**The Apostolic rejection of binding and judging beyond Scripture.**

Text ~ 1 Cor. 4: 6, 7

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ. (1)

The administration of the Word, performed in your midst today congregation, carries a very extraordinary character. *Our being together in this place, as you sit and I stand here, is already proof of a traumatic separation. Authorized by your consistory and therefore acting on their behalf someone has spread the hands of blessing over you this morning.*

*The fact that he had lost the right to do so according to a church assembly, and yet (that) your consistory ordered and authorized him to do so in Christ’s name is itself proof of a traumatic break and the immediate restoration. Moreover the fact that in the week that is behind you, in your own church circle and fellowship, a proposal was presented for consideration and consequently accepted, following your own judgment, by the consistory. In this the break, and the restoration as well, are confessed and in that confession taken as the basis for further action*. Here again exposing reformation (*the situation 1944)* in its fearsomeness and seriousness and, God be thanked, also in its glory for the faith.

*So here we are.* Will the glory be a glory of faith? That means; the content of our faith itself. Then we may not give in to the tendency of our hearts for one second, to give free play to our own experience when laying a basis, to fly on our own wings, to use our own authority, our own judgment over the body(s) *(synod)* which once called us together in the past and now still calls for our repentance.

*And also* to give a verdict about ourselves *and about the man who stands before you,* notto pass judgment by our own insight. Because Paul would say to us that asserting above what is written is something forbidden in the church.

Not just acting against what is written is wrong, heresy, and so false doctrine. Not only is what is against it wrong, but also what is beyond it. Not to hold anything beyond what is written. This precept of Paul was a well known rule, a stock rule, a fixed theme in church and preaching, as appears from the original form of the text in which it was proscribed.

It was a slogan: nothing beyond what is written. And as Christ said, your “yes” be “yes” and your “no” be “no”. And what is more than that - but not necessarily opposed to - is from the evil one. So it is here also. What is written is written, what is revealed is revealed, and what is opposed to it as well; but what is beyond (over and above) that is from the evil one. No binding beyond scriptural binding, no verdict beyond the scriptural verdict, and no acts beyond scriptural acts. Whatever lies beyond it is from the evil one.

Because whatever proceeds from binding beyond scripture is offensive to God’s glory, a crime against God’s majesty. It is profanation of the church which is bound to promise and demand, to grace received and returned to God. Bound in His word and that alone. What authority has the church unless received, and accepted?

What use has she of her own power? What use of autarchy, unless it was given?

Therefore it is good in this hour we are together with fear and trembling to remain with the conviction that the reformation continues.

Good to hear the scriptural command which we will now explain further and which I take as theme. I will proclaim:

**The Apostolic refusal to move aside for extra-scriptural binding and judgment.**

Of this refusal I point out three things:

1) Its presence at the laying of the foundation of the church

2) Its necessity in preserving the foundation of the church

3) Its answer to the character of the foundation of the church.

Or to say it another way:

1) The first office bearers placed the cornerstone this way

2) The second group of office bearers used the cornerstone this way

3) All office bearers read the cornerstone this way.

**ONE**

In the text we have, as I already said, a refusal - an apostolic refusal that is, because the apostle Paul comes to say it - to be held up by, or move aside for, bindings and judgments which are extra-scriptural, which proceed from beyond what is written in God’s Word.

In the first place I would show that this refusal already existed at the laying down of the foundation of the church. That it was manifested consciously and recognized by the apostles as a demand of the Lord.

I read this idea in the first words of the text, where it says: “these things, brethren (what we just mentioned) I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos”. When Paul speaks to the Corinthians you must first properly consider the question: who are the two parties confronting each other?

On the one side there are Paul and Apollos and on the other the church of Corinth.

I should not say that in Paul we have to do with the special office bearer and with the church of Corinth with the office of all believers.

Corinth was a complete church which already had real elders and deacons, which also are special offices.

Also in that church true officials of Christ’s way had been appointed, which ruled and fed and could serve it. Feeding them in His name with the Word. There is not Paul and Appollos, office bearers of higher degree, opposed to the congregation, a small flock of common folk.

But it says this: on the one side Paul, an apostle and Apollos. One an apostle, called by Jesus Christ Himself, by special voice on the way to Damascus, who received his office once. And also Apollos, who helped him, these were the institutors - if I can say it inaccurately for a moment - of the New Testament church. This is said somewhat incorrectly, because the church of the New Covenant was not instituted on Pentecost, but was revealed as existing church in new form, in a new semblance, a new dispensation.

