

Good News & Bad News

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 November 2023

Preacher: Bill Story

[0 : 00] How we doing? Fair to middling? Fair to middling? Great, we got a great. We got fair to middling?

We got great, we got fair to middling? Blessed beyond measure. Blessed beyond measure. Okay, you can get better than I deserve, right? Amen.

Take out your Bibles with me, please, and turn to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 3. Look at that. We're making headway. Chapter 3 of Luke.

Luke is going to pick up the story he left off at the end. Chapter 1, we had the announcement and then the birth of John the Baptist. Chapter 1 told us that John grew and grew strong and increased and then moved out of home and moved into the desert.

And we hadn't heard anything until now. Now we see John fully grown. And becoming that which God had prophesied he would be. So Luke, chapter 3, we're going to read the first 20 verses and then we'll pray and we'll dig in.

[1 : 14] So if you're able, please stand as we read from, as I read from Luke, chapter 3, 1. In the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee and his brother Philip, tetrarch of the region of Eteria and Trachonitis.

I think that's something you get in your throat, Trachonitis. And Lysanias, tetrarch of Abilene. That's not Texas. Sorry. During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance unto the forgiveness of sins.

As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord.

Make his path straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The crooked shall become straight and the rough places shall become level ways.

[2 : 50] And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. And he said, therefore, to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, you brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, we have Abraham as our father. For I tell you, God is able to from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

Even now, the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

And the crowds asked him, what then can we do? And he answered them, whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none.

And whoever has food is to do likewise. Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, teacher, what can we do?

[4 : 14] And he said to them, collect no more than you are authorized to do. Soldiers also asked him, even us, what can we do?

And he said to them, do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, but be content with your wages.

As the people were in expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all saying, I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming.

The strap of whose sandal I'm not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn. But the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.

[5 : 35] So with many other exhortations, he preached the good news to the people. But Herod, the Tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, Herod added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

So reads the word. Let us pray. Father, guide us today. Open our eyes to see wondrous things from your word.

Help us hear, hear the message of John, your prophet. Prepare our hearts for you.

This we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. Good news or bad news?

You want the good first? You've heard these sayings, right? Go to the doctor. The doctor says, I have some bad news and some very bad news.

[7 : 09] The bad news is you have cancer. The patient said, well, what's the very bad news? You also have short-term memory loss.

The patient said, oh, thank goodness. I thought you were going to say I had cancer. Right? Right? I don't know. Good news, bad news.

Well, I don't know if that was, that was good news. You couldn't remember. Did you know the gospel is not just good news? It begins with bad news.

That's what makes it good. And that's what John, it's almost like you read and hear what John says and then in verse 18 it talks about, so with many other exhortations, John preached the good news.

That was all good news that he said, you brood of vipers. Good news of the gospel is only understood when we see it in light of the bad news.

[8 : 15] That's why so many people dismiss the gospel because they don't understand the bad news of dismissing the gospel. John doesn't mince words.

He apparently has not taken the course from Dale Carnegie how to win friends and manipulate people, I mean influence people. John doesn't care what people think.

He cares what God has to say to them. So John begins with the bad. He talks about the coming wrath of God. So Luke 3, we see now John preaching.

Chapters 1 and 2 of Luke, we were told of the announcements of John the Baptist being born and then the announcement of Jesus Christ being born and then we heard about the birth of John and the prophecy of his father.

Then we saw in chapter 2 the birth of Jesus and the angels in the sky, right, and the shepherds proclaiming all these things. And then we saw the second part of chapter 2 where these two strangers come up and proclaim and talk about this Jesus being the light and the division.

[9 : 31] So now we come, John kind of catches up at this point to the other gospels. The other gospels kind of start with John the Baptist and his ministry. John now adds. And he describes it as God's word has come at a particular time.

It's almost, I think, an ironic picture here of God's word invading world history. The eternal comes into the temporary.

The real power comes into the imaginary power. But John portrays the earthly power seems to be the real power.

Look at the list of these rulers. He talks about, and now understand that Luke, once again, remember Luke said he's going to write in an orderly fashion so that we might be certain about the gospel.

Well, he's writing very orderly. We found that he structures each story. So he frames this story beginning with Herod and ending with Herod. With the beginning of John, the word of God coming and John preaching and the end of the story, John's still preaching.

[10 : 46] And then we have the heart of the story in the middle. He begins with Herod who's among a number of world leaders. Those who seem to have the real power.

He even tells us, he gives us details. So again, he's checking boxes so that we might be certain.

