

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE : SUNDAY 22 JANUARY 2012 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 121:1, 4

Let us commence this meeting with God by declaring openly to one another and to God:

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Beloved grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Psalm of praise: Psalm 149:1, 2

Prayer:

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation of the church, the authorities and the sinful world and appeal to God's promises**
- **General prayer**
- **Enlightenment from the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry of the Word.**

Amen

Psalm 119:12, 13

Scripture reading: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; Ephesians 5:21-32; Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 41

Scripture text: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Heidelberg Catechism:

Q. 108.

What does the seventh commandment teach us?

A.
That all uncleanness is accursed of God: (a)
and that therefore we must with all our hearts detest the same, (b)
and live chastely and temperately, (c)
whether in holy wedlock, or in single life. (d)

(a)

Lev.18:27 (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;)

Lev.18:28 That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations hat were before you.

(b)

Jude 1:23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

(c)

1 Thess.4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

1 Thess.4:4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

1 Thess.4:5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

(d)

Heb.13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

1 Cor.7:7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

1 Cor.7:8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

1 Cor.7:9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

1 Cor.7:27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

Q. 109.

Does God forbid in this commandment, only adultery, and such like gross sins?

A.

Since both our body and soul are temples of the holy Ghost, he commands us to preserve them pure and holy: therefore he forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, (a)

thoughts, desires, (b)

and whatever can entice men thereto. (c)

(a)

Eph.5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

Eph.5:4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

1 Cor.6:18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

1 Cor.6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

1 Cor.6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

(b)

Matt.5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

Matt.5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

(c)

Eph.5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
 1 Cor.15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

Theme: Because I am grateful I serve the Lord with my body and soul.

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ, when proclaiming from our Catechism the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ we naturally reach Sunday 41. Similarly when we are taught the Ten Commandments it goes without saying that the seventh Commandment has to be considered. The Holy Spirit drives us to testing our lives of gratitude against the seventh Commandment as well. Attempting to sidestep this will not yield any gain. In fact, should we not listen also to what the Lord teaches about our relationships and sexual lives, at one time or another the Lord will, in some kind of way, retaliate. Maybe our dodging as Christians to proclaim God's clear Word about relationships between sexes and sexual relationships has already caused the retaliation to start. We can confess our Christian dodging as an additional factor to the sexual ill treatment and misuse of women and children and to Aids amongst people of loose morals.

The Lord is definitely not unclear in His Word about human sexual life. But do not make the mistake of thinking that during a sermon dealing with the seventh Commandment all sorts of sensational information about human sin regarding the sexual has to be divulged. As it is, it has unluckily already happened that sermons have been misused in creating sensation by giving information regarding these sins.

But a healthy balance has to be maintained. We must not shy away from sermons about the seventh Commandment just because in the households of some believers it is still a disallowed subject. Our Lord does not mince words. Because He in fact created mankind as man and woman He, by means of His Word, teaches, about mankind's sexual relationships. On the other hand we must also not misuse sermons to generate sensation. The pulpit and the worshipping service is not a theatre stage or a thespian performance aimed at human pleasure. Between the two extremes the healthy balance is: During a sermon about the seventh Commandment nothing else than proclaiming Jesus Christ as our Saviour must be done. Furthermore the meaning of His salvation for the relationship between the two sexes must be pointed out.

Therefore, beloved, everything in the seventh Commandment, for the church of the New Testament times, deals with the following question: Is, in our relationship, Jesus Christ present or not? Here a relationship refers to a marriage, engagement or friendship. To enable each one of us in honestly answering this question to the face of God let us listen what the Lord teaches about the meaning of Christ's salvation to our marriage, engagement or friendship. This we do guided by the two matters as appearing in our Catechism: Firstly what is chastity and secondly how do you live chastely.

Brothers, sisters and children, to know what chastity is we must go back to the beginning. God created mankind to His image, He created them as man and woman. And by His indescribable grace He bound them together with the ties of marriage. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, quotes: "**For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.**" (Ephesians 5:31)

God instituted the wedding and in the wedding God blesses the man and wife and gives them a command. Through the wedding they must have children so that the earth may be filled with people. With their bodies the husband and wife have to be in service to God, expanding the human race. This is indeed God's purpose of the creation of mankind, He wants, because He is God Almighty, a nation of believers, serving and honoring Him.