But as it is, still in that newness, in that new dispensation, in spreading out over the world of that time, Paul was the institutor of the church. He says so himself. He was the builder who laid the foundation of Christ’s teaching, and that teaching is the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets.

On the one side therefore Paul and Apollos, master builders of the church in its new form, of which Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. That building rose up in new glory over all the world on that cornerstone and not only with the Jews at Jerusalem but in every place of God’s own dominion.

Opposite this, on the other side is the church of Corinth. Not a small group of voiceless people but a complete church of Jesus Christ, built and instituted, planted and erected on the foundation by Paul and Apollos. The apostle with his aid Apollos on one side and on the other the church which was privileged to honor them as institutor, planter and waterer, as master builders who brought the extended blessings of Pentecost to every place of God’s own dominion, also in Corinth.

So Paul has a specific authority over the church of Corinth. It could be said broadly - in this context broadly - a certain moral authority. He had instituted the church, put things in proper order, appointed elders. He was the one man who was acknowledged as having spiritual guidance.

But Paul’s position can actually be more clearly defined by saying he had Apostolic authority. The apostles were men who had received an extraordinary office which later was not given to anyone. It died with the last apostle. It was a unique office in the church to spread the church over all the world, also to Corinth and also to Bergschenhoek, and to every place in God’s kingdom.

Paul comes to the congregation writing with this authority. Acting as apostle and also inspired in writing this letter by a very special working of God’s Holy Spirit, enlightening him to write God’s own infallible Word.

There was reason enough to exercise authority over this church. Because the church of Corinth was already becoming deformed and neglected in a startlingly short time. That beautiful building started to shake on its foundations and the Lord’s plant was in danger of shriveling and drying up. There were abominable sins in the church. Corinth was a city of unusual wealth, of riches from world trade and also from immorality, levity, etc.

And the church of Corinth is not yet - as no church is - in condition to avoid the influences of the outside world. Moreover the Corinthian church was filled with what we call “educated people”. Educated, that is, in the sense of Greek philosophy, which in those days, also in Corinth, was conducted in a lofty tone and simply disallowed anything spiritual. The Greek philosophers lived by the delusion that wisdom is from man himself. The eloquence of the philosophers was directed to enlighten the people through elegance, through the beauty and sparkle of ideas, preferably new. The latest ingenuity of Greek philosophy, which also influenced Corinth, claimed for itself the right to say on its own decree and authority that a certain thing has been given to someone (me) by a power from above. The heathens said: “the gods have given”, and the weak Christians said: “God has given” this feeling to me.

Whenever I feel something, it is wisdom from above, for I received it by inspiration from on high.

This tendency, first from the gentiles and later from Christian converts, to accept as wisdom not to be spoken against, whatever they sensed and ‘received’, also slew those in Corinth by the thousands during the coarse of centuries.

This is apparent from the haughtiness of the Corinthians.

Although Scripture binds to one foundation everywhere, the Corinthians tended to say pompously: ‘I find that that man preaches the best‘, or another says: ‘I find him the most eloquent‘. Another says: ‘I find Paul an uplifting figure, a person of spirit and powerful deeds’.

Or ‘I find Apollos much more attractive, a learned man from Egypt who says it so beautifully’. And a third says ‘I see Cefas as a fine man, someone rock solid, who was here earlier, before Paul who came later.

Then another said: ‘I am of Christ, he has set a fine program, I must keep myself with that and call myself after Christ in contrast to the others’.

So haughtiness came at some moment of inspiration via - what people called - promptings from above.

There was a group which ruined the church in order to organize factions where someone could receive inspiration from above. It was called rapture, but not rapture through the Holy Spirit. It was only the human spirit being put out of balance. I will only recognize the manifestation of the Spirit which indeed speaks in my heart what it has first spoken in Scripture, God’s Spirit will never contradict itself. I have to ask one thing to know if what I feel (pointing to the heart) is from Him. Does what I feel agree with what is stated (there, pointing to the Bible)? If yes, it is from God. If no, it is above scripture and so contrary to scripture.

Those are ways of the Spirit, in this way we know Spiritual prophecy, Spiritual inspiration, Spiritual fellowship. But in Corinth‘s party factions they had the inclination to say what is written is but the letter. What the bible states, for the bible is only from the Jews (now the Old Testament), is only the letter, writings, dead scripture. And they forgot to measure what they felt (in the heart) by what is written, and advanced the extra-biblical idioms as actually being of a higher level.