He's not telling a fairy tale. This isn't something made up. This is something you can check. In fact, historians check Luke's details with other Roman historians like Josephus and find, oh, he was right about that.

Yep, he's right about that. Yep, he's right about that. Oh, I think he's off. Oh, no, no, no, no, no. He's right about that one too. Luke is a true historian. And so he gives the date.

It's the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar. That would mean we're talking about 26, 26, 27 A.D. when John starts.

But he frames the story with these world leaders that seem like they have all the power. I mean, you got Caesar and under him you got Pilate and then Herod and Philip and Lysanius.

[11:59] You know, Herod the Great. This is a different Herod. This is not Herod of the birth of Jesus, Herod the Great who killed the innocents, right? Remember, the Holy Family fled to Egypt, right?

To get away from Herod until he was dead. And so in 4 B.C. when Herod died, the family comes back, right? So this is the next Herod. This is not Herod the Great.

This is Herod the Tetrarch. He's not the king. He's just a puppet of Caesar. Okay, so Herod split his kingdom into kingdom, I quote unquote kingdom, realm or what he was allowed to have influence on by realm into his sons.

So Herod, Philip, Lysanius. But these seem to have the real power, right? They're the, man, they're the movers and shakers. They're the ones that are oppressing Israel.

And so notice verse 2. It says, not just these earthly human rulers but the high priesthood of, verse 2, of Annas and Caiaphas. I thought there's only one high priest.

[13:08] Well, there were two in that time. Both had been appointed by Rome, so make no mistake, these are not godly men. Annas and Caiaphas. And Caiaphas disappointed Rome, so he was deposed.

He's still alive and he's still the godfather of the priesthood. Annas was the formal son-in-law priest, but remember when Jesus died, they went before Annas and then, oh no, you gotta go, gotta go see Caiaphas.

He's the godfather. I would let you, no, I don't know. I mean, he's the real power. But I need you to understand these are all evil men. Everyone listed in verse 1 are evil.

Okay, they're out for themselves. They care nothing about God. Herod included. Herod, remember, is not a Jew. He's an Inomeen. He's from Esau. He tries to win the favor of the Jews by building them a temple and other things.

Remember, he continued that great building project. But as we see at the end of the story, he's an evil man. So then he says, so Luke frames all of this and says, all these rulers here, Annas, verse 2, it's during this time that the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

[14:34] It's almost as if we're reading the Old Testament because that's how Isaiah is introduced. That's how Jeremiah is introduced. That's how, they're all introduced as in the reign of this king, the word of God came to Jeremiah.

The word of God came to Ezekiel. The word of God came to John. So John is the last prophet. In fact, Jesus said that the law and the prophets are until John.

John's it. He's the bridge. He's the transition. So here's that picture. The word of God comes into this historical time.

This particular time. And Tiberius and Pilate and Herod are there. Annas and Caiaphas. We'll all hear, we'll hear about those guys later in the story.

John comes preaching. He's proclaiming a message of repentance. And then notice the end of the story. Just the framework.

[15:33] Again, it ends with verse 18. Here's Herod again. And he's, and the preaching of John is going on. And he imprisons John for his preaching.

He was being reprov'd, called to account, being exposed, and convicted of his evil over and over and over again. John wouldn't let up. It wasn't just that John made a remark.

John wouldn't let up. Because Herod did not just make some mistakes. He was evil. I mean, he took his brother's wife.

That was just one of the things. And it says, Herod then kind of added that. Okay. Okay, that's enough. Let's arrest him. Let's silence this preacher.

This preacher. And suppress his preaching. Maybe John should have changed his method. Huh?

[16:34] I mean, that's not how we preach today. You gotta win friends. You gotta, you gotta help people. You gotta not offend them. Right? Right? John was called of God, and he spoke what God wanted.

It wasn't up to him to change the methodology. In fact, some years ago, we wrote up, we are distinct, we think one of our distinctives as little log is that we preach.

The word preach means to proclaim. It denotes intensity, authority, urgency, and forcefulness. The word means declare, herald, cry out.

Not simply speak in casual conversation or lecture. The New Testament continually sets forth preaching, proclamation, as the principal method of communicating the gospel.

It's the method best suited to the nature of the message proclaimed. It was the method of John the Baptist, the method of Jesus, and the method of his apostles.

[17 : 42] And it was the method that John said, Timothy, you do it too. The gospel is a message which declares the invasion of God into human history.

He has not intervened to address the human, excuse me, he has intervened to address the human dilemma by means of Jesus' redeeming life. So, the gospel is good news proclaimed.

