



Article VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Ordinances of the Church

What are ordinances?

- What is an ordinance?
- How many ordinances are there?

What are your views on baptism?

- Who was baptized as an infant? Were you baptized again?
- Has anyone who was baptized as a child after “being saved” (not as an infant) chosen to be baptized a “second time”?
- For all who have been baptized twice (either as an infant or not), why did you or did you not choose to be baptized again?
- Does baptism do anything or is it salvific in anyway?
- Why is baptism important?
- Is baptism necessary?

What are your views on the Lord's Supper?

- What is the Lord's Supper (why do we take it)?
- Is Jesus bodily present in the Lord's Supper?
- Is the grace of God given through the Lord's Supper?
- Should communion only be taken in church?
- How often should we take the Lord's Supper?
- Should the bread and cup be limited to only members of our church or denomination, or can any Christian participate?
- Should we use wine instead of grape juice?

Our Approach to Article VII

- Southern Baptist theology of the ordinances
- Scripture
 - Scripture of God working through material means
 - Scripture on baptism
 - Scripture on the Lord's Supper
- The ordinances in the Early Church
- The Catholic views
- The Reformation
- A theology of baptism
- A theology of the Lord's Supper

Southern Baptist Ordinances

VII. Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

Southern Baptists on Baptism

1. Believer's Baptism

“Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

Who should be baptized?

- Believer's baptism is the doctrine that delineated the early Baptists from the puritan movement
 - “One historian has observed of the Particular Baptists, ‘In fact, Baptism apart, it would be difficult to distinguish their worship from that of Independents.’” — H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1987), 93.
- If you accept infant baptism, it would be hard to consider you a Baptist anymore

Why do others baptize infants?

- **Roman Catholics - Catechism of the Catholic Church, CCC 1250**

“Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called. The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant Baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth.”

Why do others baptize infants?

Lutherans – Book of Concord – Defense of the Augsburg Confession Article IX.

1. “For it is very certain that the promise of salvation pertains also to little children... Therefore it is necessary to baptize little children, that the promise of salvation may be applied to them, according to Christ’s command, Matt. 28:19: *Baptize all nations.*”
2. “Secondly, it is manifest that God approves of the baptism of little children. Therefore, the Anabaptists, who condemn the baptism of little children, believe wickedly. That God, however, approves of the baptism of little children is shown by this, namely, that God gives the Holy Ghost to those thus baptized [to many who have been baptized in Childhood]. For if this baptism would be in vain, the Holy Ghost would be given to none, none would be saved, and finally there would be no Church.”

Why do others baptize infants?

Lutherans – Book of Concord – Larger Catechism – On Infant Baptism

3. “Further, we say that we are not so much concerned whether the person baptized believes or not; for on that account Baptism does not become invalid; but everything depends upon the Word and command of God... Baptism is nothing else than water and the Word of God in and with each other, that is, when the Word is added to the water, Baptism is valid, even though faith be wanting. For my faith does not make Baptism, but receives it. Now, Baptism does not become invalid even though it be wrongly received or employed; since it is not bound to our faith, but the Word... For even though infants did not believe, which, however, is not the case, yet their baptism as now shown would be valid... Thus we do also in infant baptism. We bring the child in the conviction and hope that it believes, and we pray that God may grant it faith; but we do not baptize it upon that, but solely upon the command of God.”

Why do others baptize infants?

Presbyterians – Westminster Larger Catechism - Q. 166

Q. Unto whom is Baptism to be administered?

A. Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible Church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; but infants descended from parents, either both or but one of them professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are in that respect, within the covenant, and to be baptized.

Why do others baptize infants?

Presbyterians – Heidelberg Catechism – Q & A 74

Q. Should infants also be baptized?

A. Yes. Infants as well as adults are included in God's covenant and people, and they, no less than adults, are promised deliverance from sin through Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit who produces faith. Therefore, by baptism, the sign of the covenant, they too should be incorporated into the Christian church and distinguished from the children of unbelievers. This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision, which was replaced in the New Testament by baptism.

Southern Baptists on Baptism

1. Believer's Baptism

- What about our children? Are they saved?
- Why do we treat them like believers by teaching them to pray and worship the Lord when we do not believe that unbelievers cannot do those things?
- How much faith does someone need to be saved?
- When should we baptize our children?

Southern Baptists on Baptism

2. Baptism by Immersion

“Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

- The proper mode of baptism is to immerse someone completely in water
- This is what we call the “mode” of baptism
- Different modes of baptism:
 - Affusion (Pouring)
 - Aspersio (Sprinkling)
 - Immersion (Dipping)
- ALL Christians accept immersion as a mode of baptism, but others accept other modes as valid
- Should we have people who were baptized through other modes be baptized again?

Southern Baptists on Baptism

2. Baptism by Immersion

The Didache; Chapter 7

“Regarding baptism, baptize thus. After giving the foregoing instructions, ‘Baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit’ in running water. But if you have no running water, baptize in any other; and, if you cannot in cold water, then in warm. But, if the one is lacking, pour the other three times on the head ‘in the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit.’ But, before the baptism, let the one who baptizes and the one to be baptized fast, and any others who are able to do so. And you shall require the person being baptized to fast for one or two days.”