A text was but a text, but inspiration was inspiration you see, fine and aristocratic.

In this way the people of Corinth ended up gathering in factions, and those with the most manifestations were the ones the people grouped themselves with. The making of cells was determined by the question whether the manifestations were from the ‘spirit’.

For many people was a despised man, unable to speak well, making long, sometimes unfinished, sentences (Eph. 1).

And Apollos was a nice man but came from Egypt, a blusterer with fine words, but what he had learned from John the Baptist needed to be supplemented.

The third would say that the letter was too ‘literal‘.

And a fourth said: ‘I abandon all inspiration and bind myself to my own feelings for they are divine enough‘.

Now when the church threatened to disintegrate into cliques, Paul comes to punish it and so to restore it. He says “that things are not going well, for when they exert extra-scriptural binding they differ from what I did when I instituted the church.”

“In building the church I deliberately kept my office safe and clear from all extra-scriptural binding and judgment”. This is what Paul says when he says, “these things (meaning the things of verse 1-5) I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos.”

Paul says “the things of verses one to five I have proposed in my instruction, but my instruction of verses 1 to 5 are also an illustration of what Apollos and myself have already done at the institution of the church.

My instruction - verse 1 to 5 - is meant as a general instruction, although it was also a personal illustration of what I felt and did when I acted”.

The big question is therefore: What are the things which Paul brings to the foreground in his picture of the framework wherein Apollos and him worked in the institution of the church.

Let us summarize by reading verses 1 to 5.

Verse 1 says: “Let a man consider us so, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” What was hidden, for many centuries from Israel of old, is made known and revealed by Christ’s resurrection from the dead at Easter and afterwards.

Now congregation, we were the servants and stewards of those mysteries of God.

That is a strange idea; being stewards of God’s Word. A steward is someone who must manage the property of a rich gentleman. Every steward must do two things, first he must manage the goods and give everyone the portion coming to them, and second he must make note of the regulations, the instructions to which he is bound. For every ordinary steward has instructions to follow in order to carry out his office. He is bound to them and he may, living by the instructions, oversee the goods of his lord.

But, with *these* stewards (the apostles) we find *this* peculiarity; that the goods they must oversee, contain, at the same time, their instructions .

A conventional steward has two things. First to administer the goods, and additionally to obtain his instructions. And his boss reminds him that he will hold him to his instructions, do not change them, I will take care of them.

But God has entrusted the administration, and especially the studying of His own Word as well, for the institutors of the church. The steward’s instructions are contained in that Word. The Word, which tells the church that it has the promises of grace, also states what the church itself must do and demand.

It tells what the church has in her assembling, it also states what she has within her authority.

It tells what the church has in her being instituted, also what she has and receives in her becoming instituted.

These stewards must now attend to their own instructions. Ordinarily it is difficult enough to be steward, but it is much more difficult to be stewards according to the doctrine of Scripture.

For Scripture judges the church, and the preachers.

Scripture is instruction for the congregation, but also instruction for its builders.

It is the great focus of certainty which thunders to every steward; Consider it well child of man, you tend to Scripture, administer your own orders, your own instructions. Therefore be careful that you do not assume them on your own authority, never by anything beyond scripture.

When you do that then your instructions are extra-scriptural, something is added to Scripture, a degeneration of the entrusted “estate“.

It is spoiling your own assigned “assets”, contaminating your own “field” with poison.

Your life as steward depends on remaining faithful to the Word. Therefore Paul, when instituting the church, is ruled by the idea of being a steward of the Scriptures.

He says; I preached this ordinary sermon in a normal way, but I fitted it to and set it clearly within the framework of Paul and Apollos building your church together. And we did it in such a way as not to be bound to any tie except the Scriptural one.

Therefore Paul says they are allowed to judge him according to their pleasure. They said: “Paul is flawed“, and have made their verdict saying: “we support him for this and oppose him for that“. As important self-empowered Corinthians we will observe Paul from the top down. But Paul replies that it is the least of his concerns if he is judged and bound to that judgment. Meaning “this is no grist for the mill”. To be judged by them is of the least significance.

Yes, says Paul, “to be judged by human judgment is indeed of no concern”.

In Greek it reads; ‘a human day’. For me it is the least, it is no grist for the mill for me, it doesn’t change me if there is a human day, a day of judgment by men. As far as Paul is concerned there is no state-judge and no church-judge investigating Paul which could make him change course.