It is not God negotiating with his message. He is not asking for a discussion or attempting to strike a bargain. As the Lord of the universe, he is declaring a word that demands compliance from his creation.

The spirit of the gospel requires a method of communication that is authoritative. God has acted. You must respond.

God. Preaching is God's distinct message that best suits the authoritative declaration of God's accomplishments in Jesus Christ.

[18 : 53] Preaching as our method does not emerge from experimenting with communication techniques. We preach because we have been commanded to preach. Preaching is our commission.

It is our charge. As Paul told Timothy, 2 Timothy 2. We preach not because we've come to the conclusion that preaching is the most rational, most effective means of reaching the lost.

That's marketing. but because God has ordained it, God has empowered it, and God has promised to take that which the world would say is foolishness and use it to save sinners which glorifies God, not the man and not the method.

God got my little thing in there. I thought it was a time. This is an example of I wrote that years ago and we've got it in our distinctives in our church and it became a distinctive because I saw that preaching was going away in our time.

True preaching. Everybody says they preach but it's more of a not what we described here. I believe I'm very poor at it but I long to do it right.

[20 : 29] So John the Baptist preaches because he's bringing God's word. He's not discussing. He's not seeking to flatter. He's not seeking to try to win friends and influence people.

He doesn't care who's offended by his message. He is declaring what God has said. The word of God came and he spoke that word. What's the word? Brood of vipers.

Well that's a turn off John. You're not going to get anybody to listen to that. Not John's concern. God is invading human history.

God's wrath is coming John says. This subject of unquenchable fire. hell is an unpopular subject. In fact it's offensive to the sensitivities of modern man. Don't preach it. J.C.

[21 : 33] Ryle, one of my favorite commentators, says on this passage, he says, to be silent on the subject of hell, is treachery to men's souls.

It only encourages them to persevere in their wickedness. And it fosters the devil's old delusion in their minds that says, you surely will not die.

Never will man flee until he sees the real cause to fear. bad news first. I will never grasp why it's good news until I see what I'm staring at.

God. So John gets locked up. It seems like these earthly rulers really have the power, but we see in the heart of John's story, there's a real power that comes.

There's a power that can bring forgiveness, is what John is preaching about. So the heart of the story, we see the real power is this good news in light of bad news.

[22 : 48] So John had given us the temporary view of these earthly rulers who seem to have temporary power for a while, but in the middle we see the eternal word of God that has the real power to change lives for eternity.

So John is proclaiming now, we see in verses 3 to 17, the need and the urgency of turning to the Lord, and he reveals two baptisms.

Did you see it? He talks about in verse 3 his baptism. He preaches a baptism of repentance unto forgiveness of sins. It is what is fulfilling the prophecy preparing the way of the Lord.

So in other words, it's a baptism of preparation. Repenting is preparing for forgiveness. It's not the actual forgiveness. So there's two baptisms.

One baptism is a baptism of preparation. That's John's baptism that calls us to repentance to prepare for the Lord. And then we see at the break then, we see in verses 15 through 17, we see this other baptism John talks about.

[24 : 00] A baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire. In fact, John says, me, I don't compare to him who will baptize you. I'm nothing compared to him.

I don't need, I'm not even worthy to do the strap on his sandal. And that's the most menial task. And I'm not even worthy of that one. He's so much further beyond. What I do just prepares you. What I do shows you your need.

What I do gets you ready for him. What he does is the power. What he does is the transformation. That's the baptism you need.

So two baptisms. So let's look at John's baptism. Verse 3, he begins with the, well, let me, if you're taking notes, the first baptism, let's describe it this way.

[25 : 01] True repenting places us in the path of forgiveness. That's the first baptism of preparation. True repenting I don't say just repentance, but true repenting, continual repenting, excuse me, places us in the path of forgiveness so that we can escape the wrath that's coming.

So it begins with a need. Verse 3, calls it a baptism unto repentance, unto forgiveness. Now I know our texts don't read that, right?

Verse 3, does yours not read proclaiming a baptism, repentance for the forgiveness sins? Is that how you read? Yeah, that's poor translation. There's other words for that.

The word means unto. In other words, repentance doesn't get you the forgiveness. The repentance puts you on the path of forgiveness.

It's what leads to the goal of repentance. So repenting puts me on the path to get the forgiveness that God will bring.

[26 : 07] baptism. And John's preaching of this baptism of repentance, we're told in verse 4, Luke tells us this is a fulfillment. This was God's plan all along. This is not something new.

John's not coming out and being innovative because they didn't baptize. Jews were never baptized. Jews did purification, right?

