

Sanctifying Jehovah in Worship (2) Votum

Dear brothers and sisters,

The salutation is one of the first elements in worship. This is where the minister speaks on behalf of God and greets the congregation with the words, "Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Today, we deal with the second element of the worship service. It is the votum. This word is in Latin and it has the meaning of a vow or a promise. The words of the votum are "Our help *is* in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 124.8)

What is the meaning of these words?

1) It is a confession of our own inability in things spiritual and utter dependence upon the Lord.

This is the response to the salutation. We are of ourselves powerless to help ourselves in thing spiritual: we are unable to earn our own salvation, unable to secure our own forgiveness of sins and to be right before God. We are totally unable. With these words, we confess we are totally depraved and have to depend upon the Lord's blessings. This is especially so when we come into the presence of God to worship Him. Often we come to the house of Lord on the Lord's Day morning dull and in great need of encouragement. Such a response from the congregation of the Lord will energise us to depend upon the Lord.

2) This is an expression of faith in Jehovah.

Oh, we ought to love the name of Jehovah! The name "Jehovah" is the name of the unchangeable God. We can trust in Him because He is reliable and trustworthy. He will not short-change us nor will he deceive us but he will be true to His Word. Number. 23.19, "God *is* not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do *it*? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

What is the name of Jehovah? The names of God in the Scriptures are pregnant with rich meaning, unlike ours. The names of God are the revelation of His attributes: His righteousness, holiness, sovereignty, justice and mercy. We can trust in Him because of who He is, consisting of all His attributes.

And Jehovah will surely come to our aid especially when it is according to the will of God. What kind of help do we need? Help in resisting the devil in our many temptations, help to understand God's Word and know His will for us, help in growing our faith and to walk in obedience to the Lord. And during worship, we need help to worship the Lord from our hearts in the singing and praising His name. We also need help to hear the preaching of God's Word with spiritual profit. We need help to fight against formality in worship.

Beloved, the next time we come to worship the Lord, may we make this confession with meaning and purpose.

Pastor Paul Goh