For Paul is not bound to the human courts of chapter 4: 3. A human “day” is different then a Godly “day” in which the Lord sends fire on the church. And the fire which he blasts upon the church will scorch everything built on the church’s foundation which can not withstand the fire; hay, rosewood, straw in the walls, it burns completely. It is flammable material, which burns on the day of judgment, even if it is brought into the framework of the church’s foundation.

What remains is the foundation of Christ Jesus, the old doctrine, the eternal truth. And if Paul says; ‘I have built and continued building, have planted and finished building, then he knows this; eventually there comes a day when that work is subjected to the flames of judgment from above.

Against that day of God the day of man can not do much harm to Paul.

For every human judgment day must - to be a judgment day - bind where God binds, shut where he shuts.

Must administer the power of the keys according to His own Word, must ascertain that the contents of the faith are the gospel of salvation.

For then, and only then, can the church say; “if I turn the key of the church door here on earth, then God turns the key in the heavenly gate”.

**When the church in her judgment, in her binding, in her verdict concerning Paul, or whoever, ever makes herself loose from the written Word**

**and goes beyond the Three Forms of Unity which are based on the Bible**

**adding something of which she can never say ‘thus says God absolutely”,**

**yet claiming it to be binding,**

**then the church plays with and rattles the keys instead of using them in His name.**

Then the binding on earth becomes a caricature of the binding in heaven.

Then fear and trembling is gone. We get a church which says today: “away with you”!

We withhold from you the right of the Holy Supper, baptism and preaching”, and who says a week later: “come join the conference table, we are a Calvinist association, and we teach the pluriformity of the church.”

And driving you off today, tomorrow they say: “provided you are in (at least) another church you are a distinguished gentleman.” This is the terrible extra-scriptural binding which Paul refuses to acknowledge.

And when Paul says “I have never even judged myself”, that means to say: I, Paul have not enough skill to make adequate judgment over my own heart, my own visions, my own motives. Even I will put no extra-scriptural binding on the man Paul. I tell you Corinthians, turn away from these things, I turn away from them myself. Later the Lord will judge. And when I work today I must be aware of the requirement to bind on earth according to the written Word.

Therefore you Corinthians, in the building of every church I reject the steward who is steward according to his own insight.

I know that God will later bring to light what is hidden,

but now still binds to His own written Word, therefore I reject every binding and judgment which goes beyond the Bible and adds to it when building and tending the church. I accept no condemning nor freeing verdict from beyond Scripture.

And it is these things that Paul has always employed with fear and reverence, and speaking in the general course of things sees as the framework in which both men of Corinth, himself and Apollos, have worked in laying the foundation of the church.

Congregation of Bergsenhoek, it was the grace of God that especially Paul and Apollos could do this . If there were any people in whom the disposition existed, who were predisposed to bind beyond the Bible it was these two. Paul and Apollos.

For Paul was raised up with bindings outside of and beyond the Bible. He was a student of Prof. Gamaliel, a predecessor of the Pharisees, an expert on binding beyond the Bible. The Pharisees were slick and said; ‘it says this in the bible but we will add some more paragraphs’.

Today this student of the Pharisees, the lively mentor of the Pharisee professor, who was spoon fed extra-scriptural binding, says; ‘I have learned not to bind, neither you nor myself. Also to not let myself, not by you or myself, be bound or judged, neither good nor bad, by things above and beyond the Bible.

Bury me with ribbons or condemn me with an ecclesiastical verdict.

But when it comes from anything beyond Scripture, I say; “no” against that praise or against that reproach. In my preaching, in my home visits, in my church discipline, I will not be bound to any of your verdicts that are not clearly pulled from the well of Scripture.

No; I will not be bound to any verdict of which you do not have the courage to say it is true, that it is stated here and here in the written Word.

I bind myself to the Three Forms of Unity which are from the Bible and the rest I will allow to fall overboard.

It is grace when Paul speaks so. If there ever was a man who could understand Corinth and its weaknesses it was Paul.

There was a woman in Corinth who said: “brothers and sisters, I have received this and that from the Lord, I was in the seventh heaven.

And later another man says the same, and tomorrow yet another, and then a fourth.

Paul knew all about it. He was also in the third heaven, yes today we would say in the seventh heaven. Taken up above the clouds. He also knew of visions, also heavenly vistas. The curtains above were also opened for him. He saw unspeakable things with God.

