

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 14 MARCH 2010: EVENING SERVICE

Sing before (standing): Psalm 78:1

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 33:1

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 38:2+8

Scripture reading: Acts 16.

Scripture text: Acts 16:30-31 and Heidelberg Catechism Lord's day 5.

“He then brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household.”

Humanly spoken, the jailer that night stood before the gates of hell. Had he committed suicide he would have entered hell, for then he would have died an unbeliever.

However, God's Plan was different.

- He is seized by God and made His child.
- Within moments that cruel man is turned into a terrified man begging for saving grace in the dim lamplight. “The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’”

The question arises – what is the effect of the witness we bear each day?

Consider all that occurred that night:

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. (Acts 16:25)

- That day they had been cruelly beaten when severely flogged.

- At midnight the two of them are singing hymns to the glory of God.
- A few minutes later they preach the gospel of salvation to the one who flogged them so severely!

It is one of the imponderables of life that such a cruel and unapproachable person can change within a moment into a helpless and terrified being sincerely seeking salvation from God.

Note how God's salvation and benediction came to this sinner:

What occurred first was that he realized the seriousness and the need of his sins:
“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

That usually is the first question that arises in someone who is in distress.

- Man then wants to do something to escape his situation.
- In his anxiety he tries to escape in various ways, all in vain, because in all of them he relies on his own strengths and abilities.

Yet there is a way out. The moment when man complies with God's righteousness, the Lord grants relief according to His grace.

- That is what happened to the jailer that night.
- He fully realised the depth of his misery, but also came to know the saving majesty of God through the singing and preaching of Paul and Silas.

He knew that he could not live before God the eternal Judge.

- That is why he asks what he must do to be saved.
- Note that he does not ask what he must do to make up for all that he did wrong.
- His question goes beyond that; he wants to be saved.

These men who are languishing in his jail are servants of the Most High God. He notices in them a way of life that is foreign to him.

- In the darkness, with their torn bodies, they sing hymns to the glory of God.
- They do not fear the earthquake.
- Even more striking is the fact that they do not escape and that they also caused the other prisoners to stay.

“But Paul shouted, ‘Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!’ (Acts 16:28)

That makes him realise that from these people he can obtain the “recipe” of the peaceful knowledge of the salvation by this God whom they worship.

- He receives the clear answer: Your self-willed decision to commit suicide is to no avail! Don't do it!
- He finds the answer in the hymns he heard being sung all night and the preaching of Paul thereafter: run to God! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Paul and Silas obtained the strength to proclaim, while in prison, the glory of God with so much vigour, from the Lord Jesus Christ.

- He is their Redeemer – He is God who was born man to be the Redeemer so that we might comply with God's justice!
- That happens because on the cross the Lord Jesus satisfied God's justice for all the unrighteousness we committed in this life.

The jailer hears that night that for all the unrighteousness he committed and for which he felt such anxiety he too can obtain redemption provided he comes to conversion.

Nobody else can save us. Only the Lord Jesus can do so – and he does so indeed for those who love Him.

- It is not a matter of our punishment disappearing and God pretending that it does not exist.
- That would be a cheap way of being saved – and such salvation is meaningless.
- The truth is that God punishes all sin – He inflicted His punishment on the Lord Jesus.

What is striking in this narration?

- The realisation of one's sinfulness – and together with that the discovery that in God's grace there is a way out of these miseries!
- This passage also clearly draws the connecting line between the conversion and the peace that the believer experiences thereafter!

It also demonstrates how a truly converted person changes thereafter:

- The jailer is no longer the man who handles the whip and the keys with the same hand.
- He becomes a tender person who has compassion for his fellow-man – he nurses Paul and Silas and washes their wounds!

Our Mediator is the One who is stronger than any creature.

- He can give succour and salvation where it is humanly impossible.
- He does this because in His divine power He takes our debt of sin away from us by taking it onto Himself.
- That is why He also has the right and the power to absolve us in His merit of redemption.

Let us read the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's day 5, together.

5. Lord's Day

Q. 12.

Since then, by the righteous judgment of God, we deserve temporal and eternal punishment, is there no way by which we may escape that punishment, and be again received into favour?

A.

God will have his justice satisfied: (a) and therefore we must make this full satisfaction, either by ourselves, or by another. (b)

(a)

Gen.2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Exod.20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

Exod.23:7 Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.

Ezek.18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Matt.5:26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

2 Thess.1:6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

Luke 16:2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

(b)

Rom.8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

Rom.8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Q. 13.

Can we ourselves then make this satisfaction?

A.

By no means; but on the contrary we daily increase our debt. (a)

(a)

Job 9:2 I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?

Job 9:3 If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.

Job 15:15 Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.

Job 15:16 How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?

Job 4:18 Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly:

Job 4:19 How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?

Ps.130:3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

Matt.6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Matt.18:25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

Matt.16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Q. 14.

Can there be found anywhere, one, who is a mere creature, able to satisfy for us?

A.

None; for, first, God will not punish any other creature for the sin which man has committed; (a)and further, no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin, so as to deliver others from it. (b)

(a)

Ezek.18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Gen.3:17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Heb.2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

Heb.2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Heb.2:16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

Heb.2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

(b)

Nah.1:6 Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

Ps.130:3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

Q. 15.

What sort of a mediator and deliverer then must we seek for?

A.

For one who is very man, and perfectly (a) righteous; (b) and yet more powerful than all creatures; that is, one who is also very God. (c)

(a)

1 Cor.15:21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

Jer.33:16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.

Isa.53:9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

2 Cor.5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

(b)

Heb.7:26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

Heb.7:16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

(c)

Isa.7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isa.9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Rom.9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Jer.23:5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

Jer.23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Luke 11:22 But when a stronger than he (a strong man armed) shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

Closing prayer.

Closing Hymn: 5-3:1.

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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Reformed Church Bellville

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Scripture: New International Version