

## Devotion on Galatians 3: 8. 14. 26

LTS in Tshwane, 2015-07-29, Werner Klän

*„Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. / Christ redeemed us in order to that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. / You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”*

The gospel message tells us: God is in Christ and, for His sake, He is with us. That is why we may endure. It is the apostle Paul from whom we learn that we are called to self-awareness, that we are challenged to see ourselves unvarnished, and unadorned. Against the standards of God's holy will, we discover: We are not in the position to approve the lives we usually lead. We are not able to vouch for ourselves in the eyes of God. And we experience the fact that we are unable to keep ourselves grounded when realizing the abyss of our lives and identifying the untenable nature of our way of living. We are dependent on help coming from somewhere else, namely from God.

For God is willing to end the need that makes us suffer: That we have broken away from Him, that we have fallen out with Him, that we go separate ways from Him. This promise was made already in the Old Covenant to Abraham. In those days God has asserted that He wants to help all people out of their dire straits. Long ago God has bindingly declared that all those people will be in amicable agreement with Him who rely on Him without any reservation. That is why God has appointed and sent His Son to provide for this reconciliation with His life and through His death, so that God and humankind may live in peace with one another again. What began in Bethlehem's cradle, and, humanly speaking, ended on Golgotha's cross, carries in itself world-wide weight and timeless meaning. It is a wealthy God to share our poverty with Himself. It is a poor Jesus to share His riches with us. It is a helpful supporter to lift us up. It is a heavenly friend to come into operation. He has done everything to deliver us from affliction and harm, to relieve us from sorrow and grief, to remove any burden from our shoulders.

Jesus did not shy away from that path that led Him into complete communion with us, the path that took Him into deepest suffering and finally brought Him to death. And He went that way, loaded with all the guilt of ours, laden with all our infamous lies to kill Him in the end. It was Him who carried our stubbornness up to the cross. It was Him to take upon Himself all our self-importance. He struggled with our egoism. Jesus crucified, He Himself nothing but devotion, He Himself outright sacrifice, conquers the powers of destruction by surrendering to them and dying. Thus He removes anything to condemn us in God's eyes. Thus He crosses anything that bereaved us of our dignity.

Jesus turns to us in order to turn our fate. He takes away anything to block our way towards God. He withdraws anything to hinder us from coming into the realm of God's loving kindness. He breaks down the walls to separate us from God; in this way He opens up for us

the path to God. He tears down the ramparts to seal us off from God; in this way, He paves the way to God's heart. He bridges the moat to divide us from God; in this way He discloses new opportunities for us to encounter with God. It is Him to restore the connection with God that had been broken; in this way, we are connected to God anew. It is Him to heal our disrupted relationship with God; now God is accessible for us again. It is Him to take up the conversation with us; now God has become approachable to us. Jesus clears the way for us; thus we may arrive in heaven. It is His Spirit who does accomplish all this; and on the day we were baptized, we have received precisely that very promise of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit is now working on us that the longer the more may be implemented in our lives what Christ has achieved for us.

The key question of our life is: "How may I stand my ground before God, although I am the way I am? And the answer to this key issue is: You will only stand your ground, if you leave yourself in order to rely on God, and on Him alone. You will have to leave behind all of your own means, you are not necessarily predicated on yourself. Moreover, you are based and find your foundation outside of yourself, namely in Christ Jesus. This is what the Bible calls "faith".

In this faith I am certain, that I am no longer forced to degrade myself, like I was the dwarf of my fears, and you do not have to extol yourself, as though you were the giant of your dreams. For God's attention is focused on you, His benevolence aims at me. I do not have to be afraid of failures nor am I forced to give up hope. I am not compelled to give in to threats that lurk deep inside me. I must not worry about falling into a gaping abyss any more when realizing that I find myself on a steep slope. Nor do I have to be angst-ridden over against God's judgment or even my annihilation. I do not have to doubt any more whether or not I am God-pleasing a person, nor do I consequently despair when I feel myself far from fulfilling God's demands. I am convinced and confident, that Jesus Christ, by virtue of His sacrifice will compensate and cope with all that I am lacking. In this way, though, I am granted a new future, I am presented with a new life.

For today, on this beautiful morning, in this very moment when the Gospel of Christ is preached, moreover, when the message of our salvation is applied to us, we are reassured that God is by our side and on our side. And we are His children, beloved children indeed. God does not hesitate to grant us forgiveness, although time and again, yes, over and over again, we are seduced to run away from Him, to neglect Him, to for a while even forget about Him – and we do so, unfortunately more often than we are conscious about. God nevertheless comes after us, looks for us, reaches out for us unceasingly. Because there is nothing else that He loves more than to have us back home; nothing that He wants more than to take us back into His fellowship and the community of His people; nothing that He wishes more than to embrace us and count us again among the members of His family. And this becomes real, a real reality for you, now – now, in this very moment when your Lord and Savior says to you: "I forgive you all your sins." AMEN