But sin, in its violence, also assaulted the relationship between the two sexes. By the grace of God the wedding remained in existence, but inside and outside of wedlock, due to the massive blow stuck by sin throughout the relationship between man and woman, there is, till today, much grief and pain. The results of this massive blow by sin on the relationship between husband and wife is seen from the earliest times. Lamech is no longer satisfied with just one wife, he marries two. Amongst the Israelites it happens that some men were no longer satisfied with their own wives. Due to the hardness of their hearts divorces happen. Since those times, beloved, the results of sin still continue. In our times it manifests in extramarital affairs, homosexual and lesbian relationships and other similar offenses reaching the front pages of our newspapers.

But when the fullness of time arrived, God sent His Son. Christ came to redeem mankind from sin and this redemption is of cardinal importance to the relationship between husband and wife as well. The blood of Christ on the cross also brings order to the disorderly and chaotic relationships between husband and wife. Christ's intention of bringing back order to the marriage is revealed in a certain way by the wedding in Cana. By His presence at the wedding Jesus honors the wedding instituted by His Father. But further He also goes against the possible embarrassment and annoyance that could have been used by Satan at this wedding, by performing His first miracle. We can just imagine the sins the devil would have led the guests to at this wedding should Christ not have kept the peace by performing His miracle.

Eventually the arrival of Christ culminated into Him redeeming from sin and the devil's rule, His bride, the church, with His blood on the cross at Golgotha. Every man and woman in this bride was redeemed. The relationship of every one of them with God is repaired, and so also their relationship with each other. Therefore the following question faces us this evening: Is Christ present or not in your marriage, engagement or friendship?

Out of love for his church and every child of the Father, Christ, through the pen of Paul, wrote to us telling how a marriage where He is present as Redeemer looks like. In such a marriage the husband and wife, **due to respect for Christ, are subservient to each other**. The husband puts his wife in higher esteem than himself and the wife regards her husband in higher esteem than herself, because facing God, both stand as sinners cleansed by the blood of Christ. With God the husband does not enjoy preference because he is a man, and in the same way neither the wife because she is a woman.

But to the wife God gave specific grants and capabilities, and similarly also to the husband. They did not receive exactly similar grants and capabilities. With their specific grants they must serve, supplement and honor each other. As the head and heart of the body cannot take over each others functions, but must support each other so that the complete body may function properly, so in the same way the husband and wife in the wedding cannot take over each others functions. They are created to support each other so that the complete body of Christ can serve and honor God.

The wife must honor and respect her husband like the church honors and respects Christ. The husband must love his wife the same way Christ loves the church. Everything thus boils down to that the marriage of one man and one wife as God instituted it, must be a depiction of the marriage relationship between Christ and His bride, the church. Should the marriage relationship of believing husbands and wives depict the relationship between Christ and His church, then Christ is present in their marriage. And should Christ be present, the marriage is chaste and modest.

But any relationship between the two sexes, be it a marriage, engagement or just friendship where Christ is not present is an unchaste relationship. This means, beloved, unchasteness is more than just infidelity between husband and wife, a shotgun wedding, a triangular relationship or prostitution. The difference between chaste and unchaste lies in the answer to the question: Is Christ present or not in our relationship either inside or outside of the marriage? Therefore a marriage is not only unchaste when due to adultery, unfaithfulness or lack of love, it sinks. But all marriages, also those of believers, are unchaste when it no longer depicts the relationship between Christ and His church.

A marriage wherein Christ rules by His Spirit and Word will help the man and wife and support them in all matters relevant to the temporary and everlasting life. A believing man and wife do not marry each other just to be physically together, but to be true soul and spirit partners. They must support each other and help to serve and honor Christ as their Saviour. The shocking part is: should in the marriage a husband and wife only stick together in physical and temporary matters and never support and help each other in matters of the eternal life, then a continual adultery takes place. Then they are in each other's way on the small and narrow way and entrance.

This, brothers, sisters and children, means that a marriage, an engagement or normal friendship is only chaste when Christ, by way of His Spirit and Word, rules in it. All that now remain is for us to listen to what the Lord teaches about living chastely. In practice what does this mean?