If ever there was a person who experienced movement by the Spirit, the exultation of being thrust above the earth, it was Paul, who was elevated up to the third heaven.

But he returned and said: “remember, I only bind myself to the letter; ‘it is written’.” I do not tell of the visions I experienced. I do not tell you what I have seen.

Paul gets a thorn in the flesh, a chronic pain or disease which hindered him by sucking away the enjoyment in his own pleasure of spiritual ecstasy.

“No”, Paul says, “ I must not make too much of myself here. I am officially bound to the letter and to that only. You Corinthians must do likewise. I, Paul have said what I myself have accepted, and applied, as God’s own will”.

It is the grace of God if he does not let himself be bound.

Also Apollos, if he binds himself to the Bible. To half the Bible, because there was then only the Old Testament, there was no other. For him it is also extra-ordinary grace.

Just imagine; he was a student of Egyptian professors, and these were important gentlemen. He knew Egyptian culture, the schools of his time from where the call of learning went out over the whole world. A smart pupil, and a fine preacher, a fine orator. The form and content of his speech were well taken care of. An intellectual with excellent mental training. Someone with the urge to let his mind play with thoughts of fancy.

There is a temptation in being able to perpetrate mind games. You could become enamored with words and opinions. So it is grace when such a man binds himself to Scripture. Especially for one who must still learn. One could say: ‘a young man coming new into the church‘. Well known in Egypt, an apprentice in the church.

He only knew the knowledge of the biblical message from the teachings of John the Baptist when he came to Aquila and Priscilla. But he hears that he has very much to learn. And so he comes to Corinth to learn how to preach, and, although an apprentice immediately practices the laying on of hands.

He is in office, he is a minister of the church. That is possible, because Apollos, the orator, binds himself to what is written and that makes it possible. He binds himself to what it says, and then it goes well. The pupil is teacher, because he learned the one thing: Not beyond what is written.

When such a man comes alongside of Paul they can both go about instituting the church, laying the foundation. Paul with visions, Apollos without.

Paul the inauspicious orator, the man with weak words,

Apollos, an charming gentleman with a fine voice and fitting gestures and a beautifully divided sermon.

Paul, who comes from the Pharisees, from his professor Gamaliel.

Apollos who comes from Egypt and who had taken in its professors.

The one from old Israel, the other from cultured Egypt. These two come together in Greece and plant, on Greece’s own mountains, the banner of Christ. And they say: ‘we are going to lay the foundation and remember that the stones of the foundation have the inscription; Speak only the what is written and no more’.

In this way God can do wonders in the church and those who institute her. The greatest wonder was that especially these two man made the rejection of extra-scriptural binding and judgment their own slogan at the laying of the foundation of the church.

**TWO**

And I do not say that we have to become like a little Paul and a little Apollos today (Aug 20, 1944). We will not even follow their example. I only say that what they did was - especially in their acting - following the corporate line.

“That universal instruction,” Paul says in point one “I have figuratively transferred to Apollos and me.

Remember rather that we did not come on our own authority, but it was already there before we began, it is a scriptural demand.

So do not imitate, but in the ongoing building of the church you must reach back for what was received from those Writings which were there before Paul and Apollos.”

So in point two it is: “I have done it for your sake, so that you, the church, would learn from us, not to follow whatever is beyond what is written. That you do not, each for the other‘s sake, exalt yourself over and against the other”.

Paul and Apollos did the first with the laying of the foundation and with the ongoing building of the church. The same instruction that Paul used in its institution applies to preserving that foundation.

I say it for your sake, elders, rule the church in this manner.

Cut off everyone as soon as he says; I have heard it from within, it is in order.

Cut off everyone, who says: I like that brother, he is to my taste.

Cut, consistory, and congregation, bind yourself to what the consistory tells you.

For your sake I (Schilder) have spoken verses 1 to 5, for the sake of the whole church, built and standing on the foundation once laid: CHRIST JESUS.

The old rules apply. Today, with each new formation of the church, the old rule is: reject the tendency to move aside for extra-scriptural binding and doctrine and judgment.

Not one step aside, even if it may cost sacrifice.

Not aside, even if you experience the absolute vileness of impeachment.

Not aside, for it affects the foundation of the church, it turns the building up of the church into an add on.

Therefore you must learn from our example, and learn from our building anew, that the church rule is: nothing beyond what is written!

