

Later this morning, Nathan Spickard will be baptized in water—the question I want to address this hour is, why—what exactly is baptism?—well simply put—baptism entails a twofold confession—we confess something to God, and God confesses something to us—put another way—in baptism—we speak to God, and God speaks to us—thus—the question becomes—What do we say to God in baptism, and what does God say to us—well it's my desire this morning to answer these questions—and I want to do so under two main-headings...

- I. Baptism is a confession, by those baptized, that they are sinners
- II. Baptism is a confession, by God, that those baptized, are cleansed

I. Baptism is a confession, by those baptized, that they are sinners

1. Mark tells us—"all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to [John] and were baptized in the Jordan River..."
2. That is—large amounts of people from Judea in general, and Jerusalem in particular, were baptized by John...
3. Mark informs us, that as the people were being baptized—they were—"confessing their sins [or offenses]..."
4. That is—those being baptized—verbally confessed or professed their sins publically before God and man...
5. Now—this does not mean—that every person read a long list wherein each sin was specifically identified...
6. That would have taken several years—but they were verbally and publically—identifying themselves as sinners...
7. John Broadus—"The term here used appears to denote an actually spoken confession, and the present participle shows that it was made in immediate connection with the act of baptism..."
8. Thus—historically—Christians have OFTEN included some form of verbal testimony in relation to baptism...
9. 1Tim.6:12—"Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses..."
10. Many—if not most commentators—understand Paul to refer to Timothy's public confession at his baptism...
11. Thus—here I want to suggest that in baptism—sinners fundamentally confess five things about themselves...
12. [1] They are NATIVE sinners—that is—they come from their mother's womb, natively or naturally a sinner...
13. Theologically—we refer to this as original sin—that is—we are born originally sinful—we are sinful by nature...
14. Ps.51:5—"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me"—that is, he was conceived a sinner...
15. The NIV translation renders this text—"I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me..."
16. This is precisely what David was confessing—most of you will know, that Psalm 51 is a Psalm of repentance...
17. David was repenting from his sins with Bathsheba and Uriah—he was confessing his sins as being against God...
18. Notice how far back David traces his "sinfulness"—he traces his "sinfulness" back to his very conception...
19. In other words—no person should ever be baptized—who doesn't understand—they are sinners—by nature...
20. Their depravity is NOT the result of bad parents, poor circumstances, bad example or chemical imbalances...

21. Their depravity is native to them, it's the result of Adam's sin—they are natively and naturally—unruly sinners...
22. [2] They are ACTUAL sinners—by this I mean—they not only confess original sin—but personal and actual sin...
23. Historically—we distinguish between original and actual sin—original sin refers to our condition by nature...
24. Actual sin refers to our practice or conduct—and is the necessary result of original sin—we sin because we are sinners...
25. Now—this doesn't imply—that every sinners is as sinful as others, or that they are as sinful as they could be...
26. But—I'm simply asserting that every person by nature—lives contrary to the holy and righteous law of God...
27. That is—by nature—all of us, without a single exception, drink iniquity like water, and are enslaved to sin...
28. Rom.3:10-12—"There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one..."
29. [3] They are FILTHY sinners—sin has polluted them—it has defiled them—it has rendered them unclean...
30. I assume—it's no longer popular to speak of oneself in these terms—as a filthy, dirty, unclean, and vile sinner...
31. But dear friend—it makes no difference if it's popular or not—the only thing that matters is—whether it's true...
32. Isa.64:6—"All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds [best deeds] are like filthy rags..."
33. This is a description of us all by nature—we are all filthy sinners—we are morally and spiritually unclean...
34. That is—we are morally unfit for heaven—we are offensive to God—and unfit to live with Him in heaven...
35. Thus—within baptism—the person baptized confesses—he is, by nature, a filthy sinner—unfit for heaven...
36. [4] They are GUILTY sinners—that is—their sins have offended God—and have rendered them worthy of punishment..
37. This is what we confess in baptism—we confess that we are hell-deserving sinners—offensive to divine justice...
38. Eph.2:3—"All of us also lived among them at one time [sons of disobedience], gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath..."
39. That is—because of our sins—we are by nature—objects of God's wrath—deserving of His eternal displeasure...
40. [5] They are HELPLESS sinners—that is—they are unable, in and of themselves, to alter or remedy their condition...
41. In other words—in baptism we not only confess our sinfulness—but we also confess our own helplessness...
42. But I go further—we not only confess our helplessness—but we also confess that our hope is found in Christ...
43. Acts 22:16—"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord..."
44. Notice—two things are shadowed in baptism—(1) cleansing from sin, and (2) calling on the name of the Lord...
45. In other words—in baptism—we not only confess our sins—but we also confess our hope lies solely in Christ...
46. Or, put another way—those being baptised are confessing—they are helpless sinners with no hope but Christ...

