

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 23 MARCH 2008: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 68:8

Let us commence this meeting with God by declaring openly to one another and to God:

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Beloved grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Psalm of praise:145:10+11+12

Confession of faith: **Apostolic**

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hell, the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, a holy catholic* Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.

Amen

After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 16:2.

Law

Psalm: 16:2

Prayer:

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation for the church, the authorities and the sinful world and appeal to God's promises.**
- **General prayer**
- **Enlightenment from the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry of the Word.**

Amen

Hymn: 12-2:5

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:9

“God, who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.”

This weekend we remember again the crucifixion and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- It is an event in which we remember the greatest grace of God for us.
- We remember that the Son of God came to live visibly in our world and that He allowed Himself to be crucified for the sake of our sins.

On the Friday of the crucifixion He bore the wrath of the Lord unto death for our sake.

- On the first day of that week He came out of the tomb as the Conqueror of sin and death for in His Divine Almighty He arose from death.

God has elected you – although you fell into sin. That is why He died for us and reconciled us with God and that is why the Holy Spirit calls us to belief.

- The result is that we must be active and vigorous in our life of faith.
- That is the meaning of what is written here, that we are called upon to faithfully call on the Name of God and to practise the fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ.

1. **Our calling**
2. **The future together with Jesus Christ**

1. **Our calling**

Paul introduces himself as *“called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God ...”*.

- He commences his letter by stating clearly that he did not become an apostle by his own will.
- We know that is the one thing he did not want to be – that is why on the road to Damascus the Lord said to him: *“It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”* (Acts 26:14)
- Paul was opposing the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul also refers to his calling because he knows that all the faithful remember how on the road to Damascus the Lord intervened drastically in his life.

- The Holy Spirit did not just convince Paul and he then came to belief.
- The Lord Himself spoke to Paul and all with him heard the voice which said: *“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”* (Acts 9:4)
- Paul came out of this meeting blinded. He was only cured after Ananias had been with him whereafter he was baptised.

It is with reference to this calling that Paul writes – “by the will of God”.

- The will of God encompasses His entire Counsel, in other words, the entire planning and ministry of the Tri-une God.
- It includes the predestination and also the calling of every person and also the salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ and also the ministry of God the Holy Spirit.
- It also includes the responsibility with which we must manage the things that God in His Counsel entrusted to us.

With this introduction of himself the apostle Paul indicates a particular position from which he wants the church at Corinth – and us – to approach and understand this letter.

- At the same time it determines the position from which they must see themselves when reading the letter.

- For the implication of the first verse is that the called apostle is writing to others who are called also.
- Our congregation, as readers of this letter, must therefore from the start understand clearly that we are called in Christ.
- The introduction to this letter is important because it immediately tells us who we are – for we are called people (church) precisely as were the Corinthians.
- We must also know that our calling is according to the will of God – for that implies that God puts certain duties on us as called people and also has certain expectations of us.
- We therefore have determinable responsibilities to fulfil.
- With reference to each command of the Lord we have the duty to obey it in a particular way.

Listen again how the Lord addresses us in this letter. We are addressed in our responsibility. It is written there: To the church of God in Corinth (Bellville)!

But that is not all. The people making up the church are defined more closely:

- To those sanctified in Jesus Christ.
- And called to be holy.
- Together with all those everywhere who call on the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Upon that follows an emphasis that the Lord is their Lord as well as our Lord.

- The Lord is therefore everywhere (omnipresent) and all believers in their unity belong to the Lord.
- Remember – a church is not a building – it is the people who believe in Christ who assemble there.

You see that the holiness of the believers is emphasised strongly.

- In both sentences it is clear that the holiness is not something they acquired by themselves.
- It is something given to them and worked in them from “*outside*”.
- Our calling to belief therefore comes from the Lord.

2. The future together with Jesus Christ

We are sanctified in Christ Jesus the Lord.