They were circumcised. They followed the law. There's nothing about baptism in the law. John comes baptized saying you're not clean. The only people who were baptized and I don't know if it's first century but it was soon along those times that the Jews baptized Gentiles to be converts into Judaism because Gentiles are really dirty.

Right? They're unclean. Jews just have to wash their hands because, you know, we're Abraham's children. We're okay. So, he talks about verse 4.

So, it's a fulfillment of Isaiah's words. In Isaiah 40, the voice crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord. John is the one in the wilderness.

[27 : 23] He's the voice saying prepare the way of the Lord. Make his path straight. What I want you to understand is verse 3 says John is proclaiming a baptism of repentance. His proclaiming a baptism of repentance is a fulfillment of what Isaiah says.

So, what Isaiah is talking about is repentance. Okay? The voice is crying to all of us, make the way ready.

Straighten your paths. Then he's going to give a whole bunch of images. Look at verse 4. Prepare the way of the Lord. Make his path straight. In other words, Yahweh's coming, so make the way ready for him to come to you.

Make it straight so he can come right to you. Here's how you do it. Verse 5. Every valley shall be filled. Every mountain and hill shall be made low. What's he talking about? What's valleys?

He's talking about imagery here. It's poetry. You know, they would make a way clear for the king to come. You can go to Israel. Go to Beth Zion when we go to the Holy Land and we'll see how nice the roads were that Romans made back then.

[28 : 37] Okay? They were nice. Okay? This was not a primitive people. Romans knew how to build things and they built roads. And they built the roads so that Caesar could come and go wherever he needed to go.

Even if he didn't come very often, the road better be straight and smooth. One hit bumping around and it's a nice little cherry. So he's using that kind of imagery.

But he's talking about moral things. So you make yourself, you repent, you make yourself straight. So valleys, what are valleys?

Crawl out of that hole you're in. Crawl out of that pit of darkness. Get up on the road where the light will shine on you. Mountains and hills, oh, you think you're lofty, you think you're big stuff.

Yeah, come down from your heights because the Lord is coming. He'll take you down. The crooked, crooked, who are the crooked?

[29 : 43] They're the deceivers. Make it right. Make it right. Rocky, ruffy people, okay, smooth it out. That's what he's getting at.

Then we hear John's actual words, the first words of a prophet in 430 years. Okay? The last prophet to speak was Malachi.

Now John, who Malachi spoke of, speaks. His first words, verse 7, you brood of vipers.

Now come on, John. I mean, look at verse 7. He said, therefore, to the crowds that came out to be baptized, they're already here. They're already here. Why tell them that? Why shouldn't he say, oh, good for you.

You're in the right place. Let's get you baptized. No, John wants to cut them. You brood of vipers. Who warned you from the wrath that is coming?

[30 : 48] So John starts with the bad news. One is wrath is coming. What is wrath? What's the wrath of God? Is that, remember in the Old Testament we talked about the burning anger of God, right?

It took him centuries to let it loose. Remember with Israel? It took hundreds of years before the wrath finally said, okay, enough. So here, his wrath is still coming.

But biblically, theologically, the wrath of God is a settled opposition against man. It's the same wrath that's described in Romans chapter one, right? Where people suppress the truth and he gives them over and then they reject the truth and then he gives them over a little bit more, right?

And then they kind of go down this hill. And the wrath of God isn't so much coming at them as he's moving back away from them and they just get worse because he withdraws more and more of his grace.

That's wrath. You want that? That's what you get. You get misery. You get misery. There is another wrath coming.

[31 : 56] We read about it in Revelation, right? It's the wrath of the Lamb. There is a final day where God says, enough. And all things are made right.

And there is a great division. John's going to talk about that same kind of thing here. The wrath of God is coming. Why? Because he calls us. And by the way, he's not just calling the leaders.

In the book of Matthew, when John preaches, he says, you brood of vipers to the Pharisees and Sadducees. And all of us other people go, yeah, yeah, get them. Yeah, they're the brood of vipers. Here, here, it's the whole crowd that comes, he calls.

You brood of vipers. You're all vipers. Come on, John. Well, I'm not a full-grown viper yet.

I'm just a son of a brood. You know, I'm just one of the offspring of the vipers. But I'm born with it. See, that's, I'm born with the mentality and the condition of a viper.

[33 : 01] A viper who has venom. A viper who stings and bites and hurts people. We all have that.

We all have that. And until we recognize that, we won't flee. Satan's over going, no, you won't die, you won't die.

That's our condition. Is it really that bad? Verse 8, bear fruits in keeping with repentance. What do you need to do? Bear fruit, bear fruits in keeping, not just repent, but repentance with fruit.

Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. Not just a repentance where I make a decision and I pray a prayer and then I go back on Monday and do what I did.

I did that for years, by the way. I was convicted, convicted. I came and I prayed. I made a decision. I prayed a prayer. I walked in. I threw a stick in a fire. I did whatever I needed to do because I knew I was a viper.

[34 : 08] But that decision I made, Monday I was the same. So he says, don't just make a decision. Don't just make an emotional response.

Don't just have a repentance that later you will regret. Paul talks about 2 Corinthians 7. But in other words, a real change.

Fruit, bear fruit. Your repentance produces fruit. There should be an outcome of your decision, of your changing of your mind. Remember, repent means to change your mind.

It means to change the direction of your life. I leave this. I leave the idols and I come to God. Right? Now, don't just do that once and then I'm, it's a, it's a lifelong thing.

It's a direction. Why should I do it? Why all this? Well, and then he, then he attaches something. Because remember, he's speaking to Jews here, verse 8.

[35 : 09] And don't begin to say, don't, don't begin to think in your heart. Don't begin to say to yourselves, I'm okay. Because Abraham's my father.

I'm circumcised. I'm okay. I come to, I, mass, I come to synagogue. I come to temple. I go, I do what the law says. Do you?

How, how you doing? Don't begin to say, because God can just create, just like he created Adam out of, out of dust.

He can create new Adams. Out of Adams. Yeah. Didn't plan that. Sorry if that was bad. Verse 9. What's the urgency?

Look at you. He's talking about the wrath to come. Okay, the wrath to come is, is a long way off. I got time, right? No, even now, verse 9. Even now the axe is already laid at the root of the trees.

[36 : 11] And every tree that does not bear fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Even now the axe is laid to the root. Where's the root in a tree, Diane? Where's the root? Is it on the outside?

When you start chopping a tree, do you get to the root right away? You got to cut away, don't you, before you get to the root? So in other words, he's saying many cuts have already been made.

The axe isn't just in the, in the, in the chopper's hand. The axe isn't just laid down by the tree that hasn't been cut yet. The axe is already right at the root. It will take one more chop.

That's where you are. You're hanging by a thread. That's why you must repent.

That's why your repentance must not be this simple emotional decision. It must be a real life change.

[37 : 16] We are dealing with life and death issues. So, oh, this, this foolish method of preaching.

Look at this verse 10. It's very effective. He nailed him. Maybe we should have done, maybe we should start going around calling people brood of vipers.

Maybe that really works. Is that a, is that a technique we can kind of, no, no, no, no, no. But, but notice the crowds. It's just like Pentecost.

Remember Pentecost after Peter preached. Remember it said that the, that, that the word just, it pierced their heart. It got through. And then they said, what shall we do?

And remember what Peter said, repent and be baptized. Not John's baptism, but in the name of Jesus, the real baptism. Right?

[38 : 15] And so just like that, here we go. It's a pre-Pentecost. Look at it. The crowds ask him. He doesn't have an altar call. The crowds ask him what to do. That's God's call.

The crowd asked him. My, my, my version has what then shall we do? No, no, no, no. It's what can we do? It's in the subjunctive. It means what's possible.

What, what could we possibly do? What, what, I mean, we're a brood of vipers. What could we do? Can we do anything? So John's going to get very specific about how do we repent?

What is, what does it look like? What does repenting look like? How do we change? How, what does that mean that we repent? So he takes on one group at a time, the crowds.

And I want you to notice these crowds get from bad to badder to baddest or worstest. Worcester. Okay. He starts general with the crowd.

[39 : 20] Here's where we all start. You're all at least on this level. Okay. You're, you're, you're, you're not a, you know, you're a brood and some are more viperish. The crowds, what shall we do?

He said to them, verse 11, whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none and whoever has food is to do likewise. Okay. That's nice. Share with your, you know, we teach our children to share, right?

By the way, isn't that the first lesson we have to teach our children? Share. Why do we have to teach our children that? Don't they know that? No, they're born vipers. They're, sorry, they're born, right?

To take. That's mine. And that's in our nature. To take. And to not share.

Share. I hate sharing because it's mine. So that's on that level, right? You got extra. In other words, don't be a hoarder.

[40 : 17] I mean, our society recognizes this level of righteousness, right? We should share. We said commercials about people in need. Give to the need. Yeah, that appeals to us who have not evolved but are in the image of God.

That's why we understand that message. Because if we had evolved, we would give a rip about anybody else. because it's strong. Win, right?

Survival of the, if that's true, we wouldn't care. But even the worst of sinners has some image of God still left in them that he understands, right?