Southern Baptists on Baptism

3. Act of Obedience

“It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer’s faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer’s death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus.”

- In Baptist theology, this point is the one that makes baptism important because obedience to Christ matters
- Baptism being an act of obedience is what causes Baptists to question the sacramental views of other Christian groups
- If Baptism is obedience, then baptism is a work, and we are not saved by works but by faith alone (sola fide)

Southern Baptists on Baptism

4. Only a Symbol

“It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer’s faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer’s death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus.”

- “An outward sign of an inward reality that God has already worked in us”
- There is no power in baptism whatsoever because everything baptism represents has already been accomplished by God
- Baptism has nothing to do with the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38)

Southern Baptists on Baptism

5. A Public Profession

“It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead.”

- Baptism is our public profession of our faith in Jesus Christ
- For Southern Baptists, this is the ultimate answer to the question, “What is baptism?”
- Baptism cannot be a private affair and must take place in the community of believers

Southern Baptists on Baptism

6. A Prerequisite

“Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord’s Supper.”

- Baptism is said to be a prerequisite to both church membership and the Lord’s Supper
- If Baptism is by immersion and it is a prerequisite for church membership, then according to the BFM, this is why we re-baptize (or baptize for the first time) all who were not baptized by immersion.

Southern Baptists on Baptism

7. Ordinances

“Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord’s Supper.”

- *Ordinance* – an authoritative decree; command
- We never see the word ordinance used to describe baptism and the Lord’s Supper, but the idea is there
 - 1 Corinthians 14:37 – “If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.”
 - 1 Timothy 3:15 – “If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.”

Southern Baptists on Baptism

7. Ordinances

- Historically, Baptists believed there were more than two church ordinances
- The Baptist Catechism (1693)
 - Q. 95. What are the outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?
 - A. The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption are His ordinances, especially the Word, Baptism, the Lord's Supper and Prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

Southern Baptists on Baptism

7. Ordinances

- The Baptist Catechism (1693)

Q. 99. Wherein do Baptism and the Lord's Supper differ from the other ordinances of God?

A. Baptism and the Lord's Supper differ from the other ordinances of God in that they were specially instituted by Christ to represent and apply to believers the benefits of the new covenant by visible and outward signs.

Southern Baptists on Baptism

7. Ordinances

- Are the ordinances required or optional?
- 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith; Chapter 26; Paragraph 6-8:

“The members of these churches are saints by calling, visibly manifesting and evidencing (in and by their profession and walking) their obedience unto that call of Christ;¹² and do willingly consent to walk together, according to the appointment of Christ; giving up themselves to the Lord, and one to another, by the will of God, in professed subjection to the ordinances of the Gospel.”

Southern Baptists on Baptism

7. Ordinances

- 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith; Chapter 26; Paragraph 7:

“To each of these churches therefore gathered, according to his mind declared in his word, he has given all that power and authority, which is in any way needful for their carrying on that order in worship and discipline, which he has instituted for them to observe; with commands and rules for the due and right exerting, and executing of that power”

Southern Baptists on Baptism

7. Ordinances

- 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith; Chapter 26; Paragraph 8:

“A particular church, gathered and completely organized according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members; and the officers appointed by Christ to be chosen and set apart by the church (so called and gathered), for the peculiar administration of ordinances, and execution of power or duty, which he intrusts them with, or calls them to, to be continued to the end of the world, are bishops or elders, and deacons.”

Southern Baptists on Baptism

7. Ordinances

- Most Christians use the word sacrament to speak of what we call ordinances
- *Sacrament*
 - St. Augustine – “For a sign is a thing which, over and above the impression it makes on the senses, causes something else to come into mind as a consequence of itself”
 - A visible sign of an invisible grace
 - A means of grace
- For modern Baptists, the use of the word sacrament is almost forbidden (not officially, just in strong opinions)
- The common reasons for not using sacrament:
 - It is not used in the Bible
 - The ordinances do not have any type of saving efficacy
 - Sacrament can be confused with Roman Catholic teaching

Southern Baptists on Communion

Terms in relation to the Lord's Supper

- The Lord's Supper has a few different names:
 - **The Lord's Supper**
 - **Communion**
 - **The Eucharist**
 - Like the term sacrament, Baptists hesitate to use this word
 - **εὐχαριστία (eucharistia)** – thanksgiving
 - Luke 22:17 – “And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks he said, ‘Take this, and divide it among yourselves.’”
- **Elements** – the items that are used in the Lord's Supper (bread and wine)

Southern Baptists on Communion

1. Symbolic

“The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.”

- The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act
- The bread and “fruit of the vine” do not become the actual body and blood as taught in the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation
- They remain the symbols of what they represent

Southern Baptists on Communion

1. Symbolic

“The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.”