That is a saying which received a short summary, meaning: do not go beyond the Old Testament. There was no New Testament in those days.

So remember congregation, how powerfully God bound the spirits of His servants.

Everything cried for the New Covenant: the Gospel of Luke came, the Letter’s of Paul and the Revelation of John. There was a call for the new.

The new was already there in Christ, but it still had to be written and made readable for the church. The “new” is in the new order. The Spirit had, in part, already directed new pens with the coming of the New Covenant. And in that time of the new, bursting in all directions, Paul himself says that not a single letter can be written, even of the Bible, or it must conform to the line of the Old Testament. All of today’s knowledge, also in Corinth, is bound to what the prophets of Israel have said.

Greek philosophers, bow before Isaiah and Amos, cowmen, because the Spirit has spoken with authority through them .

Athenian aristocrats, bow before king David with his psalms and shepherd past, the Spirit spoke by him.

All you who swear of being inspired, speak of the letter instead.

And the church later, when it makes the New Testament canon, can accept no letter from James, or of Paul unless those letters, according to the Spirit’s witness, agree with and are already contained in the Writings of the old Testament.

The Spirit binds here, the one who can and does do it.

Only now He, when He inspires Paul, grants or allows no letter of the Bible of the New Covenant to be acknowledged without verification to what was already written.

And if the church wants to learn, it must also in speaking and discipline bind itself to what is written. It must learn that. And learning starts with being a pupil-of-the-master.

That means to proceed step by step by self-exertion and investigation.

The Savior learned through what He suffered and suffering is most often the quickest way to learn something.

Christ also had to learn through suffering, just as Paul must learn by the circumcision of the flesh, through the crucifixion of his cleverness. And Apollos as quickly, and the whole church must learn through bitter struggle, also today. We learn by the hard road of discipline and judgment, by the of loss of secure tenure. So we learn.

We learn what we have already established: no binding above what is written.

We learn to be serious with church discipline. Be careful and don’t say this is what is written when you are not sure of it, also when binding candidates.

You must reject every formulation that binds as if it were perhaps revelation of the Lord, also doctrinal declarations.

Better to decline formulations as binding if we are uncertain whether it says so clearly in Scripture, than to say ‘it might be true‘.

The church does not live by chance opportunity, but by the sure mercies of David.

Paul had said all this against the haughtiness of the Corinthians. What do you get if you bind in this manner, if you transcend the Bible and accept other bonds as binding?

You get division and no binding at all.

You get a rift.

And from whom?

Not from the one who says: I refuse that binding. For he says “I reject it”, keeps to the old rule, the slogan which read “not beyond what was written”.

But, the tear comes from him who binds where God does not bind.

If the church, in its own speaking and silence stands or falls with Gods speaking or silence, well, then the rift is made by him who speaks beyond the speaking of God, - even if by chance he was right. He does not prophecy with solid, unmovable certainty.

He tried the keys, but has not administered them. Trying them is not stewardship of the mysteries and results in pompousness.

For what is advantageous for one may be disadvantageous for the other.

For one it is beneficial, but for another hostile, to his hurt.

Then one says: ‘I am for Paul, against Apollos’, and another turns it around.

Someone says: ‘I am with the brother, the sister who experienced it with such beautiful visions’, and against this another says: “I must first see proof that it says so in the Bible”.

Then comes haughtiness, and division, and party gossip.

But no longer a church. There is propensity for particular favorites and no unity in a legitimate sense for the church and her foundation.

That is the regression in Corinth after only a few months, and with us after (seventy) years.

It is already there with haughtiness, when we swear by the tradition of a ‘school’ of a deceased professor, and binding to a concept not prescribed by the heavenly Judge. Let scholastic binding remain off limits, the same goes for hierarchical binding, ruling from on high with human authority.

Therefore Paul adds; so that no one brings heresies into the church opposed to the building of the church, and import a rift in the name of love and rest and binding which is not according to the Bible.

**THREE**

When Paul himself binds accordingly, as first office bearer, with Apollos, when he lays the foundation, he does so with a call upon the old, and so binds the church to preserving its foundation and structure.

“Because“, says Paul, “every office bearer, who acts, sooner or later, that is I-myself and also Apollos, and later you or another who comes after, every office bearer reads in that inscription of the church-foundation my rule for today.”

