

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 29 MARCH 2009: EVENING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 4:3

*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 33:7

**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**

Hymn 1-2:1

**Scripture reading:** 2 Corinthians 6

**Scripture text:** 2 Corinthians 6:18 and Heidelberg Catechism Lord's day 9

**"I will be a Father to you, and you will be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."**

In the Catechism we find a question which starts: "What do you believe when you say..."

- It is about faith.
- The question we put to ourselves here is not what our opinion is or our thoughts are about what kind of Father God the Almighty is.
- Or what theory we have about His creation.

It is about your personal belief

- Hence the answer and your confession is so personal: "I believe..."

From a theological point of view we find various kinds of faith.

- Only two are applicable here – a true faith or a false faith.
- One kind of faith consists of someone knowing the truth but ignoring it.
  - That is the faith that Satan and his angels have
  - They know and believe that God the Father Almighty made heaven and earth

- But this knowledge does not inspire any awe in them
- They know and believe everything, but it means so little to them that they dare to fight God and try to take His kingship from Him.
- And everybody who confesses this but does not believe that the earth and all that is in it was made by God stands in the ranks behind Satan.

My salvation and your salvation is inextricably tied to our faith – to that what we believe of God.

- If I do not now see and confess that God is the origin of all things, how can I then believe in a life after death?
- If God is not the beginning, how can He then provide for a life after death?
- How can God be “my God and my Father” if I do not truly believe and confess these matters?

**...I will be a Father to you, and you will be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.**

The importance of this passage in Scripture and in our confession is that, amongst others, it emphasises the love that God the Father shows us.

- In the fact that all was made by Him is embedded the fact of my own existence.
- The fact that He still upholds it ensures not only my temporal existence but also gives the assurance that in love He provides for me eternal redemption from sin and hell.

God loves His people.

- That means that He loves you
- That is why, at creation, when He planned His eternal counsel, He included in it His predestination. (Ephesians 1:4-5)

Even when shortly after creation we broke away from God, He provided the Father’s love so that we not be left to ourselves.

- He so determined it in His counsel that we be saved from the devil.
- He immediately proclaimed that out of the seed of the woman One would come who would crush the serpent’s head.
- This promise was made to come true by God.

He sent His Son Jesus Christ to cast the devil down on earth.

- To do that He had to enter death, there to do battle personally with Satan.
- He did so and wrested Satan’s power from him when the Lord Jesus Christ arose from the dead alive.
- But it was more than only a victory over death. With that deed the Lord Jesus Christ with His blood and His life redeemed us from Satan and his power.

By this merit of the Son of God we were adopted as His children.

- That is why we again may speak of “Our Father which art in heaven.”
- That is how the Lord reveals Himself to us in the Bible - and not only in Scripture but also in the sacraments in which His covenant and death is confirmed to us: He is our Father who enfolds us in His boundless love.

That is why our confession shouts out our love for God:

- I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.
- I believe in the Almighty God who made heaven and earth to His greater glory – the Father who revealed His almighty in His creation in that we might live there.

- He made heaven for Himself and His angels and He upholds both it and the earth.

That is why the title **Almighty** is included in our confession.

- The fact that God created confirms His Almighty.
- It is not our confession that makes Him almighty, but His works compel us to confess His almighty.

We further know the almighty of God from His Counsel for in it we learn that God, according to an orderly plan, determined the way of history and creation and that everything happens accordingly.

- It teaches that there is no power that can change or stop the Counsel of God.
- God plans, for at the creation of man it was said: **“Let us make man in our image,..” US**
- The fact that God plans here tells us that God God planned and determined everything before creation in that it might remain unto eternity.

In contrast to this we stand – not only without almighty – totally powerless.

- We cannot create anything
- We cannot give life
- We cannot even rule the earth as God commanded us.

That is why the almighty of God is such a great comfort to us.

- This divine power drew me out of sin.
- At the end of time it will also command me to life bodily
- This almighty will keep me on the new earth eternally
- This divine almighty makes me a child of God – which I am unable to do by myself.

But our confession also contains a word of warning. Our life often is so bad that it shows clearly that we have forgotten the Almighty of God.

- Often we obstinately do wrong and ignore the fact that God will not tolerate it
- We include God and Satan in one life when we confess that we are Christians but live a life that stands in stark contrast to it.
- We act as if God cannot and will not punish our stubbornness.

In the passage we have read Paul asks the Greeks in Corinth how it is possible that with one hand they hold on to God and with the other they cling to sin.

- He says that it is impossible that God would form an alliance with Satan.
- This means that it is impossible for a faithful child of the Lord to live like the worldly people.

If we then confess that we believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, we must look at ourselves and see whether we live and look like people who belong to this God.

- The almighty of God – and His love – does not mean that He will continue to be tolerant towards sin.
- For the almighty of God has another side to it – that side of which we in our sin do not want to know: It is the judgement of God.

The almighty of God has very much to do with the last judgement!

- It is the almighty of God that casts into eternal hell the devil and death and the realm of death together with all those who sinned against God and refuse to repent.

- It is the almight of God that will seal unto eternity this condition of eternal death of these people and the angels with Satan as their chief.
- The almight of God ensures that for them no salvation will ever be possible.

Is our confession genuine? Is there unity between our confession and our daily life? Do we confess God and is our life proof that we are children of God who have forsaken the world?

- Do you, for example, confess that you subject yourself to the almight of God but your life shows that you rebel against your parents? Or that you are in revolutionary rebellion against other structures of authority?
- Or in the authority you exercise you seldom if ever consider the demands God makes on you?
- Or we confess that God is the highest authority but our life shows that our arrogance allows no place for God or anybody else above us.
- Or we confess the love of God and we confess that we forgive our neighbours their sins, but our intolerance and our nastiness towards other people proves otherwise.

Then you do not live according to the image of God the Father. Not His image expressing love and also not His image of grace.

There where your life is your heart and actual faith are also. It cannot be different.

- Do not delude yourself in thinking that your life may testify to the world and sin but that in truth your belief is in God the Father.
- It is impossible to worship the Almighty hypocritically.

Renounce the world. Serve God the Father, the Maker of heaven and earth to the best of your ability in that your confession and practise may be in agreement.

For God wants to be a Father to you and then you will be to Him sons and daughters.

The Creator looks at you. The Father provides. The Almighty gives you the eternal life.

Let us read the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's day 9 together:

**Question 26: What do you believe when you say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth"?**

**Answer: That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of nothing made heaven and earth, with all that is in them,(a) who likewise upholds and governs the same by His eternal counsel and providence,(b) is for the sake of Christ His Son my God and my Father(c), in whom I so trust, as to have no doubt that He will provide me with all things necessary for body and soul;(d) and further, that whatever evil He sends upon me in this vale of tears He will turn to my good;(e) for He is able to do it, being Almighty God,(f) and willing also, being a faithful Father.(g)**

**(a)Gen 1-2; Ex 20:11; Job 33:4, 38, 39; Acts 4:24; 14:15; Ps 33:6; Isa 45:7; (b) Heb 1:3; Ps 104:27-30; 115:3; Matt 10:29; Eph 1:11; (c) John 1:12; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5-7; Eph 1:5; (d) Ps 55:23; Mat 6:25-26; Luke12:22; (e)Rom 8:28; (f) Isa 46:4; Rom 10:12; (g) Mat 6:32-33, 7:9-11.**

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 103:7.

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**