- While Southern Baptists generally deny the real presence of Christ in the Supper, the BFM does not outright deny it
- The use of the language of signs and symbol have always been employed to describe the elements in the Lord’s Supper

Southern Baptists on Communion

1. Symbolic

- Baptists have always held to a symbolic view of the Supper while still believing Christ is present in the elements in a spiritual nature
- 1689 London Baptist Confession; Chapter 30; Paragraph 7

“Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this ordinance, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death; the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally, but spiritually present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.”

Southern Baptists on Communion

2. Act of Obedience

“The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.”

- The Lord’s Supper is an act of obedience to Christ
- Just as with Baptism, this is the Baptist way of making the ordinances our work and not the work of God

Southern Baptists on Communion

2. Act of Obedience

- While the Lord's Supper is an act of obedience, Christians have historically spoken of Communion as the work of God which we receive in faith
- The Baptist Catechism
 - Q. 98. How do Baptism and the Lord's Supper become effectual means of salvation?
 - A. Baptism and the Lord's Supper become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them or in him that administers them, but only by the blessing of Christ and the working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive them

Southern Baptists on Communion

2. Act of Obedience

- The Baptist Catechism

Q. 107. What is the Lord's Supper?

A. The Lord's Supper is a holy ordinance, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, His death is showed forth, and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporeal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of His body and blood, with all His benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace.

Southern Baptists on Communion

3. Members Only

“The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.”

- Participants in the Supper can only be baptized members of the Christian Church
- Baptists have had many debates through history on who is and is not allowed to participate

Southern Baptists on Communion

3. Members Only

- The practice of not allowing people to participate in the Lord's Supper is often referred to as "fencing the table"
- Why fence the table?
- Who might we refuse from participation if we do?

Southern Baptists on Communion

3. Members Only

- 1 Corinthians 11:27-30 – Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

Southern Baptists on Communion

3. Members Only

- The BFM only requires that participants be baptized believers of a local church, but churches are free to be stricter
 - Some Baptists have proposed that only members of their church are allowed to participate, even refusing other Baptists
 - Others only allow only Baptists to participate for various reasons:
 - Some believe Baptists are the only true Christians throughout history
 - Others will not allow other denominations who practice infant baptism because those believers have never experienced believers' baptism
- Other reasons to fence the table is to refuse the bread and cup from those who are under church discipline

Southern Baptists on Communion

4. Bread and Fruit of the Vine

“The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.”

- The elements of the Supper are bread and the “fruit of the vine”
- Does it matter what elements we use in the Lord’s Supper?

Southern Baptists on Communion

4. Bread and Fruit of the Vine

- Yes, it does matter. I'm sorry megachurches, YOU CANNOT USE OREOS AND MILK (OR DR. PEPPER?)
- Both bread and wine have deep biblical connections
- Bread
 - Bread was used in the Passover (Exodus 12)
 - God provided for the people of Israel by raining manna (Exodus 16) which became a central theme in scripture
 - "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11)
 - "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4)

Southern Baptists on Communion

4. Bread and Fruit of the Vine

- Bread (cont.)
 - Jesus calls himself the bread of life, connecting himself to the manna in the wilderness (John 6)
 - We will eat bread with the Lord in the end
 - “Blessed is he who will eat bread in the kingdom of God” (Luke 14:15)
 - “To the one who conquers I will give him some of the hidden manna” (Revelation 2:17)
 - Bread is constantly used as a symbol pointing to Christ

Southern Baptists on Communion

4. Bread and Fruit of the Vine

- Wine (and I mean wine... the fermented stuff)
 - Wine was used in the drink offering in the OT (Exodus 29:40; Leviticus 23:13)
 - “You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and *wine to gladden the heart of man*, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man’s heart.” – Psalm 104:14-15
 - Wine was a sign of the promises of God being fulfilled in the prophets:
 - “And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD and water the Valley of Shittim.” – Joel 3:18
 - “ ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,’ ” – Amos 9:13-15

Southern Baptists on Communion

4. Bread and Fruit of the Vine

- Wine (cont.)
 - Consider the significance of these prophecies as Jesus turns water into wine and what that would mean to a Jew awaiting the Messiah (John 2:1-12)
 - The cup of blessing in the Passover, while not found in the Old Testament, was the cup of wine Jesus gave during the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16,21)
 - "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord, I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people." - Psalm 116:13
 - Christ gave us the cup of blessing and then took the cup of wrath for us
 - Finally, we will drink wine with the Lord at the marriage supper of the Lamb

"On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine will refined. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken." – Isaiah 25:6-8

Southern Baptists on Communion

4. Bread and Fruit of the Vine

- If it matters what elements we use and wine is such a prominent thing in the Bible, should we use grape juice or wine in communion?
 - This was not even a question before 1869, when a dentist name Thomas Welch developed the method of pasteurizing grape juice to prevent its fermentation
 - Many Protestant denominations began using grape juice in the late 19th century and early 20th century
 - The Prohibition Act of 1919 and the teetotal mindset of many Protestants cemented this new tradition
 - Now, we take Jesus' words out of context to support our rejection of the true element
“For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” – (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18)

Southern Baptists on Communion

4. Bread and Fruit of the Vine

- When the Israelites ate bread in the Passover, were there limitations on the ingredients in the bread?
- You may say, “Oh well wine and grape juice are the same because they are both from grapes.”
 - No one really believes that
 - If they were the same, there would be no issues with wine
 - They are not the same because there is a molecular difference
- Do we really believe the Lord’s Supper is an ordinance (commanded by Christ)?
- If so, by what authority do we say it is okay to change the elements which our Lord used when He instituted this wonderful gift?