47. Thus—this is an extremely important point—in baptism, we not only confess our sins but our trust in Christ...
48. Peter, in 1Peter 3:21—speaks of water baptism—as an appeal to God—"for a good conscience"—cleansed from sin...
49. Thus—baptism is a confession—a confession that we are native, actual, filthy, guilty, and helpless—sinners...
50. But—it is also a confession—that we as helpless sinners—find no hope—but in the person and work of Christ...

II. Baptism is a confession, by God, that those baptized, are cleansed

1. That is—in baptism—God makes a public pronouncement from heaven—concerning the salvations of a sinner...
2. Or, put another way—while the sinner goes beneath the water as guilty and vile—he comes out of the water cleansed...
3. Now—here I need to clarify that the waters of baptism, in and of themselves, possess NO power to cleanse...
4. Baptism, along with the other sacrament (the Lord's Supper), merely represents or symbolizes spiritual truth...
5. Yet—the Scriptures have so closely joined together—the spiritual reality and sign—that they are often spoken as one...
6. Thus—I suggest, God says three things to those baptized—he is a forgiven, renewed, and accepted sinner...
7. [1] He is a FORGIVEN sinner, Mk.1:4—"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins..."
8. John's baptism—was a baptism of repentance—that is—it was a confession of those baptized of their repentance...
9. In baptism—the person baptized—openly confesses—they are a native, actual, filthy, guilty, and helpless sinner...
10. But—in addition to this—John's baptism was a baptism of repentance—"for [or unto] the remission of sins..."
11. That is—baptism is not only the confession of our sin and guilt—but it is God's confession of forgiveness of sin...
12. The Gk word rendered "remission" literally means—"release"—and refers to our release from sin's penalty...
13. Thus—in baptism—God declares to the sinner—that he is washed or cleansed from the penalty of his sins...
14. Now—here the question might be asked—how or why—how can God release us from the penalty of our sins...
15. Well—dear friends—as you know—God can only forgive our debts—if someone else is able to pay for them...
16. Thus—Christ—who alone is rich enough to pay—paid our debt for us—that we might become rich in Him...
17. Acts 22:16—"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord..."
18. Hymn—"What can wash away our sins—nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make us whole again—nothing but the blood of Jesus. O precious is the flow, that makes us white as snow. No other fount I know—nothing but the blood of Jesus..."
19. [2] He is a RENEWED sinner—baptism, is a public declaration of our union with Christ in His death and resurrection...
20. When the person baptized is plunged beneath the water—God says to Him—his old man is dead and buried with Christ...
21. When he is raised out of the waters—God says to Him—he has been raised to newness of life in Jesus Christ...

22. Thus—in our baptism—God declares—the benefits of Christ' death and resurrection have been applied to us...
23. Rom.6:1-7—"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin..."
24. In the precious chapter—the apostle has been underscoring—the gracious nature of God's salvation in Christ...
25. Regardless—how great your sins are—the grace of God is greater still—GRACE is greater than ALL our sin...
26. This anticipates an objection—if your gospel is ALL OF GRACE—should we sin that great may increase...
27. Thus—what Paul does in answering this objection—he points the Roman Christians back to their baptism...
28. V3—"Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death..."
29. V4—"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life..."
30. That is—our baptism—illustrates our UNION with CHRIST—both in His historical death and resurrection...
31. Now—here I want to briefly remind you—that our union with Christ is described by Scripture from four ways...
32. Now—here I want to remind you—that this passage speaks of our union with Christ—from three perspectives...
33. [a] There is a historical union (in His life and death)—[b] there is a saving union (in our conversion)—[c] there is a declarative or public union (in our baptism)...
34. Thus—baptism is the sign of our UNION with CHRIST—it's God's declaration—that we are in union with Him...
35. In baptism—we have pictured—both the death of our OLD man—but also—the resurrection of a NEW man...
36. [3] He is an ACCEPTED sinner—that is—when the sinner comes out of the water—he comes out accepted...
37. This is to say—within baptism—the Lord makes a public pronouncement or declaration—concerning our adoption...
38. Because there is only ONE baptism—we are not only baptized into Christ—we are baptized into ONE body...
39. Gal.3:26-29—"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise..."
40. Here—Christ is described as a garment that's put on—a uniform that every Christian publically puts on in baptism...
41. That is—in baptism—we are making a public declaration—of our union and identification—with Jesus Christ...
42. V29—"and if you are Christ's [that is, if you belong to Christ], then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise..."
43. That is—in identifying with Christ—the Son of God—you are indentifying yourselves—as "sons of God"...
44. JFB—"The argument is, By baptism ye have put on Christ; and therefore, He being the Son of God, ye become sons by adoption, by virtue of His Sonship by generation..."

45. Thus—within baptism—God makes this threefold pronouncement to every believing person being baptized...
46. You are a forgiven, renewed, and accepted sinner—all of which are the results—of your union with Christ...

