you the word of the cross
3. Paul is saying "I did not die for your sins! I am not your savior! And neither is Apollos or Peter or any other servant. CHRIST IS THE LORD! He is the Savior! He died on the cross for your sins! He was crucified for you... I wasn't"
4. Part of that adjustment is this aside on water baptism: "Were you baptized into the name of Paul?!"
  - a. You were baptized into CHRIST'S NAME, not mine!"

C. Paul Puts Water Baptism in its Place Too!

***1 Corinthians 1:14-17 I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup> so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. <sup>16</sup> (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) <sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel***

1. These are amazing statements!
2. Paul asserts that he is thankful he didn't baptize hardly anyone in Corinth (he initially says, "Except Crispus and Gaius")
3. That doesn't mean the Corinthians weren't water baptized... just that Paul delegated the actual work to others, and that he's glad he did
4. Amazingly, then Paul amends his initial statement... "Oh yeah, wait a minute... I also baptized the household of Stephanas... But I don't remember if I baptized anyone else"
  - a. His dismissal of the importance of this issue is amazing
  - b. Not at all saying that water baptism is meaningless or insignificant, but that Paul's personal activity in baptizing converts was not important at all

c. Effectively, “It doesn’t matter who actually did the baptism; what matters is that they were baptized into the name of Jesus Christ”

d. We are merely servants sent to do God’s will

5. Then the final statement:

***1 Corinthians 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel-- not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.***

6. This is a KILLER STATEMENT for baptismal regeneration!

a. If water baptism were essential to salvation, then Paul’s statement that Christ did not send him to baptize but to preach the gospel would be EXTREMELY CONFUSING! Misleading!

b. Basically, what matters is hearing the gospel with faith, not water baptism

c. The extra statement about the WORDS of HUMAN WISDOM Paul will spend the rest of the chapter explaining...

i) The “words of human wisdom” speaks of human philosophical leaders... heroes of the warring camps of philosophical school

ii) Words of human wisdom will NEVER SAVE SOULS

iii) If they could, the cross of Christ would be emptied of its power

D. Bottom Line: Christ alone is the Savior; human messengers are servants

## II. The Origin of Water Baptism

### A. Water Baptism Unknown to the Old Testament

### B. Intertestamental Period: Gentile Converts to Judaism

1. As the Jews were spread throughout the Gentile world, more and more Gentiles converted to Judaism

2. When they did, the men were required to be circumcised... but also they added the ritual of a water cleansing in many cases... the idea was that the Gentiles had to be completely cleansed from their filthy lives as pagans before they could be accepted into the Jewish community

### C. The Ministry of John the Baptist

1. Suddenly there came into Jewish history a man whose ministry was as shocking as it was powerful

2. John the Baptist came preaching in the desert of Judea and claiming that JEWS be washed like Gentiles... implying that Jewish national sins were so significant it was as though they were Gentiles in their uncleanness

***Matthew 3:1-6 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea<sup>2</sup> and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near..."<sup>5</sup> People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan.<sup>6</sup> Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.***

3. What is "baptism"?
  - a. The Greek word means "to immerse" or "plunge" or "sink"... like a garment in a vat of dye or a ship that gets sunk in a storm or a battle or a rod that gets dipped into honey
  - b. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint), the word "baptize" had to do with dipping or plunging something in a liquid... such as priests dipping their finger in blood or Naaman dipping himself in the Jordan River to cleanse himself of leprosy
  - c. The word never means "sprinkle" or "pour"... different verbs were used for that action
  - d. So, John the Baptist was in the Jordan River and was immersing people in its waters as a symbol for the cleansing of their sins... he was calling on people to REPENT from their sins, because the Kingdom of Heaven was coming near

***Matthew 3:6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.***

D. John Predicts the Superiority of Jesus by Comparing their Baptisms

***Matthew 3:11-12 "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.<sup>12</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."***

1. John was saying "the one who comes after me is infinitely greater than I am as proven by the superiority of his baptism
2. I only baptize you with water... he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire
3. He will PLUNGE YOU or IMMERSER YOU in the Holy Spirit and fire
4. What does this mean?

