

Our Baptismal Confession

John 3:22-36

²² After this **Jesus** and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and **was baptizing**.

²³ **John also was baptizing** at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized

²⁴ (for John had not yet been put in prison).

²⁵ Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over **purification**.

²⁶ And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you **bore witness**--look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him."

²⁷ John answered, "A person **cannot receive** even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.

²⁸ You yourselves **bear me witness**, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.'

²⁹ The one who has the **bride is the bridegroom**. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.

³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease."

³¹ He who **comes from above** is above all. He who is **of the earth** belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who **comes from heaven** is above all.

³² He **bears witness** to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives **his testimony**.

³³ Whoever **receives his testimony** sets **his seal to this**, that God is true.

³⁴ For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.

³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has **given all things into his hand**.

³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

What is a Baptist?

It seems like half of the people in America are Baptists of some kind. What is a Baptist? A lot of people imagine those are the people who think God's presence is strongest in the back three rows of the church, or who honestly think Paul spoke King James English, or that Jesus used Welch's Grape juice and saltine crackers, or who think that anyone who says "Amen," is a Pentecostal.

There are more kinds of Baptists than there are flavors of Baskin Robbins ice cream (having watched Whitney Houston's funeral yesterday, the variety is not always bad), but the tie that binds us all has to do with [the way we baptize](#). Baptists are those Christians who believe baptism is not properly forced or given to someone without their consent. So, we would exclude the ancient idea of forcing pagans to be baptized at sword-point, or (more famously) the baptism of infants. The first group does not want to confess Christ, the second group can't confess him. The point is, a person being

baptized is “receiving the testimony” of Christ and confessing it as their own. This is why we are sometimes called “credobaptists” or those who baptize upon confession or profession of faith. We believe that this follows the universal teaching of Scripture.

John was a credobaptist. He wasn't called John the Pae-dobaptist but John *the Baptist*. Here is how his baptism worked. First, he would preach a message; something like “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 3:1-2). Then he would point to the Messiah by explaining that he was the one “preparing the way of the Lord” (3:3), that the Lord would come and baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (3:11), that he would gather in many non-Jews to himself (3:9), that the time of Israel's unique place was being fulfilled and that judgment upon the nation was imminent (3:12). Upon hearing, it says that many people came to John confessing their sins, repenting, and were baptized (3:5-6). The

pattern was thus a law-gospel Christ-centered sermon followed by baptism upon confession of sin and hope in Jesus.

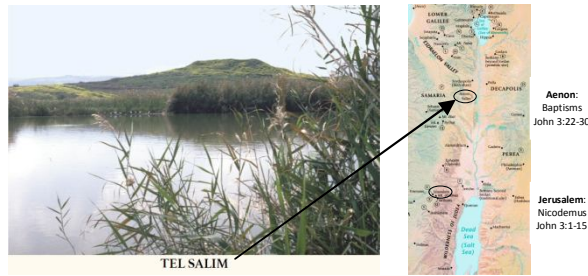
Jesus' disciples were also Baptists. We come to our passage today and read, “After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them as was baptizing” (John 3:22). John 4:2 explains that Jesus was not the one baptizing, but rather his disciples were baptizing. In the next verse there is another distinguishing feature of Baptists. This is the form or mode of baptism we practice. Baptists immerse people in water. Many in the church baptize via the mode of sprinkling. This follows a certain mode of baptism in the OT that was for the purification or cleansing of things, including people and objects. Many of those baptisms were performed with blood, though some included water. The point is, they were purification baptisms. Keep that word (“purification”) in mind.

NT baptism is by immersion, for we read, “John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful

there” (John 3:23). You don’t need a lot of water to sprinkle, just a cup will do. So why mention it? Because you do need a lot of water to immerse. This is why John baptized in the Jordan (John 1:28) and why people went down into the water together (see Acts 8:38). This follows the Jewish tradition of the Mikveh, a ritual bath. Thus, Jewish translations of our verse say, “... because there was plenty of water there; and people kept coming to be immersed” (CJB). They simply translate the word “baptize” as “immerse.” They’ve been immersing for thousands of years.

