



June 17, 2020: Thoughts on the Bible text

Foto: P. Johanning

“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement” (1 Corinthians 1: 10).

Factions had formed within the church in Corinth, and many members had different favourites among the preachers of the gospel. One of these vocal and probably influential groups believed that certain gifts such as speaking in tongues were bestowed at the point of receiving the Holy Spirit. Paul saw the danger that this would result in divisions in the congregation and called for all the brethren to “speak the same thing”. In doing so, he was not demanding uniformity in the style and way in which faith was practised, but that the church members should be focused on sharing the fundamental convictions of faith, strive for the same goal, and put the gospel into practice.

Our faith is based solely on Jesus Christ

At times, brothers and sisters can favour certain ministers and direct their faith towards them. One might even think that in doing so one is following a New Apostolic tradition. However, such an attitude will lead to problems: what if the minister in question does not behave as I expect, and I am disappointed by the person in whom I have bound my faith?

Paul makes it clear that it is inappropriate to single out individual servants of God (1 Corinthians 1: 11–12). They can indeed be a help in maintaining and strengthening our faith, but our faith is in Jesus Christ and is not bound to an individual person. Every servant of God is focused on Jesus Christ but just as in the time of Paul, each one has strengths and weaknesses. What counts is the gospel which contains the message of the cross (1 Corinthians 1: 18), the resurrection, and the promise to all of eternal life. We give thanks only to Jesus Christ for this grace and future: “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3: 11).

Do I understand what I believe?

It is right and proper to have examples of faith. Who does not know of brothers and sisters who despite the most difficult of circumstances and great disappointments have not allowed themselves to be led astray from the way of Christ? To be guided by such examples is fully understandable and indeed helpful. We should, nevertheless, not make our faith dependent on the behaviour of our brothers and sisters in faith.

If I want to keep faith, then I must also know and understand what I believe. New Apostolic Christians should, for example, know that Jesus Christ is the head of the church, and it is He who governs and will complete it. It is also a fundamental conviction of our New Apostolic faith that the Apostle ministry is again active in our time today and is essential for the preparation of the bridal congregation for the return of Christ.

Differences and commonalities

Our shared confession of faith, as expressed in the Ten Articles of Faith, helps us to promote unity within the congregation and not to stumble over things that are of a secondary nature. It is wonderful and uplifting when different people with different education and backgrounds have something in common that transcends all differences and can speak with one voice saying: we believe that Jesus Christ is coming again and that the apostolate is preparing us for it. This is our shared New Apostolic faith.

17 June 2020