What's fair, what's right, it's good. Yet there's something in me that doesn't want to give. I see that commercial and I, you know?

You ever see the commercial? This is my, the worst commercial. I'm watching the commercial. It's about the dogs. Yes. You know? I mean, oh gosh, more people probably give to dogs than to children but because dogs have this, you know.

[41 : 23] So, but it's that gal singing, you know, she's in the voice of the angels. Remember that one? It's like, oh, just like, oh, puppies cry.

You know, you got, okay. And people give to that. Why? Because they're of the nature of God and they still have that sense of compassion. We care about living things.

Then you get to the next level, verse 12. Then the tax collectors came. The tax collectors, okay.

They got the crowds. They're the takers. The tax collectors, that's a whole other level of deception, isn't it?

Teacher, what can we do? What about us? What can we do? Well, he said to them, collect no more than you're authorized to do. He didn't give them a whole lot. He said, guys, you know, don't collect any more than you're authorized to do.

I know what you do. You cheat. You deceive. You manipulate. You remove from greed. You con people. Do your job honestly. Then comes the soldiers.

[42 : 28] That's interesting. Soldiers. Where did they come out? Where did they come from?

Soldiers are coming. Well, they're the worst of all. Because look what they say. They don't even, they even add to their question.

They ask the same question, what can we do? But they add, even us? Even us? What can we do? I mean, we know, we know, you know, the tax collector.

We know. But we know we're another level from the tax collectors. Because they deceive and manipulate. We plain bully people. We beat people up.

We force money out of people. That's a whole nother level. So he says to them, do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation.

Be content with your wages. Stop bullying. Stop threatening. Be nice. No. Share and be nice, right?

[43 : 28] That would be a horrible message, wouldn't it? You know, John says, be nice and share. No. Change who you are.

Stop beating people up. And be content. Oh. Okay. Oh, sure. Okay. Be content. See, here's John's message of repentance.

Right? It's basically the law. Repent. Get on the right road. Walk in righteousness.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. It's just what he's saying. Right? If you love God and you love your neighbor, you have fulfilled the whole law.

That's essentially what John has said. John says repentance is obeying the law. That's true, is it not? Doing what is right. We're off the path. Get back on the path.

[44 : 32] Does the law lead to forgiveness? Does repentance lead to forgiveness? The answer is yes. Because John says it does.

Baptism of repentance unto forgiveness. It puts you in the path. It puts you in the path. But I think what John is telling these people, do takers suddenly become givers?

Can they just do that? Do deceivers suddenly become honest? Hmm? I can be a promise keeper for a while.

Right motivation. Absolutely right things to say. But can I do that? No. I can do it for a while. I can be a giver for a while, but then, you know, I can be honest for a while, but then, you know, I'm from, I'm a viper.

Vipers do what vipers do. I'm used to beating people up. I'm used to threatening and squeezing them. I can be content for so a while, and then the wife says, you know what, we need a bigger house.

[45 : 55] You want another kid? We need a bigger house. Well, then I need more money, so what am I going to do? Be content? I don't. How does life go, right?

So what is John really saying? True repenting places us in the path of forgiveness. What John, I think, is doing is calling us to a sense where we see our brokenness, where we see our condition, where we see the threat is real, to see that I am truly under conviction, that I come to the place like these people, and I say, what can I do?

I'm hanging by a thread. What can I do? That's where I need to be. That's exactly where John wants us to be. Then you're ready.

If you stay in that place, then you're ready. Okay? Because then when the good news comes, whoo. Okay.

Paul explains what this continual change in Christian life looks like. It's not just that when we come, we repent in order to get forgiveness. After we've been forgiven, we're called to continue to repent, to lead a life of repentance.

[47 : 12] Christi read that. I'm so thankful she read Colossians. It's almost like what I'm going to read here in Ephesians. It's kind of like, you know, what, is he saying the same thing to two different people? What's going on here? Ephesians 4, listen to this.

He's talking to Christians. Now I testify, I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, Christians. The implication is there's Christians in Ephesus who are still walking like Gentiles.

Paul is saying, folks, what are you doing? No longer walk as Gentiles do in the futility of their minds. That is not the way you learned Christ, assuming that you heard about him and were taught in him as truth is in Jesus.

What does it mean to learn Jesus? It means, one, put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires because, you know, you're a viper.

And to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God and to righteousness and holiness. There's a change. That's repentance, putting off the old, being renewed, putting on the new.