For, and now Paul comes in verse 7 to the powerful, reformed, Calvinistic theme of free grace:

“who makes you differ, and what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”

That is the theme of free grace, the elemental reformed axiom, the slogan of everyone who knows Calvin. Everything from grace, not from works, so that no one boasts. Not a single human store from which the gold is mined with one’s private spade.

Every hand filled, yes, but from above, through and by the treasures of grace. Not from us, but everything from God.

Mere grace, free and elected, all of it received. That is the refrain inscribed above the church’s foundation.

“Because“, Paul says, “it stands fast and true, the foundation of God, having as number one this seal: the Lord knows, by election, by predestination - in advance through His own will, those who are His.

And only then comes number two: the inscription based on election that everyone known of the Lord by free grace must do away with sin.

Sanctification? Good. But it is not a spontaneous deed, but a fruit of justification.”

Paul reads into the foundation of the church what he inscribes here. He reads what was already written there. Because, noteworthy enough, the man, who laid the foundation of this second temple, recalls - perhaps consciously - a word from David when he only contemplated the coming foundation of the first temple.

When David, before Solomon, already sees and designs - in the spirit and on paper - and collecting and receiving gifts that are coming in, then David comes forward publicly saying: “Lord we thank Thee for these gifts“.

“It was all from Thee and therefore we give it back. It was from Thee, Lord.

And later it is God’s gold on the temple that shines in the sun.

When the temple gold above the ark in the holy of holies and the gold curtain become visible that is from Thee.

Our hands are full, but Thou Lord have filled them from Thy own treasure chambers”.

The saying “free grace” is therefore written above the walls of Jericho, which finally collapsed by faith. It was stated above David’s and Solomon’s temple even before it was built. The spirit of David burnt those letters “free grace” into it before even one stone was cemented in. And when the temple disappears into nothing, the temple is gone but the inscription remains. And when Paul and Apollos go to institute a church here, and there, and also in Bergschenhoek, the temple can be gone as far as the stones are concerned. But the inscription “free grace” still stands written in the heart, because it is written in God’s written Word of the Old and now also of the New Testament.

Therefore if that is true, then “free grace” is living from God’s hands,

if it is true, “election without any basis in you and me“, then why do we boast, we poor church people as if we had something in ourselves?

Corinth said; “I have something within myself. Athens says: “the philosopher has it in himself and Egypt says the same.

Paul’s teacher, Gamaliel, says: “a man is fine through the gifts of his own discovery. He is himself the mine from which he digs the gold on his own authority, his own fountain and the water gushes from his own reservoir.

“No“, Paul says, Gamaliel may get out of the way now.

“No”, says Apollos, the wise of Egypt may also perish.

God laughs at both. “What do you have that you have not received?”

And if everything is received, is pure gift from God, we can never say: “I am distinguished on my own account”. Nothing in or from myself can ever elevate me above another. Whoever is lifted up is first cast down. Whoever returns to his house with honor has first left it in scorn. Only the way of humiliation is the way of exaltation.

And every building of the church, old or new,

every building in the old design, which must disappear,

or the new, which is actually old,

has in every aspect to bind itself to the basic thought that everything is free grace.

In verse 7 Paul carries on in a different language then in verse 6. In verse 6 it says: you people” (plural), for “your sakes: (plural). But in verse 7 it is written in the singular: “you”. Who distinguishes you, what do you have, that is not received?

Going from the plural by which he addresses the church, he comes to the singular:

You, individual, you baptized person, what do you have, child and man and woman of the church, what have you, if you had not received it?

And if it is received, do not boast, as if you had found it. Accept it as grace and so become fellow stewards, each in his own, steward of your own instructions, from Holy Writ.

Administer the law through the gospel, bind the two parts of the covenant, promise and obligation, together. Together these are and must remain one whole. Then go the way God points out, rejecting every extra-scriptural binding, but say with an eye to Scripture: “the letter kills but the Spirit using that letter makes alive.

Separated from the Spirit the letter strikes dead.

The Old Testament letter, separated from the New Testament which explains and develops it, kills. But the Spirit, which accepts and binds both covenants together makes the Word alive in both“.

And whoever grasps this remains at peace no matter what happens. Even if from a human prospect and view he goes into the night he stands rich and full in the day of grace. He says; “now, while there is time administer the old rule. Now, take the rule for yourself and submit to it. For everything you have, is received. And who has received the one, who has the one thing what counts, will later receive abundance. But whoever does not have the one, in the acquittal of God’s Word, from him is taken what he has“.