Baptismal Setting of John 3:22-36

With that introduction, it won’t surprise you to learn that the setting of John 3:22-36 is baptism in the region of Aenon (which means “spring”) near Salim (which means “peace”). It is a beautiful little spot about two thirds up the Jordan River between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. Everyone has left Jerusalem and has made their way some 45 miles north for this baptismal ministry.



We are still in a time **very early in Jesus' ministry**. **Vs. 24** tells us that **John had not yet been put in prison**. To give a flavor for the time frame, the Gospel of Mark begins with Jesus' baptism and then **Mark 1:14** says “**after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God.**” In other words, everything in the book of Mark except Jesus' baptism takes place after John chs. 2-4 (which is why, for instance, there is no reason to see contradiction between Jesus cleansing the temple in John 2 as well as a second time during the last week of his life as recorded in the Synoptics).

What the Apostle John chooses to do is tell us that there was a dispute that arose between **John's disciples and a Jew over purification** (**John 3:25**). There's that word I told you to remember. Purification is the first of many ideas that are now

repeated from the first three chapters. So, our passage acts as a kind of summary of all that we have been told up to this point (see chart below). The main focus of these things is to remind you again of who this Jesus is in the context of this is baptism. In other words, we learn here about what Christian baptism is and why it is so important. It is an affirmation of all that Christ is, for it is a baptism *into* him.

Recapitulation in John 3:22-36		
Baptism	3:22-23	1:28
Discussion between John and Jews	3:25	1:19-27
Purification	3:25	2:6
Jesus of whom John bore witness	3:26	1:34
Inability to Receive Christ apart from heaven	3:27	3:3-11
John was sent ahead of Christ	3:28	1:20, 23
Bride and bridegroom	3:29	2:9
Jesus comes from above	3:31	3:13
Things from the earth	3:31	3:12
No one receives his testimony	3:32	3:11
Those who receive his testimony	3:33	1:12; 3:18, 21
God is true	3:33	1:14, 17, 3:21
Giving of the Spirit	3:34	1:32-33; 3:5-8
Believe in the Son	3:36	1:12; 3:3, 5, 15-16, 18
Eternal life	3:36	3:15-16
Wrath/Condemnation	3:36	3:18-20

Why would a dispute arise over **purification**? The answer is, because all of these people are baptizing. I want you to think about that for a moment. The doctrine of baptism of very often treated as if it just sort of magically *poofed* into existence out of thin air. But the language of purification has

to do with OT law. John has already used it this way once, during the episode of the wedding at Cana. It said that Jesus turned the water into wine using “six stone waterpots ... for the Jewish custom of purification” (John 2:6). These refer back to a law in Leviticus 11:32-33¹ where things were ritually cleansed by washing them in water. This is the only other time he uses the word. If there is an argument arising because of baptism regarding purification, then it must be because baptism comes from the OT law!

This has all kinds of implications for how we Baptists should be arguing for our position of both baptizing only those who can profess faith as well as the mode we believe to be most faithful to the NT practice. We can point out why the Apostles baptized the way that they did, but we must make sure that we root our arguments in the OT, for the Apostles got the practice from the OT. There are perfectly biblical reasons from OT baptism as to why they did what they did. As I have

¹ “And anything on which any of them falls when they are dead shall be unclean, whether it is an article of wood or a garment or a skin or a sack, any article that is used for any purpose. It must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the evening; then it shall be clean. And if any of them falls into any earthenware vessel, all that is in it shall be unclean, and you shall break it.”

argued many times, this means that **baptism comes from baptism**. Any argument that tries to make a connection between the practice of baptism and the practice of circumcision misses the point entirely. When we discover that the mode and nature of baptizing people professing faith that Jesus is Messiah are held up to OT law, it becomes clear pretty quickly that some purification rituals in the OT do not fit the practice of the Apostles, while others do.