Southern Baptists on Communion

5. Memorial

“The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.”

- “Do this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19)
- Remembrance is not the idea of remembering something forgotten, but holding fast to the covenant of God
- “But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.” – Genesis 8:1

Southern Baptists on Communion

5. Memorial

- Think of going to a wedding with your spouse and hearing the vows of that covenant exchanged
- The Passover was a meal of remembrance that tied the Israelites back to the Passover event of their ancestors
- What do we remember?
 - We remember Christ's life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension
 - We remember the covenant made in His blood
 - We remember the forgiveness of our sins

Southern Baptists on Communion

6. Future Hope

“The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.”

- Not only is the Lord’s Supper a meal in which we look backward, but we also await His return
- “For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” – Luke 22:18
- We trust in Jesus’ promise here and anticipate drinking the cup with Him again in that great Marriage Supper of the Lamb as we celebrate the fulfillment of all God’s promises

Summary of SBC Ordinances

Baptism

1. Believer's Baptism
2. Baptism by Immersion
3. An Act of Obedience
4. A Symbol of Our Unity with Christ
5. A Public Profession
6. A Prerequisite to Membership and the Lord's Supper
7. An Ordinance

The Lord's Supper

1. Symbolic
2. An Act of Obedience
3. Members Only
4. Bread and Fruit of the Vine
5. Memorial
6. Future Hope
7. An Ordinance

Is there more to the ordinances?

- The ordinances are signs that are effectual unto salvation
- Through these symbols, we receive the grace of God for the building up of our faith
- This is in no way opposed to salvation being given through faith

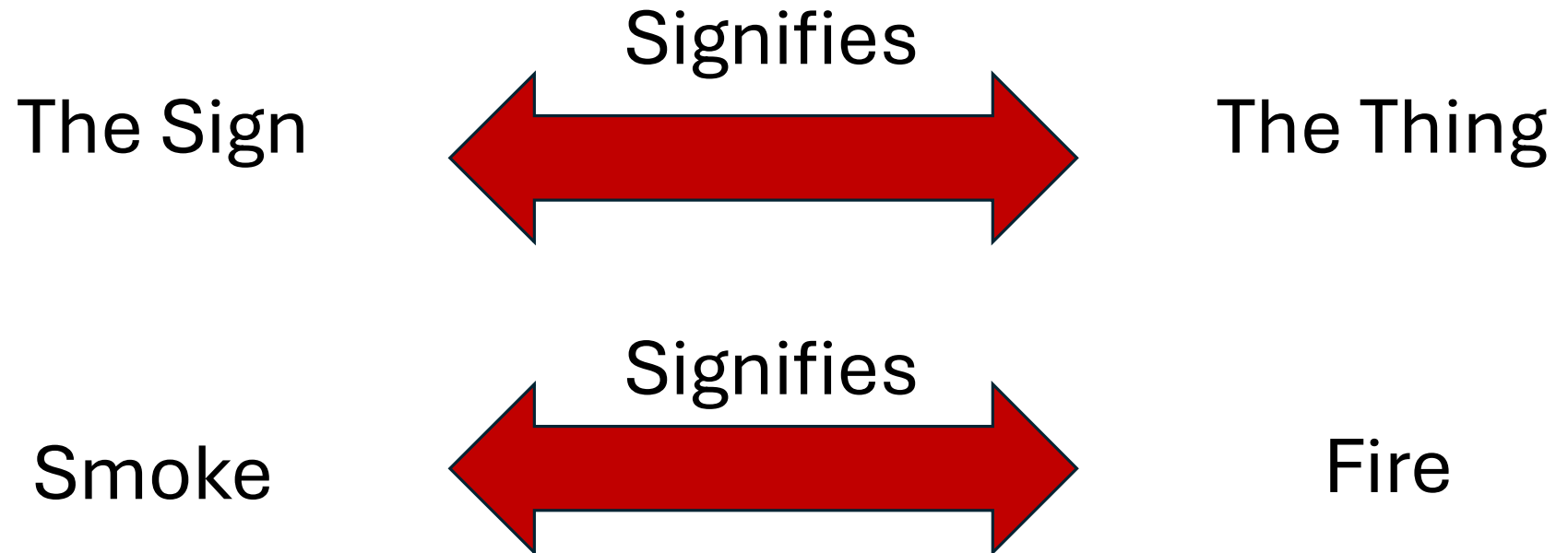
Our work or God's work?

