

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 4 APRIL 2010: EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 66:2

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 146:1

Prayer:

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation for 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 104:1+21

Scripture reading: 2 Corinthians 13.

Scripture text: 2 Corinthians 13:14 (13) and Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 8.

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

Each time we gather in a formal assembly with God, He blesses us.

- He does this twice: At the commencement and at the end of the assembly.
- He does this with the blessing of the presence of the Holy Trinity in our lives.

At your baptism God already gave you this blessing of the Holy Trinity:

- You belong to the Tri-une recreating God.
- He is the sole salvation-giving God who comforts you in all circumstances with whatever you may need.

Who is there that does not need the blessing of this Tri-une God? We often, in various circumstances, need the blessing of the Tri-une God to strengthen us:

- We sometimes stand at the grave of a dear one whom we entrust to the earth in the belief that he/she shall arise.
- At other times there is grief about our own sins.
- Or there is anxiety about a serious illness.
- We often feel threatened in some or other way.

It is only the blessing of the Holy Trinity that is so great that it can bring relief in these circumstances.

We divide this sermon into three parts. In each part we shall examine how each of the three Persons of our Single God strengthens and comforts us in life and in death.

1. The Son redeemed us.
2. The Father elected (predestined) us and keeps us.
3. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us.

1. The Son redeemed us.

Everyone who is honest with himself and before the Lord, knows that by nature he more readily consorts with the devil than with the Lord.

- Yet the Lord does not reject us.
- It is written that God gave up His own Son so that by this act we should acquire all God's grace:
 - **He who did not spare His own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?** (Romans 8:32) (see also John 3:16)

Now that the Lord's wrath over all our sins is satisfied, the relationship between us and Him is entirely different.

- After the Fall into sin we were simply sinners who had damaged the image of God we had in us and who had surrendered themselves to sin.
- Now, because of the atonement by the blood of Jesus Christ, there is such a tender relationship between us and God that He calls us His children.

Of course we are not the natural offspring of the Lord as we know this relationship to be on earth. But it is true that we are the Lord's own – His true property in time and eternity.

What does it mean to be children of God?

- Christ redeemed and freed our bodies and our souls from the power of death and the power of Satan.
- Simultaneously it means that He reconciled us with God the Father.

The Lord Jesus did more for us than making us children of God.

- He saved us from Satan and also saved us from ourselves.
- He redeemed us from our submissiveness to sin and our feelings of guilt when we have sinned.

The Lord Jesus also freed us from the violence of sin – for each sin carries in it the violence of hell – and with it the rule of the devil.

- Furthermore, we have been absolved of the guilt with which we stand before God because of these things.

This redemption by the Lord Jesus is also not incomplete as if we need to contribute something to it.

- It is also not conditional.
- He did so out of free will in the full power of His almighty.

Our total inability is set out in Psalm 116:3-4:

The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me;
I was overcome by trouble and sorrow.
Then I called on the Name of the LORD:
“O LORD, save me!”

For as long as we live in this dispensation, the redemption by the Lord Jesus will be the comfort and hope we need most, for we are not yet in the hereafter.

- In this life there are many bonds that tie us to pain, such as the seduction into sin.
- Or grief when the people closest to us die.
- We are often deeply disappointed in people when they wrong us.

If that was all that happened to us we could, perhaps, deal with it.

- The difficulty is that, the stronger your faith becomes, the more the venomous enemies which you acquire.
- They provoke you with heresy or they hinder your progress or block your promotion in your job.

That is why it is so necessary that every true believer should know each day that, in the protection of our Lord Jesus Christ, he/she has a future that rises above this daily grind into God's perfect glory.

2. To make the blessing of the Tri-une God more complete we now look at a matter which accompanies it, namely, the Father predestined us and keeps us.

The Lord's blessing in the Old Testament is descriptive of what the Lord's blessing means to mankind.

- From Genesis 12:2 we learn that the meaning of your life is tied to the Lord's blessing.
- The LORD said to Abram:
 - **“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.”**

From Genesis 49:25 it appears that the blessing of God Almighty causes the rain to fall from heaven.

- The water from fountains and boreholes is part of His blessing.
 - **“...because of your father's God, who helps you, because of the Almighty, who blesses you with blessings from the heavens above, blessings of the deep that lies below, blessings of the breast and womb.”**
- Deuteronomy 28:8 adds to this barns and everything we undertake:

- **“The LORD will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving you.”**
- What we tend to forget is that the Lord’s blessing also encompasses the country which He gives us. See Jeremiah 31:23:
 - **“This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘When I bring them back from captivity, the people in the land of Judah and in its towns will once again use the words: the LORD bless you , O righteous dwelling, O sacred mountain.’”**

Our redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ is in fact also keeping by the Father.

