

V.O.C. – October 2017

October 29, 2017: Who is God? His Word shows us God as He is believed by us!

Dear Listeners,

This is the last Sunday in the month of October and therefore the last time I will be speaking about God for now. *Knowing God*, as we have seen is *very important*. When we *know God we have eternal life*, the Lord Jesus has said. Right from the start I stressed the meaning of this knowing as a knowledge that is deep and loving and thankful and glorifying for God. It is a knowledge that's rooted and grounded in *love*, and a response to God's love for us in Jesus Christ! Time and again I also emphasized that it is important to know God *rightly*. Its importance has been proven in history time and time again. Speaking about *God as He is believed by us* is a very relevant focus tonight. I am not sure whether you are aware of it, but this coming Tuesday, October 31st it is the 500th anniversary of the *Great Reformation*. It was on October 31st, 1517, that Martin Luther started the Great Reformation by exposing the errors of the church in his days which show that the church did *not* teach the knowledge about God *rightly*!

In the life of Martin Luther, dear listeners, another characteristic of God and of His Word was central: *God's wrath*. Luther had been struggling with the wrath of God and had lived in fear and anguish for years, because the church taught him that *we* have to do *good works* and so pay for our sins in order that *he* could be delivered from the wrath of God. It troubled him daily, and it forced him to try every way he could imagine to *punish himself* for his sins and to *do good works* to appease God. You can imagine the agony in which he lived..., until he studied God's Word himself and searched the Scriptures about the wrath of God and the justification of man. Then he learned from epistles such as Romans and Galatians that *we* cannot satisfy God's justice ourselves or by our good works and obedience to God undo the wrath of God! What great relief that gave him! Thus he decided that this error should be exposed in order that others too would be delivered from this burden, this curse in a man's life, and be set free from it by faith in the sacrifice and death of *Jesus Christ*!

Last week, dear listeners, I spoke about this work of Christ *satisfying God's justice* by His death on the *cross*. I stressed very much as well that this *justification* can be obtained *only by faith*, as a *gift of grace*, according to *the Scriptures*: in *Christ alone* was the *heart* of the Great Reformation! That's what we commemorate and celebrate on Tuesday, October 31st, as the 500th anniversary of the beginning of this Great Reformation. As you might know, the *Voice of the Church* is a broadcast from the Canadian *Reformed Churches*, and this name "*reformed*" in our name indicates that our history goes back to this *Great Reformation*. We still up to today hold dear the five sola's of the Great Reformation: *only* by grace, *only* by faith, *only* by the Scriptures, *only* by Christ, and *only* for the glory of God!

As you may have noted in the past five weeks, dear listener, knowing God in all His characteristics and virtues, in His entire Being and work of salvation, was rooted and grounded in the *Word of God*! *Back to the Word of God*, that was the *motto* of the Great

Reformation, and how important that is! If we want to know God as He has revealed Himself and if we want to recognize God in the way He has manifested Himself in this world, in the history of the church, we must know Him from the *Bible*! That's what Luther discovered and that's what we uphold to this day! That *includes* what the Word of God reveals to us about the *justice* and *wrath* of God. As we saw last week, we do read in the Bible about the wrath of God, and due to His *wrath* over sin and guilt God is *a consuming fire*, the letter to the Hebrews tells us. We do have to take that seriously, for in both the Old and New Testament God has revealed Himself in His wrath over the sins of man, witness the *Flood*, the *Exodus* from Egypt, the *Babylonian Captivity*, for example. Especially in the cross of Christ, however, God has manifested His *wrath*, which He poured out on the Lord Jesus (His own beloved Son!) when He was *forsaken* by God and descended into *hell* (i.e. God forsakenness). We have to take that seriously! Why? So that we will seek our life and salvation *outside* of ourselves in Jesus Christ!

Our response to this reality of God's wrath and the truth about hell, therefore, dear listeners, should be a *deep respect for this holy God*. We have come to know Him over these past few weeks in order that we would live in such *deep respect* for Him! It also should lead us to love Him for His *grace* and *mercy*, for His justice and wisdom, and for His way from death to life! Then we learn from the Word of God to *show* this love in a life of *obedience*, of *service*, and of *praise and worship* to God! If not, the letter to the Hebrews tells us as well, if not, then *we won't get to see God*, and *we won't get to be in His Presence*! The examples of the Flood and of the drowning of Pharaoh should also work in us a fear of God, knowing that God is *fearful* as well, because He makes His enemies freeze in their footsteps when they come face to face with God's wrath and judgments. God is a *jealous* God as well, who does not want to *share* our life, our preferences and priorities with anyone else. God's wrath in such a situation also shows how serious and sincere He is about His love and gift of salvation in Jesus Christ!

Looking back over these messages in the past few weeks, dear listeners, we have come to *know God* very much. He is the one and only God, a Spiritual Being, whose characteristics and virtues show Him as an *awesome* God, glorious and gracious, majestic and merciful, yet also *unfathomable*, *incomparable*, and in His thoughts and ways and wisdom often *incomprehensible*. Indeed, who can fathom the greatness of His work of creation, who can comprehend His ways with this world, and who can compare His work of salvation to anything found in this world's religions! God is unique, holy, and awesome, and yet He has revealed Himself as *our God and our Father* when we believe in Jesus Christ and find our whole life in Him! That, too, is *incomprehensible* when you consider who we are as sinful people, as stubborn sinners, and as rebels quite often who know God yet do not do His will!

In this time and age, dear listeners, we will be able to obtain only a *small* knowledge of God, which already is awesome and glorious, powerful and majestic, comforting and encouraging. Yet, as the apostle Paul shares with us in his letter to the Corinthians, when the Lord Jesus returns and He will give all His believers to God, we will see God as He is! That will also be the time that *God will be everything to everyone* who *believes* and who began to live for God here and now already! May this series about knowing God be

the beginning of *your* quest to deepen your knowledge, so that *you* may grow in love to God and praise, worship, and glorify Him with His people in the church!