[48 : 24] Therefore, here's some examples. Having put away falsehood, repent, stop lying, put off falsehood, let each of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

Here's another area. You got an anger issue? Okay. Be angry when it's right to be angry, but don't sin. Ah, that's a fine line.

Anger's not necessarily wrong if it's righteous anger. Jesus got angry. God gets angry. Yeah, but I'm not Jesus.

Yeah, I know. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. Oh, so deal with it. Okay. Give no opportunity for the devil. Ooh, okay.

Here's another area. Let the thief no longer steal. Okay, stop stealing. Okay, be a giver. Oh, watch how he says it. No longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work.

[49 : 24] What? Doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. You know what the purpose of your employment is? It's not just to provide for yourself. It's also provide for others.

That's the Christian view of work. Christian view of work is not just that I provide for me so I can get, get, get, get, but so that I can have enough to give to others because I got two tunics.

I need to clean up my closet and give it away. I got too much food in my pantry. I got to give it away. Now that's kind of a transformational thought, isn't it?

Oh, let's talk about the tongue. Oh, let, can we skip this one, pastor? Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up as fits the occasion that it may give grace.

Oh man. To those who hear and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. What? Corrupting speak, grieve the Holy Spirit. Yeah, it does. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed the day of redemption.

[50 : 27] Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven.

forgiven. Yeah. It's one thing to be kind. It's a whole nother thing to be forgiven. So. Have you learned Christ?

Are you putting off the old and putting on the new? And notice the key Paul gives to us in order to do that. How do I put off the old, put on the new? I got to keep renewing my mind.

I have to keep renewing my mind. I have to get my mind in the right place that it's not about me. It's about him, but I keep seeking his grace. So first baptism teaches about true repenting, puts us in the path of forgiveness.

That's the preparation. And now we look at the power in verse 15 to 17. The other kind of baptism, a baptism of power that brings true forgiveness, true forgiveness that comes by Jesus baptizing with the spirit.

[51 : 32] This is what we learn about in Acts. Okay. In the book of Luke's second volume, right? In the second volume, he distinguishes the two baptisms. Remember, they're keep meeting people.

The apostles keep meeting people. Have you been baptized in Jesus? Do you know, gee, we don't even know who Jesus is. We, we were baptized under John. We got to be baptized in Jesus because John's just get you ready for Jesus.

Jesus is the real deal. Do you have the spirit? No, I didn't have the spirit, but I got baptized with John. I'm good, right? No, you're not good. You're in the right place, but your road's not finished. You must have the spirit of Christ. So the people are wondering if John is the Christ, right? Their inner reasoning, they're starting to think through whether he's the Messiah. By the way, good preaching makes people think.

Verse 16, John explains. He answers their thoughts, right? Somehow he knows, right? He answers them saying, I baptize with water. But he was mightier than me.

[52 : 31] There's somebody coming after me. That's much, much mightier than I am. And I'm not even worthy to untie his strap. He will baptize you with the Holy spirit with fire.

My baptism only prepares you. It's not the real power. I'm not even worthy. I'm the instrument of that baptism. And I'm not even, you know, on the level of a menial slave compared to this person.

That's coming. That's coming. This person that's coming is, he's not just better than me. He's mindier than me. He is far, far, far, far, far superior to me.

What he brings accomplishes what you really need. I just get you ready. I'm hardly anything compared to him. So he talks about this real power is that he will baptize you with the Holy spirit.

Interesting that the translations translate the word baptism because all they're doing is transliterating the Greek word. Right? Anybody studied Greek?

[53 : 40] It's simply, the word is baptizo. And so why didn't they translate that word? Everything else gets translated from Greek and English. Why didn't they translate baptizo?

Which means immerse or cleanse. Why didn't they do that? Because they were already sprinkling. That's why. I probably shouldn't have made a point of that.

But the word means immerse. It means to cleanse. To dip. Right? He will dip you. He will immerse you. He will.

His is a picture of full cleansing. Within the Holy Spirit. It's a whole different realm. It's not water. It's spirit. And there's a real transformation now.

The other one is picture. It's a picture. It's external. This one is internal. This is a spiritual transformation. Like Moses said, circumcise your hearts. Okay, Moses, how do I do that?

[54 : 38] I got to get a knife. Right? Right? How do I? I can't do that. Repentance does not earn forgiveness.

Yet there is no forgiveness without repentance. Repentance is the path to God's working. And then he adds, right, it's not just all baptized.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit, but also baptize you with fire. What's that mean? What is that? When did Jesus bring fire? Right?

Right? Oh, it's all Pentecost. There were flames of fire. Remember? Holy Spirit came. Okay, maybe. Fire. Fire, it can destroy or purify.