- Start thinking about the ordinances as gifts of God instead of our works, rules, and barriers
- Both faith and repentance are commands of Christ as well
- We do not view our faith and our repentance as our works, why then see the ordinances any different?
- By the end of this study, my hope is that you see even more the riches of God's grace

On Signs and Symbols

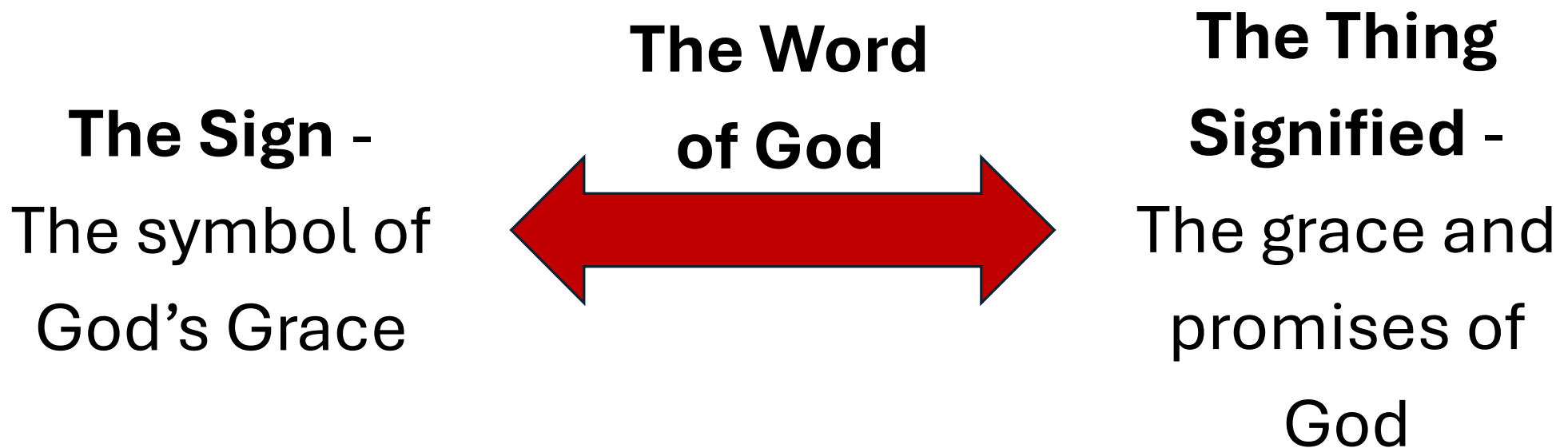
- God has always given his grace through material means which we call signs and symbols
- The sign is so closely connected to the thing it signifies that they are indistinguishable to us
- “For a sign is a thing which, over and above the impression it makes on the senses, causes something else to come into the mind as a consequence of itself.” – Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book 2, Chapter 1.
- If you see smoke, what do you know is present?

On Signs and Symbols



On Signs and Symbols

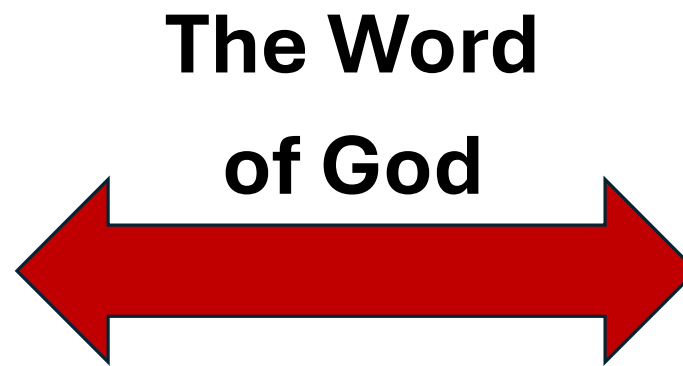
What unites a sign to the thing it signifies?



“And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” – Genesis 2:9

- What did they receive from the fruit of the tree of life?
 - “Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also the tree of life and eat, and live forever” – Genesis 3:22
- Does life come from the power of the tree itself?
- Why then does the tree give life?

