

Sanctifying Jehovah in Worship (1) Salutation

Dear brothers and sisters,

I intend to write a series of articles on worship, especially on the various elements of worship. The need is obvious, as we need to understand what the various elements mean and its significance. My prayer is that by the end of this series on the elements of Worship, we would be well-informed on the essentials of Reformed Worship.

At the beginning of the Worship Service, we have the call to worship, salutation, votum and benediction. We greet the congregation with the words, "Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ", and the votum is, "Our help is the name of Jehovah who has made heaven and earth" and the benediction that follows.

So, the salutation is "Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ". Who speaks these words, God or the minister? In truth, though these words are spoken by the minister, he in fact, speaks on behalf of God, as God's minister he addresses the congregation. In other words, already at the beginning of the Worship Service, we hear the voice of God: God is addressing us, as His beloved congregation. Just meditate on it. God calls us "His beloved congregation"! This greeting or salutation will surely encourage us and strengthen our faith that we are indeed God's flock. When in doubt that we are the people of God, remember this salutation! This salutation is biblical. The apostle Paul often calls the various congregations, as beloved saints or beloved brethren. This means, that we are greatly loved by God through Jesus Christ. Having being chosen in eternity to be His people and sanctified by Christ. It must be noted that in this salutation, all classes of people are included: children, youth adults, single and married. It is to be noted that children are included. We need not wait for the confession to include them in the family of God. They are included as the beloved of God because they belong to the covenant of Grace by virtue of the promise of God in Acts 2.39 and Genesis 17.7.

Are we justified in calling the congregation beloved, when there are Esaus in the congregation? We view the congregation, as the beloved of God in an organic sense. According to our Lord, though there are tares in the wheat field, they are still called the wheat field. Furthermore, the tares in the wheat field are necessary till harvest time and then, they will be weeded out and burned. And in the local congregations, there will be the Esaus but nevertheless they are still called the beloved of the Lord. This is how we ought to understand the tribe of Judah and Israel, organically. Furthermore, they are also called the beloved of the Lord, by virtue of the purpose of God. It is always God's purpose to save his congregation.

We are the beloved congregation of God!

Pastor Paul Goh