Perhaps this is the nature of the discussion that arose. John does not tell us what the discussion was specifically about, but it may not be difficult to guess, because we have the same kind of arguments to this day. Why are you immersing rather than sprinkling? What is the meaning of your baptism vs. Jesus' baptism? I can imagine that this was going on.

Confessing the Messiah

What the text focuses on is not **the argument**, but its relation to Jesus and those who confess him. This argument over purification and baptism turns into **an opportunity** to ask the

Baptist why everyone is going over to Jesus. It is as if they are saying, “John, your star is sinking. What shall we do?”² In his day, John the Baptist was recognized as an important figure. The question implies this. He was popular and well known, a powerful preacher, a rugged prophet cut out of the same cloth as Elijah (compare **Matt 3:4** and **2 Kgs 1:8**). He was known even to **Josephus**, who was no friend of Jesus. In the place where he tells us about John’s death at the hands of Herod, he writes that John was “a good man” who “urged the Jews to exert themselves to virtue, both as to justice toward one another and reverence towards God, and having done so join together in washing. For immersion³ in water, it was clear to him, could not be used for the forgiveness of sins, but as a sanctification of the body, and only if the soul was already thoroughly purified by right actions” (*Antiquities of the Jews* 18:5.2 117-18). Josephus makes John’s theology Jewish rather than Christian, but he shows you just how well known John was.

² James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John : An Expository Commentary*, Pbk. ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2005), 253.

³ Translates the word “*baptisin*.”

Yet, the *Apostle* John who was actually there in the wilderness with the Baptist and Jesus shows you just how far off Josephus is his estimation of the Baptist's teaching. Josephus is correct that John the Baptist did not think that immersion in water would clean a person internally. Yet, he did not think that souls were purified by "right actions." That's the classic Jewish mistake, and the mistake of the whole world. It is classic works-righteousness. Rather, John tells you that Jesus must be received. Only the baptism of Christ by the Spirit can cleanse you inside. And John says much of Christ in the midst of great humility. John's confession is not about his own works, but of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Let's return to baptism for a moment. Think if you will to questions asked at a person's baptism. We don't just baptize anyone, but we make sure that the candidate knows and believes something of the basics of the Christian faith. We aren't claiming to know the heart infallibly. We also are not making them get a Ph.D. prior to the baptism. But we are

baptizing people who confess the *Christian* faith. Christians have been doing this since the beginning.

Didache (meaning “teaching”) is perhaps the oldest Christian book we have outside of the NT. Most scholars place it in the late first century. It contains instructions for baptism. First it says that the convert is to recite a list of commandments: Things like the Golden Rule, the Two Greatest Commandments, things Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, some Pauline commands, giving to the poor, and so on. Only after this is baptism performed “**In the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit, in living water**” (**Did 7:1**). These things assume that a person regards the teachings of Jesus as inspired and essential. Thus, we ask people at their baptism to publicly make a profession of faith in Christ.

This appears to be the way Paul baptized Timothy. Though it doesn't use the word “baptism,” I believe Timothy's baptism is recorded by Paul. Timothy, who grew up knowing the Scriptures, was nevertheless baptized only as an adult upon

profession of faith. The passage in question is **1 Timothy 6:12** which says, “**Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**” Notice the language of confessing in the presence of many witnesses. Many commentators, including John Stott and William Hendriksen understand this to be Timothy’s baptism.⁴

I bring this up for two reasons. First, John the Baptist is doing something very similar here, even though he is not being baptized. Second, there are in fact many people being baptized in our passage, and surely that is what they are doing too! The ideas are the same. All are confessing Christ. They are doing so as witnesses and before witnesses. I want to tell you now about the things they were confessing. For the Christian faith is a specific faith. It believes definite things about Jesus.

