

THE COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS – Part I.

The Meaning

What is the Communion of Saints? The communion of the saints is the spiritual fellowship of God's people. And in the context of the church, the communion of the saints is the holy Catholic Church seen from the viewpoint of the fellowship of God's people with each other. Such a fellowship is rooted in the fellowship with God.

Illustrations from Scripture

Scripture presents several figures for the communion of the saints. First, there is the figure of the body where Christ is the head and the spiritual members of the church make up that body. Secondly, there is the figure of the vine and the branches where Christ is the true vine and the members are the branches. And thirdly, the figure of the building, where Jesus Christ is the cornerstone and the members of the church are the building blocks of the temple of God. All these figures set forth the truth that Christ is the life centre of the church and the saints draw all their life and existence out of him.

Explanation

God calls his people out of sin and darkness and delivers them from the bondage and corruption of sin through the effectual call of the gospel. And to be members of that one body of Christ, which is called the Church. And the members are called saints, or the holy ones who have been set apart by God and called to a life of fellowship with other members. The basis of the communion of the saints is that this is the work of God for the promotion of God's glory. This is not a society formed by man for social, recreational or humanistic purposes but for the glory of God and God ordained has the church in eternity and in due time gathered his church through the mighty work of the Holy Spirit. And God brings the saints into one spiritual fellowship of His one covenant life with one another, as one living organism with all the individual members as an intimate part of that organism and making it a glorious whole.

The heart of the communion of saints is our Lord Jesus Christ, for without him there be no communion of saints. Christ is the one who unites them into one body. Christ is the one who unites their hearts together with the same love for God, love for his church, love the things concerning the kingdom. And Christ is the one who lives in their hearts and causes them to keep his Word. All these are possible through the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, merited on the cross of Christ and the covenant life through the resurrection Jesus Christ. They are united with one and same purpose, the glory of God in Jesus Christ.

The Manifestation

The communion of the saints comes to the most glorious manifestation in the institutional life of the church. In the act of worship of God, where there is the preaching of God's Word and the saints are gathered together as one people to hear the preaching. The saints love the preaching for it is their Head, Jesus Christ who is speaking to them, through God's servant, and they delight to hear his voice of Christ. The saints also express their common faith, hope and doctrine of the Scriptures, which is a most beautiful expression of the fellowship of the saints in the Word of God. This manifestation of the communion of the saints takes place when the saints pray together with the pastor in congregational prayer. Here, the pastor prays on behalf of the congregation. And the congregation agreeing with the prayers and say, "amen". The communion of the saints is also manifested in the congregation's response in worship, where the saints gather together to glorify

God in the singing the songs of Zion, singing heartily unto the Lord and singing of their hope of salvation and eternal life. And when they bring their gifts and offerings for the poor and needy, each one giving according as they purpose in their heart and giving generously for His sake.

The manifestation of the Communion of the Saints is also revealed in the whole company of the elect. This company of the elect is also chosen by the decree of God, God chose them in love and they are brought to the sheepfold of God in time. The communion of the saints also extends to the believers that has gone before us and are at present with us and found in every nation, tongue, language and tribe. They too have been gathered by the same Spirit through the call of the same gospel of Jesus Christ and this is the same spirit that works in the hearts of God's people found in every tongue and nation

To be continued...

Pastor Paul Goh