

LITURGICAL PRAYER OF CONFESSION

John and Elaine McLachlan 31 July 2016

Churches having a liturgical tradition normally use a "general confession" to be recited by the congregation. This is usually published in a denominational prayer book and/or displayed using an overhead projector.

We are concerned that these prayers of confession suggest that those who are required to pray it, ie, the congregation, are habitual sinners. If a reasonable number of people within the congregation are understood to be saved, born-again believers, then these people, by God's grace, "have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness". (Romans 6:18) "Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord". (Romans 6:22-23 NIV) "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" ... "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:17 & 21) "Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4)

On Good Friday 2015 we attended a Sydney suburban evangelical Anglican church where liturgical tradition is respected and maintained. The following congregational confession was used in the Holy Communion service:

O Christ, we are stripped bare by your suffering.
You know the secrets of our hearts,
and those we keep even from ourselves.
Forgive all that needs to be forgiven,
heal all that needs to be healed,
awaken all the good that sleeps in us,
banish all the fears that paralyse us.
Put the power of your cross into our lives for ever,
and clothe us with hope and love.

The Apostle Paul, addressing the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, said: "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through Him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38,39) Paul, farewelling the Ephesian elders, said: "I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts 20:32)

Paul, to the church in Corinth, wrote: "He [Jesus] will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful." (1 Corinthians 1:8-9)

The above prayer adequately recognises the grace of God shown to born-again believers. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no-one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9) We who are diligent as followers of our Lord Jesus Christ need to ensure that our standing in Him is not demeaned by liturgy that negates Bible truth. We need to be certain that the words of Jesus are a reality in our lives: "I tell you the truth, no-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." (John 3:3)