Right? Right? So, is this whole, is this baptism fire to purify or is it to destroy or is it both? It's both. Because he explains in verse 17.

[55 : 34] See, his winnowing fork is in his hand. What's that about? Well, that's about separation. His winnowing fork, it's just a big shovel where he picks up the grain on the threshing floor, right?

All the grain is there. He shovels it up. It's a big shovel. He shovels it up. He tosses it into the air and the wind blows away the chaff. Everything that lands is still good. Right?

I mean, Psalm 1 talks about chaff, right? The wind blows it away. Chaff is just the, you know, just the little inconsequential stuff. It's not the real stuff.

So, Jesus is, when he's baptizing in the Holy Spirit of fire, his winnowing fork is in his hand. He's clearing the threshing floor to do what? To gather the wheat into his barn and the chaff to burn with unquenchable fire.

Okay? Does that sound like purifying? Is the chaff purified? And there's not much to chaff. When you burn chaff, it's gone. There is a sense where he's a purifier of us.

[56 : 36] Yeah, absolutely. His words purify us every single week. Every single time we sit under his word, his words purify us. But if you're chaff, so, the preaching of Jesus, in other words, divides us.

It forces our response. It clarifies who is wheat and who is chaff. What does this word reveal about you? And that's part of my testimony is that every week I sat under the word of God, I was unsaved. I was unsaved, but I heard the word of God and it cut me to the quick. And it convicted me. And so I did what the preacher or whatever said, come, pray the prayer.

Right? And you'll be saved and you'll be forgiven and you'll be clean and you'll be changed. I can't tell you how many times I did that and nothing happened. So I don't believe in altar calls.

I think they are deceptive. I mean, coming forward and doing an act as if that will do something for you. I think it's well meant.

[57 : 51] I just think that this, that they have not thought through the methodology. Jesus never did that. He called people to come, not to an altar, but to him.

Altar's not going to do anything for you. What I'm saying is that word divided me every single week. I felt that separation, that uncleanness, that wrongness about me.

How do you, what makes a person go hundreds of times to the altar? Altar. my friends gave up long before.

My friends left the church because it didn't happen for them. What would make me keep coming? Pretty dumb, huh? No. The spirit of God was working. He was working. The father was drawing.

[59 : 01] Why does it have to take so long, dad? Just keep coming, boy. I want you to hear that in Ezekiel 36, God had already promised the coming spirit who would cleanse and transform hearts.

Listen to Ezekiel. By the way, it's interesting who he's speaking to. Ezekiel, he says, say therefore to the house of Israel. I don't know if you remember, but historically the house of Israel was already gone.

By that time, the kingdom had split. Remember, the house of Israel was north and they disappeared into the nations. Remember that? Now he's preaching to the house of Israel. Who's the house of Israel? Us.

Us. Because they're all interspersed with the Gentiles. They're all the Samaritan kind of people. It's us. Say to the house of Israel, thus says the Lord God is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I'm about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations, among all the other Gentiles to which you came.

And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned among them. Get the point? Whose fault is it? And the nations will know, all the Gentiles will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God.

[60 : 22] When through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes, I will take you from the Gentiles and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.

I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness. And from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you.

I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules because you can't do it without me.

You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers and you shall be my people and I will be your God and I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses and I will summon the grain when it comes to fruit.

I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the Gentiles because I will transform your hearts.

[61 : 32] Have you experienced this baptism? Have you experienced a change? a new desire before you knew you should you ought you must walk in the ways of God and you hated it but now you want to now you want to now it's your desire I want to please him I don't do it because I have to

I do it because I get to I call to you if you have not experienced this never rest until God changes your heart keep asking him and keep knocking and keep seeking him until he answers your prayer don't give up because if you're still convicted and you haven't had peace yet you know what that means?

He's working if you're convicted he's working he's drawing you're in the path so the gospel begins with bad news wasn't that fun?

you like the bad news? you like the bad news if you're a Christian because you've heard the good news because then I know okay okay I can breathe it's not because I did anything right oh my he had mercy upon me the gospel begins with bad news a coming wrath so it is urgent that we repent and seek the power that transforms our soul let's pray Father we thank you for your word even when it's hard even when it's unpleasant even when it pierces our heart and and and exposes us because as John said we are called the great message of God who is light is to walk in light to let him expose our darkness and by our coming into the light and being open and confessing who we are he cleanses us the transforming power is scary it's humbling it exposes but oh Father that's what you require of us to get into the path where you forgive us help us accept this and embrace this and tell others about it we pray in Christ's name amen to to to to to!