

July 2, 2019

To: The Consistory of Grace Protestant Reformed Church
c/o Elder Larry Meulenberg, Clerk
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Dear brethren,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I humbly write to protest a sermon preached by Rev. Van Overloop on Sunday evening, June 23 in Faith Protestant Reformed Church. The text was Revelation 3:14-22, "The Church of Christ at Laodicea." The sermon can be found at <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=62319230165131>.

In this sermon, Rev. Van Overloop taught that there is a condition for our fellowship with Christ. From the sermon (at around the 44:00 minute mark):

When He says in verse 20, "If any man will hear my voice," He's not establishing, of course, a condition. There are none. But He is talking about, not the condition to establish a union. But He is establishing a condition that deals with communion. Not union. That's grace. It's all grace. Only grace. But communion – fellowship.

Here, the sermon explicitly teaches conditional covenant fellowship with Christ. This is false doctrine, militating against the doctrine of our Reformed confessions that salvation is unconditional, as expressed by our Declaration of Principles.

[The Protestant Reformed Churches teach on the basis of the same confessions] That faith is not a prerequisite or condition unto salvation, but a gift of God, and a God-given instrument whereby we appropriate the salvation in Christ. This is plainly taught in the following parts of our confessions: [Here follow quotations from and references to The Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 7, QA 20; The Belgic Confession, Articles 22-35; and the Canons of Dordt, Head III/IV, Articles 10, 14].

Declaration of Principles, II.C., p. 423-424 of the green hardcover study edition of *The Confessions and Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (2005).

The sermon's doctrinal error is especially clear and grievous because of the *contrast* that the sermon teaches between unconditional union with Christ and conditional communion with Christ. "But He is talking about, not the condition to establish a union. But He is establishing a condition that deals with communion. Not union. That's grace. It's all grace. Only grace. But communion – fellowship."

According to the sermon, our union with Christ is established by grace, all grace, only grace, and thus is unconditional. In *contrast* to that, our communion with Christ is said to be conditional. If union with Christ is unconditional because it is grace, all grace, only grace, then conditional communion with Christ must be something other than grace, all grace, only grace.

In order to see how enormous this error is, one only has to ask why the sermon rejected conditions when it comes to union with Christ. The answer is that if union with Christ were conditional, then union with Christ *would depend upon man*. It *would not be gracious*. But when the sermon then immediately

makes communion with Christ conditional, it is inescapably teaching that fellowship *depends upon man and is not gracious*. It is establishing the very same error regarding communion with Christ that it rejected regarding union with Christ.

This contrast demonstrates that the sermon's error is not merely the bare use of the ill-advised word "condition," which in itself would have been objectionable and grievous for a Protestant Reformed sermon in the year 2019. Rather, the contrast demonstrates that the sermon's error is the false doctrine of conditional theology. By rejecting conditions in one part of our salvation (union with Christ) and then embracing conditions in another part of our salvation (communion with Christ), the sermon teaches man's merit and denies God's grace.

This doctrinal error of the sermon must be repented of and repudiated.

Brethren, I submit this protest in the mutual love that we have for the truth of God's unconditional covenant, and an earnest desire to see this truth preserved in the PRC. I also submit this protest in love for Rev. Van Overloop, and an earnest desire to see him restored from his error. I also submit this protest in love for Faith PRC, Grace PRC, and the entire Protestant Reformed denomination, and an earnest desire that we not be troubled again by conditional theology.

Warmly in Christ,
Rev. Andy Lanning