The Sign -
Tree of Life



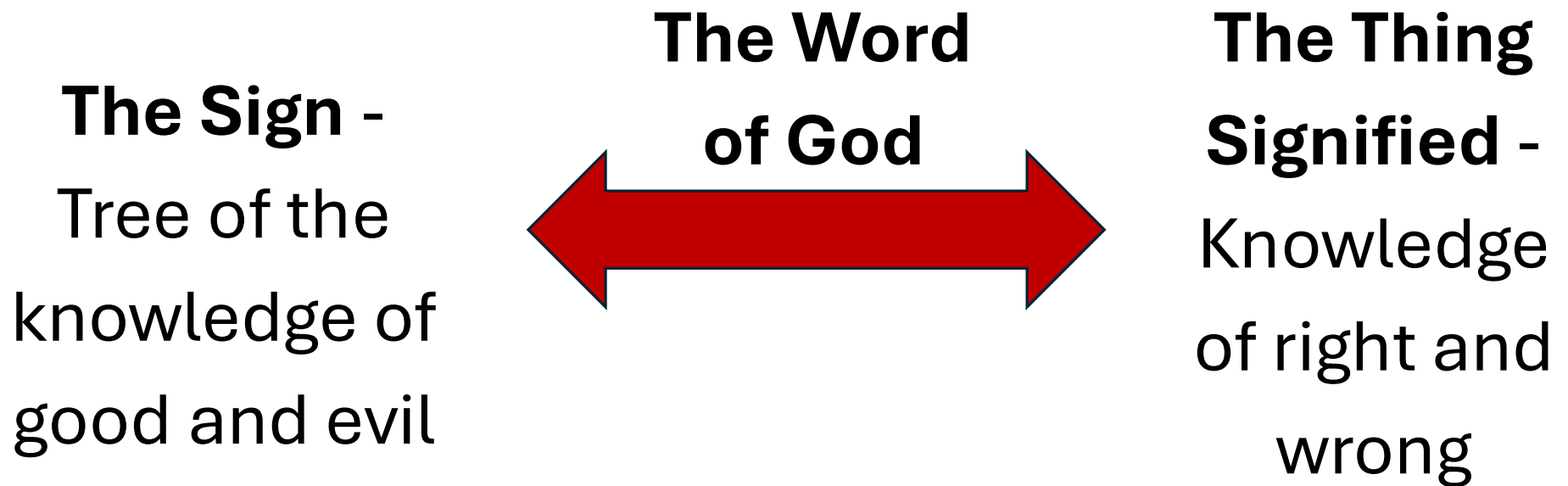
**The Thing
Signified -**
Life from
God

On Signs and Symbols

Tree of Knowledge

“And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” – Genesis 2:9

- What did they receive from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
- Does this knowledge come from the power of the tree itself?
- Why then does the tree give this knowledge?

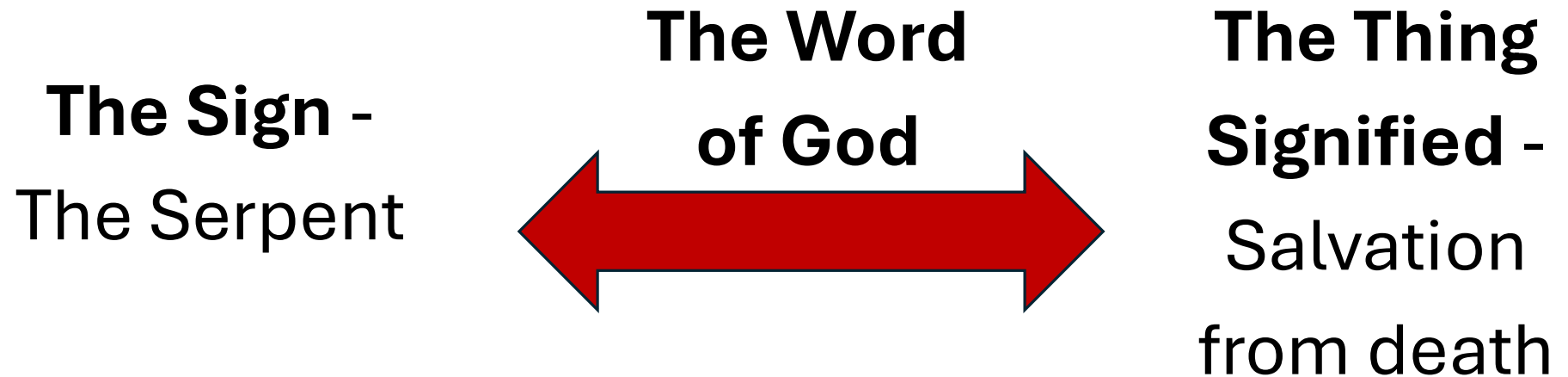


On Signs and Symbols

Bronze Serpent

Numbers 21:5–9 (ESV)

⁵And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.” ⁶Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. ⁷And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” ⁹So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.



On Signs and Symbols

Samson's Hair

Judges 13:2–5 (ESV)

²There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. And his wife was barren and had no children. ³And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. ⁴Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, ⁵for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.”

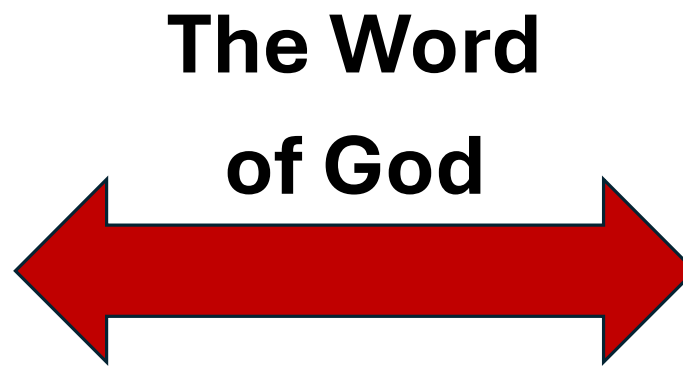
On Signs and Symbols

Samson's Hair

Judges 16:17–19 (ESV)

17 And he told her all his heart, and said to her, “A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man.” 18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, “Come up again, for he has told me all his heart.” Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. 19 She made him sleep on her knees. And she called a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him.

The Sign -
Samson's
Hair



**The Thing
Signified -**
Strength
from God

John 9:6–7 (ESV)

⁶ Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷ and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

- Jesus heals using two material objects, the mud and the washing in the pool
- In other healing miracles Jesus doesn't use any means to heal, why do you think He uses these means?

