

**“This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.”**

Love letters have been dying a slow death ever since we started calling paper mail snail mail. Instead of waiting at the mailbox every day hoping for a letter from your sweetheart, we stare at our phones waiting for the three dots to turn into the next text message from someone we like.

As we write and receive love letters, whether they be via snail mail, email, or text, we want to know we are our beloved and our beloved is ours. To quote Steve Wonder, “Here I am, signed, sealed, delivered. I’m yours.” We’re going to talk about God’s love, and how in God’s love, our victory is signed, sealed, and delivered. Our theme: GOD SIGNED, SEALED, AND DELIVERED YOUR VICTORY.

First, I. Christ's blood signs the victory over the world. **“For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.”** The blood testifies, it serves as a witness that what we have in Christ is real.

As you write love letters back and forth with your boyfriend, you start to recognize his handwriting. Yes, he signs his name at the end, and you can recognize a signature, but the whole letter becomes its own evidence. The phrases he uses, the way he writes his “r’s” all testify to the fact that it is indeed your boyfriend writing the letter. If I were to take a letter your boyfriend wrote and rewrite the same words in my handwriting, you’d recognize the difference.

God gave us a love letter: the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. This love letter was signed in His blood. As we consider Christ who died for the sins of the world, the blood the flowing from His side acts as the proof of authenticity. God Himself gave His life for me and for you.

And it checks out, the same God who established animal sacrifice to forgive sins would send His Son as the Lamb of God. The same God who spared Isaac from Abraham’s knife would provide the lamb for the sacrifice.

**“Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”** And Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection signs the victory in His blood. Without all that Christ has done for you, there would be no victory, no love of God, no forgiveness, life, or salvation. Through these selfless actions, Jesus writes you His love letter in His blood.

Second, II. The water of baptism seals our victory over the world. **“For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.”** The water seals what was won on Calvary in your heart and soul.

How would you react if a love letter from your girlfriend arrived in your mailbox already opened? You would be especially horrified if the letter contained

intimate or secret information. A letter that was meant for your eyes only was examined by someone who had no right to read it. A sealed letter proves that it is genuine, that it hasn't been intercepted by someone who might mean to do you or your beloved harm. A sealed letter assures you that this message is for you.

Water seals the victory in Christ's church. The victory that was won on Calvary becomes yours through the waters of baptism. The Lord combines water with the Word to welcome you into the family of God. As the water was poured onto your head, it wasn't your mom or dad's name that was called out, but yours. Baptism is a very personal gift that is given from God to you. Even on an occasion where multiple people are baptized on the same day, the pastor baptizes each person individually. Baptism is a personal promise from God to you.

So it is that when the devil tempts you to make you think that the promises of forgiveness and life won by Jesus are for someone else, not you, tell Satan to take a long walk off a short pier because you're already spoken for, you belong to God. **“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”** It's through baptism that we are born of God and that Christ's victory comes to me and to you.

Third, III. The Spirit delivers this victory through His means of grace. **“For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.”** The Holy Spirit delivers this victory to bring power to the waters of baptism and to bring Christ's victory into the present day.

We take a reliable postal service for granted. A friend told me his trouble with starting a distance postgraduate program in Africa. He had to send his academic transcript from the United States to South Africa. For a transcript to be valid it had to be received in a sealed envelope. Customs didn't seem to understand that, and it took a friend who just so happened to be traveling to South Africa to hand deliver the letter for him.

We take the Holy Spirit for granted. The third person of the Trinity might seem like a silent partner, but He is anything but that. The Spirit can't keep quiet about the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the one who delivers the goods of salvation. He is completely reliable, even more so than the best courier service. He testifies to the reality of what Christ has done on Calvary. He uses God's Word and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper to achieve this goal.

The Holy Spirit works through these means to improve your life. The Holy Spirit takes the historical reality won on Calvary, delivers it through these means of Water, Wafer, Wine, and Word, and He sets off dynamite in our hearts.

A well-written and heartfelt love letter can change your world. A young man asking you on a date can set you on a course that leads to marriage. When you love someone, suddenly it isn't so crazy to take a road trip from Indiana to Wisconsin just for a weekend to see the person. It isn't so crazy to spend hours on the phone.

The Holy Spirit bringing you to faith is a change from death to life! Signed, sealed, delivered, I'm yours. **GOD SIGNED, SEALED, AND DELIVERED YOUR VICTORY.** This bringing over from death to life is how we can agree with John: **“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.”** Having our hearts changed by the Holy Spirit, we find it is not a burden to listen to God and try to obey Him. What a blessing God gives us!