And blessed he is who is not offended by this church-rule, but walks instead according to that rule, that canon. There will be peace over them, and Israel’s God as well, also in Bergschenhoek. **Amen**

1) Sermon held on Sunday August 20, 1944 at Bergschenhoek. It is the first sermon Prof. K. Schilder held after the liberation.

2) Read: 1 Cor. 3: 18-4: 7 Text: 1 Cor. 4; 6, 7

Sing: Ps. 122: 2, Ps. 101: 2, Ps. 75: 3, 4, Ps. 75; 6, Ps. 56: 4 (bop)

3) *Prayer before the sermon.*

Holy Father we come to Thee this morning, and first we come to give heartfelt thanks for it, that we are here, that we are here, in the gathering of Thy church,

That we are here, in an assembling of Thy church, which is undisturbed, which knows its richness that Christ has poured out, and which has enough by it, that it is in itself the body of Christ. Not a part of the body, which is spread over country and world and has little churches here and there. But the body of Christ, that is revealed here, that is touchable and has an address, recognized by people, recognized by the angels and by God Himself.

And also willing to acknowledge thankfully that we are here. That we are here as members of Thy church, who find their joy in Thy service and who know their own sin and confess them before Thee. Nevertheless knowing that the consciousness of our own sin is only genuine when at the same time we continue with fixed resolve to faithfully perform what Thou demanded of us, and to hold fast those promises pledged to us.

Also him, who now may lead this service, thanks Thee, that again for the first time after a long period has received a new opportunity. And to be newly placed by Thee in the midst of Thy people in this place, where memories are awakened.

We pray Thee to grant us to see all these things as real and to give childlike thanks. Let us deal carefully, considering this critical time in which we all through Thy wisdom are involved. Let us deal only on the grounds of what is written, rejecting each extra-scriptural binding and also rejecting every extra-scriptural verdict as already being beyond Scripture, thereby showing the extra-scriptural to be unscriptural. Because Thy Word tells us not to think beyond what is written, and not judge beyond what is written and not bind beyond what is written.

And if we must suffer persecution make us faithful; if due to enforcement a breach must be made, where we would prefer not to see a breach but rather a binding according to the above rule. Let us not move aside but hold onto Thy Word, also in our day, in the churches that we have for so long seen as blessed by Thee, where there is now much unrest. Oh, let the future of all churches be assigned to Thee by its office bearers and members; and let us return, not to this one or that one but to the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, of which the ultimate cornerstone is JESUS CHRIST.

So that Thy people may gather in Thy name,

for where two or three, the smallest plural possible, are gathered;

In the great continuity, in the strong decree of Thy presence, Jesus Christ, in Thy name,

Thou art there in the midst of them and will continue the line there which Thou hast drawn before their eyes with the pen of Thy Script.

The line pointed out by the Apostles and Prophets. It is a great thing to profess that we stand on that line; that we build on that foundation that has once been planted and no one else can or may plant. Let us not accept this task too easily, but do everything we do, and have already done in principle, with fear and trembling. Acknowledging Thee as Judge, also over these things, and as Comforter for the cares that arise, as a King feared by us, as Lord over every flock which is gathered under the one Shepherd. Bless the administration of the Word today, here and elsewhere. Work repentance, especially in regard to church, where repentance is necessary. Let there possibly be a return to Thy own Word, also where in our estimation the Synod of the Reformed Churches has erred. Which shuts where Thou hast not shut; which opens according to their own will and not only according to Thy command. Which forbids where thou hast allowed and made servants of those made free in Christ Jesus.

Lord, think of the assembly, where and when it assembles, and may it yet possibly return the order and restore what is broken. Lord, if Thy will is otherwise let us not look to the left or right but continue in Thy power which is complete in the knowledge of our weakness. Make everyone of us, also in the consistory here, and everyone who carries the office of all believers, faithful. Each to his own, so that Thy name is acknowledged, so that the pulpit is ruled by Thy Word, and that alone. So that the baptismal font carries the inscription of Thy written Word. So that the Lord’s table conveys the maxim which Thou taught Thyself, this maxim and this seal, this permanent foundation of God that the Lord knows those who are His and that everyone who names the name of Christ has to keep away from all, even churchly, unrighteousness.

Hear us in our prayer, Father, and do everything for us, also for land and people, for the queen and her household, our government, for Christ Jesus sake. Whom we confess and honor as King, Prophet and Priest, by Thy anointing. Amen.