- a. John was speaking to a mixed group, including some bitter enemies, but also some deeply repentant sinners who were being cleansed of their sins through repentance and faith
- b. The key is the fire: John says that Jesus will CLEAR HIS THRESHING FLOOR... he will gather up the wheat (representing the godly, humble, repentant sinners saved by faith) into his barn... that is, he will take them to heaven to live with him forever; but the chaff he will burn with UNQUENCHABLE FIRE... this is clearly depicting hell, eternal judgment for the wicked
- c. The statement "He will clear his threshing floor" means he will deal with every single person—no one is overlooked or omitted
- d. SO... Jesus will EITHER immerse you in the Holy Spirit OR he will immerse you in fire (like the Lake of Fire, where there will be eternal torment)
- e. Therefore, John the Baptist was saying, "My water baptism is just a symbol, it is of small significance compared to the true baptism that Jesus will do."

So... Jesus is infinitely greater than John because his baptism has ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES... when Jesus immerses you, it is either in the Holy Spirit, resulting in eternal life... or it is in the Lake of Fire, which is eternal death

#### E. The Interaction with Jesus

***Matthew 3:13-17*** Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. <sup>14</sup> But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" <sup>15</sup> Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. <sup>16</sup> As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Jesus was water baptized to show solidarity with John the Baptist's message... he had no sins to confess, no need of cleansing; John actually felt his own sinfulness in Jesus' holy presence: "I need to be baptized by you!"

#### F. Jesus and Water Baptism

1. Soon after this, Jesus began his public ministry
2. He was making many disciples and they were being water baptized
3. BUT we learn this important fact

***John 4:2 it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples.***

Jesus did not personally baptize anyone in water, but he trained his disciples to do water baptism

The reason for this was to keep the symbolism clear: as John the Baptist said: ***"I baptize in water for repentance, but he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire."***

### III. The Command to Be Baptized... and to Baptize

After his death on the cross and his resurrection, Jesus gave the Great Commission, including water baptism

***Matthew 28:19-20 go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."***

So, everyone of Jesus' disciples should be baptized in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and baptism is PART OF THE WORK OF EVANGELISM and MISSIONS

### IV. Baptism with the Holy Spirit

- A. After his resurrection, Jesus prepared the disciples for the baptism of the Spirit that would come

***Acts 1:4-5 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. <sup>5</sup> For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."***

- B. This was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost

***Acts 2:1-4 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.***

- C. As the gospel spread, more and more disciples trusted in Christ and received the gift of the Holy Spirit

***Acts 2:37-39 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" <sup>38</sup> Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the***

*forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off-- for all whom the Lord our God will call."*

#### D. Water Baptism on the Day of Pentecost

*Acts 2:41-42 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. <sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

#### V. The Significance of Water Baptism

A. Water Baptism is an Outward, Visible Symbol of an Internal, Spiritual Reality

B. Water Baptism Represents the Inner Baptism of the Spirit

1. The Holy Spirit is God, the Third Person of the Trinity
2. The Holy Spirit is sent forth by God the Father and the Son into the world to work in individual sinners' hearts and lives
3. By the Spirit, we are joined to Christ and to his Body, the Church

*1 Corinthians 12:13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*

4. To be baptized by the Spirit means to be immersed in Christ... he is the Spirit of Christ... by the Spirit, we are immersed in all that Christ is—in his cleansing blood, in his overwhelming love, in his mighty power, in his sublime wisdom... SWIMMING IN A SEA OF CHRIST

As St. Patrick said:

"Christ with me,  
 Christ before me,  
 Christ behind me,  
 Christ in me,  
 Christ beneath me,  
 Christ above me,  
 Christ on my right,  
 Christ on my left,  
 Christ when I lie down,  
 Christ when I sit down,  
 Christ when I arise,  
 Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,  
 Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,

Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.”

### C. Water Baptism Represents Union with Christ... in His Death and in His Life

***Romans 6:3-5 don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. <sup>5</sup> If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.***

UNION WITH CHRIST!! His death becomes our death, his life becomes our life

The full immersion of water baptism symbolizes this union—lowered down into the water as if we are being buried, raised up out of the water as if we are emerging to a new life

## VI. Proper Subjects and Mode of Baptism

### A. Therefore, Baptism Must Be Administered to Believers

1. The only people who are baptized in the New Testament after the resurrection of Christ are disciples of Christ... those who can give a credible profession of faith in Christ
2. There is not a single clear example of infant baptism in the Bible
3. There is no command to Christian parents to baptize their infants as there are clear commands to Jewish fathers in the Old Testament to circumcise their sons
4. Every example of baptism in the NT is of people old enough to believe the gospel, to repent of their sins, and trust in Christ as Lord and Savior
5. So... if this has happened we can baptize a person