⁴ “The reference to ‘many witnesses’ has suggested to some that the occasion recalled is not Timothy’s baptism but his ordination (cf. **4:14; 2 Tim. 2:2**). But the combination of the calling (inward and private) and the confession (outward and public) more naturally refers to Timothy’s conversion and baptism. Every convert was expected to make a solemn public affirmation of faith” (John Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996], 157). “When, on Paul’s first missionary journey, Timothy was ‘called’ (both externally and internally), he had in connection with his baptism professed his faith publicly” (William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, NTC [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1957], 204). See also Philip Towner, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, IVPNTC (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 143).

It believes precise information. It confesses a particular message.

Before getting to that, we need to see how John the Baptist answers the question. He explains that **the reason the Jews are asking this question** in the first place is because they have **not received Christ's testimony**. They have not believed. What comes after this only makes sense in the context of faith in Christ. They are only looking with their eyes. They wonder why this nobody carpenter from Galilee is suddenly gaining a bigger following than the famous John. John says, "**A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven**" (**John 3:27**). You must look to heaven and to Christ. You must believe his witness. Recapping the last three chapters as this passage does, these words take us back to **Jesus' talk with Nicodemus** who told him that heavenly things are received by people that have been given the Holy Spirit, but who then says that his death will be the thing that Nicodemus should look upon to be saved.

Next, John explains that **they have not received his testimony** about Christ either. **“You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him’”** (**John 3:28**). Again, we are taken back, this time to Jesus’ baptism in **John 1:20-23**. At that time this was John’s message to them. He was going to baptize someone whose sandals he was not worthy to untie.

After this, John makes is about a **bride and bridegroom**. **“The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete”** (**John 3:29**). Again we are taken back, this time to **the wedding at Cana**. In the story the master of the feast tasted Jesus’ miraculous wine and was so surprised that he called the **bridegroom** and said, **“You have saved the best for last”** (**John 2:9-10**). Here it is John who refers to himself as the friend of the bridegroom. He has tasted of the wine of the kingdom of God as he has come to recognize the King of Glory, his earthly

cousin, but also his Creator God. The wedding at Cana was performed, in part, to show the people that the old ways and kingdom were being superseded by Christ and his Kingdom of Heaven. John now gives testimony to this.

So, John concludes with that famous remark, “**He must increase, but I must decrease**” (**John 3:30**). As a representative of the old covenant, John is making room for something new, a new covenant with a new king and new kingdom. Isaiah predicted it, “... of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore” (**Isa 9:7**). Daniel foresaw it, “The stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (**Dan 2:35**). *He must increase.* This is why he has come, and as one person put it, “The messenger is not important compared to the wonder that God would come among us.”⁵

⁵ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 40-66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 51.

Verse 30 most likely completes The Baptist's discussion with the Jews and other disciples. Most people see **vv. 31-36** as John the Apostle's comments on all of these things. But as I have said, these comments are also set in the context of baptism. Therefore, let us continue with our confession.

“How who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all” (**John 3:31**). This wonderful statement is a confession of the origin, omniscience, sovereignty, and deity of Christ. **His origin:** He comes from heaven. Unlike all other human beings, Jesus Christ came from heaven. He existed prior to coming here. All others, however, are of the earth. From dust we are made and to dust we shall return.

His omniscience: He speaks of heavenly things. His knowledge far surpasses that of men, for we know only what we see and experience. We speak of earthly things. But he

knows more because he is from another place. He is from heaven.

His sovereignty: He not only is from heaven, he created heaven. He is “above all.” He is high and lifted up. He rules over heaven and earth. The universe is but his throne upon which he sits. He fills it, but it does not contain him. He is above powers, rulers, dominions, principalities, kings, princes, presidents, dictators, nations, democracies, oligarchies, businessmen, celebrities, all who have power in heaven or earth ... he is above them all.

His deity: He is above all because he is God of all. Only God can be said to be over all things. Only God can be said to know heavenly things. Only God comes from heaven. Therefore, John’s statement in **vs. 31** is a mighty confession of this man who claimed to be Messiah. Jesus is the only way, because Jesus is the only God come in human flesh to bridge the moral gulf that separates God from humanity. This verse also returns us to the story of Nicodemus, to whom Jesus said, “**No**

one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man” (John 3:13).