- We read in Ephesians 1:4 that, before the creation of the world, the Lord had already chosen us and that He had already then decided to sanctify us in Jesus Christ so that we would be blameless when we appear before Him on the day of judgement.

The Lord Jesus Himself tells us that He and the Father are ONE and that he who sees Him sees also the Father.

- It therefore stands to reason that the Father’s keeping of us is embedded in the atonement by Jesus Christ.
- Remember, for example, the prayer of the Lord Jesus when He prayed that of those whom the Father had given Him not one was lost. (John 17)

From the earliest days on God the Father wanted us to know that His blessing is on us every moment of our existence.

- Consider that He commanded that His blessing be officially confirmed on His people in the following words:
 - **“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn His face towards you and give you peace.”** (Numbers 6:24-26)
- The LORD said that in this way His Name would be put on the Israelites and He would bless them.

To the Lord we are, therefore, not just ordinary creatures.

- To Him we are so valuable that in His Counsel He determined that His Son was to die a cursed death in order that we might be saved.
- The result is that we may each day rely on the Lord’s protection.
- When we become depressed about anything that goes wrong or not according to expectations we may rest assured that the Lord and His protection is still with us.

That is why we true believers know that that there is no such thing as chance and that things happen and occur by chance.

- Every moment of my life is meticulously determined by my Heavenly Father.
- So meticulously that not even a hair shall fall from my head without the Father having determined it.
- We are thus assured thereof that we are not in the hands of blind fate – we exist within the limits of God’s Counsel.

It is necessary that we should know this because none of us is always strong.

- We are all subject to weaknesses.

- We can all lose our faith if we are not protected.
- No-one of us is so clever that he never errs.

3. The Father keeps us physically so that bodily and materially we may be healthy and well, but He also keeps us spiritually. Hence we consider in closing the following: The Holy Spirit sanctifies us.

The Holy Spirit ministers in the invisible world. He works in our hearts.

- He deals with our conscience, our mind and our insight.
- He causes us to understand what the Lord wants and what not.
- He guides us to act wisely.

What does this have to do with the blessing of the Holy Trinity?

- The blessing of the Holy Trinity is that the Holy Spirit sanctifies us.
- He guides us not only to live a more righteous life and to do less wrong,
- He also guides us so that we part with sin.
- He guides us to rebirth and to live a daily life of rebirth.

Let us put it differently: He transforms our heart and our conscience so that our handiwork is also fit for the building of God's kingdom.

What happens to somebody who lives each day with the fixed knowledge of this comfort, that the Holy Trinity protects and keeps him?

- Such a person becomes peaceful
- His life bears the fruits of faith, because he lives with a heart and mind enlightened by the Lord Himself.
- Put differently: The Holy Spirit vests the Counsel of the Father and the atonement by Jesus Christ in the people for whom it is intended.

Listen to the Lord Jesus' own words:

"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever –" (John 14:16)

"But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you." (John 14:26)

By His witness, His power and His indwelling in us, the Holy Spirit makes us prepared and willing to fight against sin continuously, and, should we fall, He makes us arise from wrong.

He makes us willing to fight our own inadequacies and to live for the Lord. It is written in Romans 8:15 -16 that the Holy Spirit guides us to pray and to know that we are children of God. (See also 1 Corinthians 2:12)

The Holy Spirit guides us so that through all adversity, poverty, illness, slander or injustice or whatever it may be, we keep our courage and keep on loving and serving God – to serve the Tri-Una God – and to remain comforted.

Let us read the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 8, together.

Lord's Day 8.

Q. 24.

How are these articles divided?

A.

Into three parts; the first is of God the Father, and our creation;
the second of God the Son, and our redemption;
the third of God the Holy Ghost, and our sanctification.

Q. 25.

Since there is but one only divine essence, (a) why speakest thou of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?

A.

Because God has so revealed himself in his word, (b) that these three distinct persons are the one only true and eternal God.

(a)

Deut.6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

Eph.4:6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Isa.44:6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.

Isa.45:5 I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:

1 Cor.8:4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

1 Cor.8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

(b)

Isa.61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

Gen.1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Gen.1:3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Ps.33:6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

Isa.48:16 Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

Ps.110:1 <<A Psalm of David.>> The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Matt.3:16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

Matt.3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Matt.28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

1 John 5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

Isa.6:1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

Isa.6:3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

John 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

John 15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

2 Cor.13:13 All the saints salute you.

Gal.4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Eph.2:18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Tit.3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Tit.3:6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;
Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 119:48+53.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Amen

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Scripture: New International Version