***Romans 10:9-10 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.***

### B. Also, the Proper Mode of Baptism is FULL IMMERSION in water

1. This is only from understanding what the Greek word “baptidzo” meant... it always means immersion, plunging, dipping as we’ve said

## VII. The Limitation of Water Baptism

A. Water Baptism DOES NOT SAVE ANYONE automatically

B. Neither is Water Baptism Required for Salvation

The thief on the cross recognized his own sinfulness and Jesus' coming kingdom... he saw them both by faith and made a profession of faith in Christ

***Luke 23:42-43 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."***

No water baptism required

C. So, the Mass Baptisms of the Medieval Era of European Christendom did not convert anyone

In September of 988, the Prince of the pagan Rus people in Kiev, Prince Vladimir, after having studied a variety of religions, decided that the Greek Orthodox style of religion was superior to his own paganism and all the other religions he knew, including the paganism of the Vikings and the faith of the Muslims. An account written a century after Vladimir reads like this:

Vladimir sent heralds throughout the whole city to proclaim that if any inhabitants, rich or poor, did not get himself to the river, he would risk the Prince's displeasure. . . . The next day, the Prince went forth to the Dnieper River ... and a countless multitude assembled. They all went into the water: some stood up to their necks, others to their chests, and the younger near the bank, some of them holding children in their arms, while the adults waded farther out. The priests stood by and offered prayers.

For us as Baptists, we realize that such forced baptisms are not valid... but that is how most of Europe became supposedly Christian

When I was in Sofia, Bulgaria, I was on a tour in which the guide spoke of how the Orthodox priests protected the Jews in World War II by sprinkling them with water in the huge Orthodox church and proclaiming them baptized Christians to spare them from being herded off to death camps. But while that sprinkling of water may have saved them from death in a German concentration camp, such a baptism cannot save anyone from sin

The true baptism is baptism BY THE SPIRIT by Jesus Christ:

***Ezekiel 36:25-27 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup> I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.***

So also the true cleansing is not by water but by the Spirit by the blood of Christ:

***Titus 3:5-7 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.***

## VIII. Applications

A. The Proclamation of the Cross is Central... so come to Christ today

1. Remember the main idea here: Paul is glad that he did not do many baptisms because he didn't want too much focus on HIMSELF

***1 Corinthians 2:2 I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.***

***1 Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.***

2. Christ is the Lord, the Savior of sinners... all the rest are merely human servants sent by him
3. The true work of cleansing is done by Christ through the Holy Spirit
4. If you confess your sins to God and ask Christ's death to be your atoning sacrifice, if you trust in his blood to pay for your sins, and if you trust in Christ to cleanse you from all sins, HE WILL
5. If that actually happens, you have already become IMMERSED in a SEA OF MERCY AND GRACE by the Holy Spirit... you have been baptized by the Spirit into Christ
6. By that grace, by the Spirit, you may now walk in newness of life!!

B. Water Baptism Does Not Save... But We Cannot REFUSE to be baptized either!

1. If you are a believer in Christ, but have never been baptized as a believer, Christ's command for you is to be water baptized
2. Water baptism doesn't save anyone; BUT it is important

***Matthew 28:19-20 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.***

3. It is an outward and visible sign of the Spirit's baptism in your life
4. If you have never been water baptized and want to be, talk to me or another of the elders

C. If you have been baptized, understand what that means

1. Just because you have been water baptized doesn't mean you're guaranteed for heaven
2. Dying and rising again means a NEW LIFE OF HOLINESS in Christ

***Romans 6:1-4 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? <sup>3</sup> Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.***

***Romans 6:11 count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.***

***Romans 6:19 Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.***

D. Think of Water Baptism as Symbolic of Total Immersion in the Holy Spirit

1. The dying and rising out of the water theme is one picture
2. But Baptism in the Spirit means a total immersion in the person of the Holy Spirit... a SATURATION with his influence...
3. Like a white garment lowered into a vat of indigo dye becomes darker and darker blue the longer it is immersed, so we are becoming more and more infused with the Spirit of Christ the longer we are filled with the Spirit...
4. This includes THINKING like the Spirit and displaying the fruit of the Spirit

***Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control.***

It also means more and more warfare against sin:

***Romans 8:13-14 if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, <sup>14</sup> because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.***

It also means more and more boldness in witnessing for Christ:

***Acts 4:8-12 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! <sup>9</sup> If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, <sup>10</sup> then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. <sup>11</sup> He is "'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.' <sup>12</sup> Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."***