III. Three observations

A. Those cleansed, and no more, should be baptized

1. If baptism is a twofold confession, wherein we speak to God and He speaks to us—then only confessing Christians should be baptized...
2. That is—only those who are confessing their sins to God, and those to whom God is confessing forgiveness...
3. Sam Waldron—"Baptism is God speaking His word of assurance and salvation to the one being baptized, and it is the one being baptized speaking his word of appeal and commitment to God. This is the focus of the scriptural significance of baptism. There is nothing in the Scriptures on baptism about the promises of parents or sponsors. It is not what parents are saying to God, or what God is saying to parents, that is essential to baptism. It is not what parents hope some day their children will say to God, or God will say to their children, that is essential. Baptism is a covenant ceremony between God and the one being baptized. It is their speaking to one another in covenant commitment..."

B. Those cleansed, should receive grace, in baptism

1. In other words—baptism, is a MEANS OF GRACE—both to those being baptized and those who are watching...
2. Historically—our Baptist forefathers—referred to baptism—as a SIGN to those baptized—of covenant blessings...
3. Confession [29:1, Of Baptism]—"Baptism is an ordinance of the NT, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party baptized, a sign of his fellowship with Him, in His death and resurrection, of his being engrafted into Him; of remission of sins, and of giving up into God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life..."
4. The scriptures relates signs to covenants—each covenant has a sign that communicates the essence of that covenant...
5. For example—think of the Noaic Covenant, Gen.9:13—"I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth..."
6. Could you imagine what Noah and his family thought—whenever they saw—the covenant sign in the clouds...
7. It was a visual reminder of God's promise—He will NEVER again flood the earth with water—regardless how wicked it became...
8. Well—baptism is the SIGN of the New Covenant—and it too—is a visual reminder of God's covenantal promises...
9. What are those—well we've seen them—in essence there are three—a new record, heart, and relationship...
10. Thus—within baptism—the Lord communicates to our hearts—the assurance that we are covenant members...
11. Now—this communication of grace through baptism, and the other sacrament, comes through the means of faith...
12. Those partaking in the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, aren't given grace automatically without faith...
13. Thus—a person partaking in baptism or the Lord's Supper without faith—do not in any way benefit from them...
14. But, and this is my point, as we partake of these sacraments believingly—they become to us means of grace...

15. Baptist Catechism [Q. 96]—"Q. How do baptism and the Lord's Supper become effectual means of salvation? A. Baptism and the Lords Supper become effectual means of salvation, not for any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of the Spirit in those that by faith receive them..."
 16. That is—baptism and the Lord's Supper are means of grace ONLY to those who receive them—by FAITH..
 17. Thus—what do I mean by—"receiving grace in baptism"—I mean—our faith in God's promises is strengthened..
 18. Confession [14:1, Of Saving Faith]—"The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word, by which also, and by the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper, prayer, and other means appointed of God, it is increased and strengthened..."
 19. For example—think back to Noah—in looking at the sign—the rainbow didn't carry with it any virtue or merit..
 20. Noah received strength and assurance from pondering the sign—only in so far as—he believed God's promises—illustrated in the sign..
 21. Oh brethren—how gracious God is—to provide for His needy people—tangible expressions of His love for us...
 22. Baptism and the Lord's Supper—are visible expressions of gospel truth—to increase and strengthen our faith...
- C. Those cleansed, should remember their baptism
1. That is—baptism is not only a means of grace as it's watched—but as it's reflected on throughout our lives...
 2. The older writers spoke of—"improving your baptism"—or, thinking upon your baptism—so as to improve yourself...
 3. Tragically—most Christians today—forget all about their baptism—it's simply something to do and then forget...
 4. Thomas Boston—"Alas! many make no more use of their baptism rightly, than if they had never been baptized. Though you were but once baptized, you should be improving it all your life long..."
 5. Now—I can perhaps best explain what I'm saying—by suggesting that baptism is similar to a wedding ring...
 6. The ring is given as a tangible and physical expression of a man's love and commitment to his beloved wife...
 7. Regardless where she's at throughout the day—she can look upon her ring and be assured of his promises...
 8. Thus—in closing—I want to suggest three times when remembering our baptism—is especially necessary...
 9. [1] In times of temptation—that is—when sin is roaring within our souls—tempting us to disobey God's word...
 10. Baptism says to us—"Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord..."
 11. That is—don't give into the temptations of sin—for you're not the same man—the old man is dead and buried...
 12. [2] In times of condemnation—that is—when we sense the condemning power of the law within our conscience...
 13. Remember—in baptism—God has promised every believer—that his or her sins—have been washed away...
 14. [3] In times of desperation—that is—in times of despair and darkness—when we simply feel like giving up...
 15. Let us remember our baptism—for it was there that God, publically, made known our acceptance in Christ...