- What reason does God give the signs?
- Let us consider the sign of circumcision

On Signs and Symbols

Signs and Seals

Genesis 17:9–14 (ESV)

⁹ And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹² He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, ¹³ both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

On Signs and Symbols

Signs and Seals

- Did circumcision make Abraham righteous?
- Was it circumcision itself that made the Israelite part of the covenant people of God?
- Were they considered a part of the covenant if they were not circumcised?
- The sign is so closely connected to the promise that it is indistinguishable

On Signs and Symbols

Signs and Seals

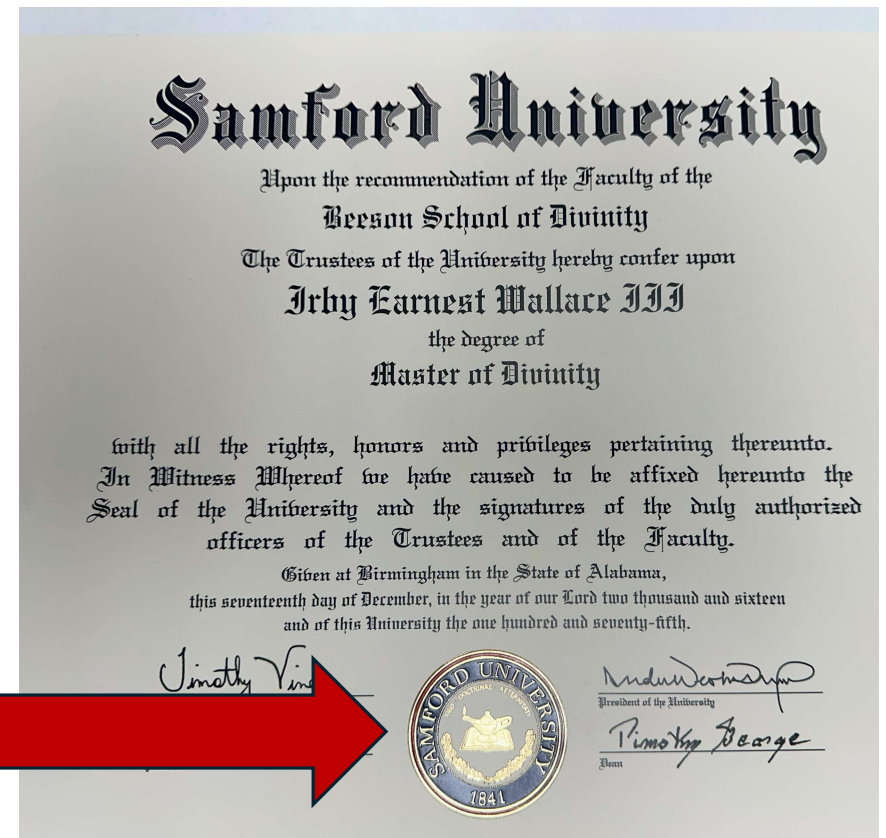
Romans 4:9–12 (ESV)

⁹ Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰ How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ¹² and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

