

Scripture: Isaiah 38

CoF art. 33

Singing: 315 – 381:1-4 – 212:1-3 – 422:5-6

Intro: *As a true Christian, we are simultaneously justified and sinful.* (Luther)

God's Signs and Seals to aid your Faith

I. In these signs and seals God stoops to your level

II. In these signs and seals God pledges Himself to you

III. In these signs and seals God speaks the same truths to you in a different way

I. IN THESE SIGNS AND SEALS GOD STOOPS TO YOUR LEVEL

A. God understands we are '*weak and infirm*' even while born again believers

B. Therefore God 'stooped' to our level in the sacraments

C. This is His common method: *tree of life – rainbow – stars – circumcision – Pass-over – sundial*

II. IN THESE SIGNS AND SEALS GOD PLEDGES HIMSELF TO YOU

A. The choice of the word *sacrament* was fitting to describe the NT signs & seals

B. The 'sign and seal' are God's *visible* Gospel in a *promising pledge*

1. In the Word He calls: *Hear* - in the sacrament He calls: *See*

C. In the 'sign and seal' God is the actor and not the receiver

III. IN THESE SIGNS & SEALS GOD SPEAKS THE SAME GOSPEL TRUTHS IN A DIFFERENT WAY

A. A sign 'speaks' while a seal 'guarantees' the promises of Gospel

1. Neither *add* a syllable to the Gospel message itself (like a wedding ring)

2. COF: *God added the signs/seals to better present His message*
 - a. Baptism pledges His *Gospel invitation* in the covenant sign/seal
 - b. Baptism and Lord's Supper pledges His *Gospel declaration* to believers
- B. The signs & seals are only effective to strengthen faith through the Holy Spirit
 1. In this truth, the Reformed faith radically departs from RCC & Luther

Reflect and Act:

The Sacrament of baptism and Holy Supper are the physical, tangible elements that Christ has given us as the vehicles of His spiritual blessings to His people.

Our faith is strengthened not in thunder coming down upon us from heaven; nor in fiery angels bringing messages to us, nor in an unearthly way that only a few elite people can understand.

Instead, Christ graciously gives common elements as water, bread, wine to be used in a special way: in doing so, He comes down to our level for the strengthening of our faith. (Daniel W. Hyde)