Should a marriage before God only be chaste and modest if Christ is present therein, then a chaste relationship already starts at the choice of a life partner. It so happens that many of us have already chosen a life partner and that our young brothers and sisters in most cases are only in a friendship or are too young to now already make or want to make such a choice. But this will not prevent us from listening to what the Lord teaches.

Now the young brothers and sisters could say, and know this to be true, that they will definitely make the proper choice. Take care! When you are in love your mind is not always very sharp. Therefore listen carefully. You do not choose a life partner because the girl is beautiful or the man is rich. The first question to be put at the choice of a life partner is: Is this man or woman co-heir to the Kingdom of God? Is this man or woman a Christian?

Such a question may sound old-fashioned to many of today's people, but there are many believers, men and women, who married non-believers. And they try and justify their marriages to non-believers by saying that they, through the marriage, will bring the non-believer to the faith. Remember that we must not try to change the purpose of the wedding to something else than what God instituted it for. The wedding is not a hospital where sick people are cured, the wedding is not an evangelical or missionary exercise. Believers who want to justify their marriages to non-believers pretend as if they

have had a preview into God's hidden plan, whilst He, via His revealed Will teaches: **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.**

(2 Corinthians 6:14)

To alert us even more to the danger of weddings between believers and unbelievers the Lord reveals what happened to Solomon. His marriages to unbelieving women led to him also serving idols. This later on led to God tearing the kingdom of Israel into two. What purpose would it serve at the end should you have gotten the most beautiful wife or the richest man and due to that be eternally lost?

Beloved, we confess that we, not only in the marriage but also outside of it, have to live chastely and modest. Today pre-wedding and extra-marital sexual relationships as well as homosexual and lesbian relations are nearly everywhere considered to be normal. So-called experts even defend it. But our unchanging God clearly says: **You must have nothing to do with sexual promiscuity.** A promiscuous relationship before or outside the marriage or between two people of the same sex can never depict the relationship between Christ and His church. If the Father specifically prohibits such a relationship, the Son will never be present in it. Therefore a believer will never experience the blessing presence of his Saviour inside such a relationship.

Children of God, we confess in the first question and answer of our Catechism that **we, body and soul, belong to Jesus Christ, our Saviour.** He paid dearly in buying our soul and body from sin. And because our bodies belong to the Lord, He bought it to serve as temple for the Holy Spirit. Therefore we may not do what we like with our bodies. We are no longer in charge over our bodies. Should you live in a house belonging to somebody else, then you will not transgress the rules put by the owner. Our bodies belong to the Lord and He allows us to stay in them, therefore we may not transgress His rules about our bodies.

Seeing that our body and soul is a temple of the Holy Spirit, we may not, by all sorts of **deeds, words, gestures, thoughts, lusts and everything that may tempt us to be unchaste**, defile it. Our body and soul must be pure and holy. Shun all those things that may lead to an unchaste relationship. In fact, even more, we must flee from it like Joseph fled from the unfaithful wife of Potiphar.

To always avoid the matters and to flee from what could tempt us is a battle against sin. And it is not an easy battle. Many believers have already fallen in the battle against an unchaste life. Still it does not mean that it is a useless battle. We must not remain in sin.

In practice to live chaste it means to also truly repent a sin against the seventh Commandment and in gratitude seeking your life with Christ. In fact Christ ate with tax collectors and sinners and had discussions with prostitutes. And to the repentant prostitute that was brought before Him He said that He did not condemn her and added: **go and sin no more.**"(John 8:11) He forgave her sins and by the power of the Holy Spirit she was enabled to, from then onwards, do battle against sin.

Brothers, sisters and children, because our entire life, body and soul belongs to Him, God has a say about our entire life. He expensively bought us and the price was paid. Let us now, out of gratitude, serve the Lord with body and soul, and leave the sin and all matters tempting us to sin against the seventh Commandment and flee from it.

Amen!

Closing prayer.

Closing Song: Scripture Versification 9-1:8, 10, 11

The Lord bless and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you, the Lord turn His countenance to you and give peace.

Amen

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Scripture Modern King James Version