

## Confirming Our Confession – Characteristics of a Confessing Church - 1 Cor 1:1 - 9

An address given by Ian Weeks at the NSW ACC Meeting Sat 11<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

Writing to the Corinthian Christians, the Apostle Paul gives thanks to God “... *because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you.*” (1 Cor 1:6 NIV) What was this testimony that Paul refers to? In Acts Chapter 18 we discover that while in Corinth, Paul “*reasoned in the Synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks... that Jesus was the Christ*” (Acts 18:4,5). Paul’s testimony that was confirmed in the Corinthians was about Jesus: the Christ/Messiah.

Reading on in 1 Corinthians we also note that Paul’s preaching and teaching was about Christ crucified (1:23 & 2:2) – the power of God & the wisdom of God (making nonsense of any suggestion that the cross represents the failure of God!) – the fundamental confession of the Church. As a Confessing Movement, we join with Paul in this testimony – *Confessing the Lord Jesus Christ* - as our “motto” declares.

Paul thanks God that the Corinthians received this good news about Jesus the crucified Messiah – but how was it confirmed in them, and how is it confirmed in us? From 1 Corinthians 1:1 – 9, can I suggest five “fruits” or characteristics of a Church that confesses Christ crucified.

### **Characteristics of a Confessional Church:**

**1. Sanctified in Christ** - Holy in identity (v 2). We are unholy (sinful) people rescued by God’s grace in Christ and declared holy by God. This is the wonder of the Gospel! The guilty are declared innocent. The stained are washed pure through the amazing grace of God in Christ’s death and resurrection by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

**2. Called to be holy** - Holy in action (v 2). Having been declared holy by God, we are now called to be holy, to live out this holy new life in Christ. We are to demonstrate transformed lives by holy living – a change in behaviour (c/f 1 Cor 6:9 – 11 “...*what some of you were. But you were washed...*”).

I was greatly encouraged and excited to read the 2007 annual report of the ACC Discipleship & Evangelism Commission who stated their affirmation of “*5 Christian disciplines.....*”

1. *Close study of the Scriptures*
2. *Daily prayer*
3. *Regular participation in the worshipping community*
4. *evangelical doctrinal integrity*
5. *an accountable lifestyle consistent with scriptural holiness”*

O, how much we need to be reminded of these things, and live out the holiness that God calls us, so to bear witness to the testimony of Christ crucified! What a transformed denomination we would be if these 5 disciplines were taught, modelled and expected in our Churches!

**3. Recipients of God’s gifts** (vv 4,5,7) The Church has been enriched in every way, and blessed with every spiritual gift necessary for us to live out God’s calling upon us. I am convinced that even the smallest congregation has been given all the spiritual gifts necessary to function as the confessing people of God in that place. Rather than lamenting a seeming lack of “gifted people” in our small congregation, perhaps our challenge is to seek God’s leading in how God’s gifts can be identified in the congregation and used in testifying to Christ crucified.

**4. Hopeful** - Eagerly awaiting the Lord’s return (v 7). The Church is to use these gifts in ministry as we wait for the Lord Jesus to return. We long for that day when “*at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, ..and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...*” (Phil. 2:10,11), at the same time reminded that we are accountable to the coming Judge.

**5. Confident in God’s Faithfulness** (v 8,9). Finally, we wait with confidence knowing that God is faithful and will bring us to that promised end. God wants us there! Not only this, but Paul writes that God will strengthen us for the journey – the perseverance of the Church based on the faithfulness of God!

If we are serious about being a confessing movement, a confessing Church, then let us continually plead with God that we might display these 5 characteristics.