Vs. 32 is about Jesus’ testimony of himself. John will have much more to say about this in later chapters. Needless to say, Jesus is not the only witness of his deity. But even if he were the only witness, his witness would be true, for he is God and he cannot lie. God cannot swear by anything higher than himself. But no one received his testimony. This also takes us back to Nicodemus, who, like so many Jews before him, did not receive the testimony of Christ.

Yet some do receive his testimony. This is vs. 33. These come out of the group “no one.” No one receives his testimony, yet out of that group of no one, some do. Someone comes from no one. Sounds like a miracle to me. This speaks not of human intelligence or freewill, but of God’s goodness and pledge to save a people. Again we are taken back, this time to the verses after John 3:16 and the comments on human depravity in the midst of God’s love for the world.

Vs. 33 is also interesting for its possible relationship to baptism as a “**seal**.” Since the early church, baptism has been called a “seal” (cf., **Shepherd of Hermes *Similitude* 9.16:5**,⁶ **Acts of Paul and Thecla 25**⁷).⁸ Seals are things that confirm, stamp with approval, or accredit the thing sealed as having originated with the person doing the sealing. Kings used to seal their letters with signet rings with their own special mark, so that when the letter was opened, the person would know it was from the king. They also protect. Think of the letter again. The letter was safe and guaranteed to be untampered with as long as the seal was intact.

Sealing is the language of sacraments in the Bible. Circumcision is called a seal (**Rom 4:11**). In this verse it is a seal that God has given to Abraham the righteousness he promised him through faith.⁹ The Holy Spirit is also called a “seal” (**2**

⁶ “Why, sir, I asked, did the forty stones also ascend with them out of the pit, having already received the seal? Because, he said, these apostles and teachers who preached the name of the Son of God, after falling asleep in the power and faith of the Son of God, preached it not only to those who were asleep, but themselves also gave them the seal of the preaching.”

⁷ “... Give me the seal in Christ, and temptation shall not touch me. And Paul said: Thecla, wait with patience, and thou shalt receive the water.”

⁸ The Reformed kept this language in the WCF (28.1), but took it out of the LBC for fear of being associated with paedobaptism where the thing seals faith in someone who doesn't even profess it. For example, see Robert P. Martin, “The Second London Confession On Baptism (Part 1): The Significance of Christian Baptism.” *Reformed Baptist Theological Review* 2:1 (January 2005): 36-55. Martin suggests that “Our Confession does not use the word ‘seal’ to refer to baptism. The reason is simple. The Bible never uses this word to refer to baptism but only to refer to Abraham and to the faith that he had prior to his circumcision” (54).

⁹ Paul does not say that circumcision is a seal to anyone other than Abraham. While infants cannot profess faith and thus the seal of circumcision would only presumptuously be a seal of their faith (see note 7), if baptism is being performed upon those professing faith, there is nothing inconsistent with seeing baptism theologically as a seal just like circumcision.

Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30). He is God's sure and certain seal that believers are his and he belongs to them. But in these places where the Holy Spirit is associated with a seal, many commentators believe baptism is close behind.¹⁰ This is especially true in John 6:27, the only other time John uses the word "seal" in this Gospel. It says, "On [the Son of Man] the Father, even God, has set His seal." When did this occur? It can only be at his baptism. This was when, as Carson says, "God certified the Son as his own agent, authorizing him as the one who alone can bestow [food from heaven]."¹¹ Indeed it was at his baptism that Christ was authorizing to perform works from God, just as it was true that only at his baptismal ordination that the Levitical priest could finally go into the tabernacle/temple and begin performing his ministry.

John 3:33 refers to something as a seal. Most see the seal as the person's word that they have received Christ's testimony.