- Those who are holy consist of the whole church – not only the church in Corinth.
- We confess that with the words “*a holy catholic church*” – “*catholic*” meaning “*universal*”, thereby affirming that there has always been and always will be only one true Christian Church.
- The fact that the whole church is called holy shows us the unity in the church. We are all the same – saints.

Let us consider the meaning of the word “*holy*”.

- To start off it is a word describing the relationship between a group of people and the Lord.
- The word “*holy*” also means that you are separated from sin and all that is bad.
- It also means people who are set apart from other people, as Israel as the people of the Covenant were set apart from the heathen nations. Israel was holy and the others were not.
- Holy also means that you share in Divine Holiness.

Saints are therefore not people without sin, but people set apart by God and then sanctified by Him.

- These people must push sin away from them each day and they must endeavour with all their strength to live according to God's commands.
- We may also say that the word "*saints*" contains a specific command, which is that people who are saints must live a strictly Christian life.
- Holiness is only found where the believers are in a continuous process of inner transformation (repentance) and of sanctification in Christ.

The Lord reveals plainly the holiness of saints does not come from themselves that is why it is written "*in Christ Jesus*".

- In themselves they do not have the quality of holiness, but the Lord sanctifies them in His Son Jesus Christ.
- Holy now acquires a further meaning, that of describing people who in future, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes on the clouds, shall enter His Kingdom.
- Saints are therefore people who have a particular expectation of salvation in Christ.

That is why Paul in this verse speaks of Christ Jesus and not Jesus Christ.

- Christ means the Anointed which is a word describing God in action while He is saving us.
- Because the Lord emphasises His official ministry of redemption the word "*Christ*" comes first. Thereafter comes the name Jesus which says that God has completed His ministry of redemption through His Son Jesus.

See what Paul has accomplished:

- Firstly, he introduced himself as an apostle called by the Lord Jesus.
- Then he proclaims the church (the faithful) as saints called by Jesus.
- "*Calling*" here means that both (Paul and the church at Corinth) are what Jesus has made them.

That is written in verse 4 "... *His (God's) grace given you in Christ Jesus*". The faithful therefore share in the gifts acquired through Jesus Christ.

The gifts of grace are not donated bit by bit.

- It is written here that we are enriched in Christ in speaking and in knowledge.
- These gifts of grace are all worked by the Holy Spirit.

Corinth was a wealthy city. The believers there understood that the Lord means that they received spiritual wealth just as there was a surfeit of wealth in their city.

Believers have an expectation.

- They live in the expectation that the Lord shall return.
- We must remember that these words were addressed to the Corinthians who were guilty of many ugly sins.
- The Corinthians represent us all.
- We are all nasty sinners, but we live a life of repentance in which we look forward to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We may wonder whether we can do so. The answer is "yes".

- God's promise to you is clear: God will grant you power to persevere.
- Not only now and then – every day till the end.

- He gives you strength so that when the Lord comes you will still believe and expect His coming.

May we doubt this? No! God is faithful.

- Proof is that He has called us.
- The fact that He then through the Holy Spirit incorporated us in faith and above all, that Jesus Christ died for us.

That is why in this passage the Lord names us called saints.

- With it He reveals to us that He has already given us a future in Christ.
- This future transcends the boundaries of sin.
- It is a future in which we shall be glorified by Jesus Christ and in which we shall be with the Lord forever.
- That is why He calls us saints.

But, and this is important, God gives us a command.

- We must exercise fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ.
- Every day we must remain at full strength in our worship.
- We may not fall behind in our attendance of church assembly.
- We may not relax in our prayers and study of the Bible.
- We must feel the presence of God around and over us each day.

God is faithful and in his faithfulness He called us and sanctified us.

At this time we remember again that the Lord fulfilled all His promises of salvation when the Lord Jesus died on the cross and arose from the dead.

- Let us in this day remind ourselves that we as the bearers of the image of the Lord Jesus Christ must show the same faithfulness and obedience that He did.
- We can, for He lets us share in His redemption.

Amen

Closing prayer

Closing Hymn: 10-2

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen

MJ Du Plessis
Reformed Church Bellville
23 March 2008
NIV