On Signs and Symbols

Signs and Seals

- The **sign** is the **seal** of the **promise**



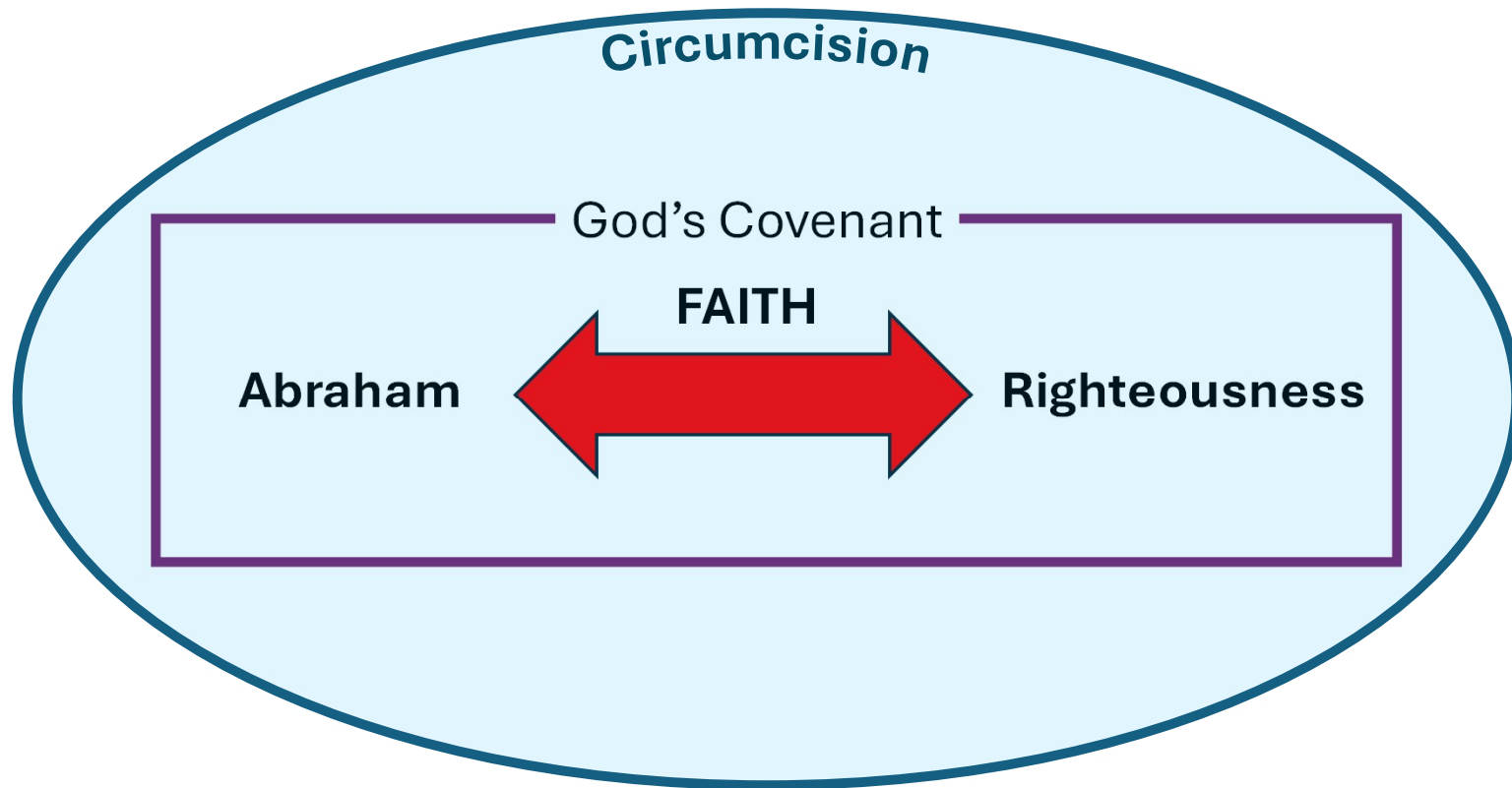
On Signs and Symbols

Signs and Seals

- Think about this in terms of circumcision
- The promise of God is the covenant that he gives Abraham
- The seal is the sign of circumcision which is God's promise to Abraham of the covenant

On Signs and Symbols

Signs and Seals



- “There Paul expressly argues that Abraham’s circumcision was not for his justification but for the seal of that covenant by faith in which he had already been justified. And what is there, I beg, to offend any man greatly if we teach that the promise is sealed by the sacraments, when it is clear from the promises themselves that each confirms the other?”
 - John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 4, Chapter 14, Section 5.

On Signs and Symbols

Signs and Seals

- Abraham receives righteousness through his faith, not through circumcision
- The sign itself does not give righteousness
- God's promise is given through the covenant
- God gives Abraham the sign of circumcision as the sign/seal (the promise) that his covenant will be true
- The promise of the sign confirms the promise of the covenant
- Why does God give us so many promises?

On Signs and Symbols

Signs and Seals

- “The sacraments, therefore, are exercises which make us more certain of the trustworthiness of God’s Word. And because we are carnal, they are shown under carnal objects, to instruct us according to our dull capacity, and to lead us by the hand as tutors lead children. Augustine calls a sacrament “a visible word” for the reason that it represents God’s promises as painted in a picture and sets them before our sight, portrayed graphically and in the manner of images.

-John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 4, Chapter 14, Section 6.

On Signs and Symbols

Signs and Seals

- The reason God gives us these signs is because we are weak. Praise God!
- These signs are visible words like real-life paintings which experience through all our senses
- God does not **need** to give us these signs, but he does so for our benefit which is his grace
- By giving Abraham the sign of circumcision, he and his wife would both be constantly reminded of the covenant and promises of God

On Signs and Symbols

Summary

- God has always given his grace, promises, and salvation through physical means
- These physical means are signs that signify the work of God
- The **signs** make visible the working of God and point us toward God
- These signs do not give us righteousness in themselves
- These signs are given as **seals** which confirm the promises of God
- God gives us these signs to help us in our weakness

Connection between Old and New

- The language of signs and seals is fine for circumcision, but what does that have to do with baptism and the Lord's Supper?
- I'm glad you asked.

Connection between Old and New

- Israel was given two ordinances just as we were: one that was initiatory and one that was a continuous reminder
 - Circumcision and the Passover
- We are given two ordinances: one initiatory and one that is a continuous reminder
 - Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- The Apostle Paul applies circumcision and the Passover to the Christian life and applies baptism and the Lord's Supper to Israel

Connection between Old and New

1 Corinthians 5:6–8 (ESV)

⁶Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Connection between Old and New

1 Corinthians 10:1–5 (ESV)

¹For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Connection between Old and New

Colossians 2:9–15 (ESV)

⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Connection between Old and New

- Circumcision, Passover, Baptism, and Communion have many differences and similarities, but they are all given to us as signs of the covenants and seals of the promises and works of God
- The language of signs and seals found in Romans 4:11 gives us a way in which we can talk about these signs