¹⁰ On 2 Cor 1:22 and Eph 1:13 See Thomas R. Schreiner, "Baptism in the Epistles: An Initiation Rite for Believers," in *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner, Shawn D. Wright; E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006), 86; Lars Hartman on, "Into the Name of the Lord Jesus": Baptism in the Early Church (Edinburgh: Clark, 1997), 68. E. Dinkler, "Die Taufterminologie in 2 Kor. 121f.," in *Neotestamentica et Patristica* (FS Oscar Cullmann; ed. W. C. van Unnik; NovT Sup 6; Leiden, 1962): 173-91; G. Haufe, "Taufe und Heiliger Geist im Urchristentum," TLZ 101 (1976): 561-66; 1976, 562; Gerhard Barth, *Die Taufe in Frühchristlicher Zeit* (Neukirchener, 1981/2002), 69ff.

¹¹ Carson, John, *PNTC*, 284.

Given that “seal” is not used this way anywhere in the NT, but it is used of baptism, perhaps the verse “his seal” does not refer to the person receiving, but to the **Person giving the testimony**. The one who receives Christ’s testimony gets baptized and sets God’s seal of baptism upon them, signifying that God has indeed sealed them with the Holy Spirit, signifying that God is true, that he has sent his Son to die for their sins. The idea that God is true takes us back to Ch. 1 and Ch. 3 where God and Christ are called true and truth.

Vs. 34 says, “**He whom God has sent (that is Jesus) utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.**” The giving of the Spirit without measure likewise takes us back to Chapter 1 and the baptism of Jesus where John saw the Spirit descend from heaven and remain on Christ. Jesus was “**full of the Holy Spirit**” (**Luke 4:1**). He was not like the prophets and judges of old who were given a measure. Rather, he was given the Spirit without measure. And in the new

covenant, the same is said of believers. This was prophesied in the OT by Isaiah (**Isa 11:2**) and others.

Vs 35 continues the confession, “**The Father loves the Son and have given all things into his hand.**” This verse also fulfills many OT passages of the Son of God being given full sovereignty and rule of the all things. Jesus tells the disciples after his resurrection that all authority has been given to him. He bases our authority to make disciples by baptizing and teaching upon his authority. Indeed, he gives us his authority as his earthly representatives.

Vs. 36 then finishes us with the same idea that John left us with in his comments with Nicodemus. It is the only way to leave these first three chapters. It is a warning and a promise. “**Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.**” Unbelievers, no matter who they are, be they elect or non-elect ... all people, are born under a state of condemnation and the wrath of God abides upon them until

faith. This warning clears the way for a series of stories where people will now begin seeing Christ and receiving his witness in the Gospel of John.

But it also goes out to you. Most of you come to church week after week. Many of you have professed Christ. Some of you have not. If you have not, look and see at the witness of Christ, of John, of the disciples, and of those who have been baptized before you. They are not lying. Their testimony is certain and sure. Look at Christ's power, his sovereignty, his omniscience, his authority. Look at his miracles, his obedience, his foreknowledge, his fulfillment of the OT, his sacrificial death, and most of all his resurrection from the dead. Look at one who is like no one else. Look to him and live, for he is the hope of life and the resurrection of the body. Then be baptized and confess this Christ in the presence of many witnesses. Set your stamp upon your belief for all to see. Receive the seal of God in his Holy Spirit, which is symbolized for you in baptism which comes as a result of having been

sealed by God. Do not delay any longer, for you are in a perilous state, like **Jonathan Edwards** put it, like a spider hanging precariously over a hot fire by a tiny little thread of web. No one is born a Christian. Not even a pastor's children. All must believe ... themselves.

You who do believe and have not been baptized, what are you waiting for? You who have been baptized, have you thought about it recently? Have you thought about the joy of professing Christ, of feeling an outward washing that symbolized inward cleansing? Have you thought about the baptism of others, indeed a whole cloud of witnesses, millions and millions of believers, some alive, many dead, that have gone before you in this same profession of faith? Think often on this, for it is a sign and seal of God's goodwill towards you, that you no longer belong to yourself, but to him. And those he has sealed with his Holy Spirit, he will by no means ever cast aside. Rather, they have been given eternal life, and life that is eternal can never be taken away.