

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE :Sunday 14 August 2011 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Scripture Versification 8-1:1, 2 (14:1, 2) Ezekiel 36:25-28

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 25:1, 6

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

Scripture Versification 16-1:1-3 (15:1, 2, 3) Matt. 19:14-15; 18:10-14; Mark 10:16

Scripture reading: Acts 2

Scripture text: Acts 2:38; Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 26

“Friends, what are we to do?” “Repent” said Peter, “repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
(New English Bible:1972)

It is the day on which the Holy Spirit is given – Pentecost

- Peter stood addressing the people who had convened in Jerusalem.
- Naturally Peter preached these things because he was carried along by the Holy Spirit.

He proclaimed that Jesus, from Nazareth, was chosen by God to work amongst them with powers and wonders. This Son of God was the Messiah and that the heathens had crucified Him.

In this sermon we will pay attention to the following:

- 1. The Holy Spirit and our baptism**
- 2. The meaning of the signs of baptism**

1. The Holy Spirit and our baptism

Ever since Pentecost the Holy Spirit has lived in all of us.

- To tell the truth, He has been living in us, even before our baptism.
- The baptism is a seal of the fact that we and our children belong to the Lord – that we share in the glory of Christ, and that nobody can take it away from us.

What does He do in us?

- He works the faith and sure knowledge of all the favours that we received in Jesus Christ, in us.
- From the text, which we read, we realise that the Holy Spirit moves Peter's audience in their hearts and minds, through his sermon.

All of a sudden something is happening to them:

- All of a sudden they have insight and comprehend the truth – they are the heathens that Peter is speaking about.
- They suddenly realise how they were misled by everything which they had been taught in faith!

They cannot deny that the Lord Jesus is the Messiah, as they know the things which Peter speaks about.

- This Jesus rose from the dead: This is true!
- He appeared to many after He rose from the grave – they cannot argue about this.
- It is possible that some of those people whom Jesus had appeared to were amongst those who were listening to Peter's sermon.

The realisation of their sins cut through them like a sword. They crucified the Lord Jesus. What do they do now?

- Terror reigned in the hearts of these people.
- At a loss the people asked Peter and the Apostles: "Brothers, what must we do?"

The answer to this question is found in the scripture text that we have read.

We clearly see that work of the Holy Spirit.

- First, the Holy Spirit removes all the foundation for a false belief, as the Lord's justice does not have double standards – you must know where you stand with the Lord.
- The Holy Spirit does this, not to condemn you, but in order for you to be saved.
- It sounds unbelievable that you first must be moved to the truth and then say that it is to your salvation.

This is how God's Spirit works. The signs of the Spirit when it was given to man was wind and fire.

- The wind and fire is symbolic of how the first work of the Spirit is to burn away the sin and to cleanse you from within with the wind.
- The frankness of God does not leave space for you to nurse your sins.
- Only when there is an honest and total knowledge of your sin, the door to remorse and repentance be opened.

Now we are burdened with the responsibility to show sincere gratitude to the Lord.

- Not to use it as a ticket to heaven.
- But to appreciate Christ with it.

This is why Peter answers the question that the group of people asked him by telling them to repent and be baptised as the baptism has great meaning for someone who has repented.

- The power of the baptism lies in the fact that it proclaims the glory and sanctity of God.
- It certainly deals with the sanctification in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- We are taught that baptism is a sign and a seal, as if it were God's signature at the end of the contract of grace.

2. The meaning of the signs at baptism

Exactly what is this sanctification that is confirmed by baptism?

- It is the cleansing of the soul.
- More simply stated: It is the fact that our sins are forgiven by the death of Jesus Christ.

This is exactly why the sign at baptism is water, and nothing else.

- We use water to bath in or to wash with when we are dirty.
- Therefore water is the symbol of cleansing or washing.

In this instance meaning that our sins are washed from our souls, as water washes away the dirt from our bodies.

- Our sins are symbolised in the filth on our bodies. As water cleanses the body of filth, in the same way our sins are washed from our bodies and souls by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- All of our spiritual filth disappears and before God, only a perfect purity remains.
- By the blood and the Spirit of Christ we are fully sanctified before God.

It is necessary for us to be fully sanctified before God, as it is made clear in the Bible that God abhors sin.

- He only associates with those who are sanctified, in other words pure people without sin.
- Matthew 5:8 is applicable here, where it is written
How blessed are those whose hearts are pure; they shall see God.
(Mat. 5:8 [New English Bible: 1972])

If we are extremely honest, we must acknowledge that we should be excluded from God's association, as all of us, very often commit gross sins.

- That is why the answer that Peter gives to his audience is just as relevant to us as it was to them.
- We are just as despondent as the people that were gathered in Jerusalem that day.

We also ask: Lord, what must we do?

All of the sanctity which we receive, can it be true? Yes, it is true and the baptism assures you of this.

- The baptism alone is not sanctifying, but the baptism is the symbol of God's agreement with us in Christ.
- The content of the agreement is that we will be washed clean spiritually, in the same way that we are washed clean with water.

The promise of sanctification does not break when you turn away from the baptismal font.

- The promise is like the sanctity itself - very durable.
- God lives in this body, that receives the sign of his covenant, with his Holy Spirit.

The baptism teaches us the glory of God, both visually and audibly.

- Visually, as the sign of the covenant is there.
 - The water is placed on the child's forehead in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

- This is done to explain fully. It is as if God signs the contract of grace, of which our children are a part, in front of everyone - everyone can see the water placed on the child's forehead.
- Audibly, as we hear the voice of God from the person who preaches the Word of God.
 - We are inducted into Christ's death and therefore resurrected with Him, for the Kingdom of God.
 - We hear the Name of the Trinity spoken over each child that is baptised.

Just then, when we hear that we have an heirship in heaven, without any doing of our own, God's grace becomes clear.

- God's Son fulfilled God's love and God's justice over us, in order for us to enter the hereafter.
- Baptism is proof of this love, that God allowed his Son to die as reconciliation of our iniquity.

The Holy Spirit takes part in our sanctity.

- He enables us to persevere in true faith and thankfulness.
- He guides us with insight, to realise our sins – in order for us to regret our sins and repent.

The order of baptism states it clearly:

- We are admonished and compelled to a new obedience.
- We must cast off our sins and grow in sanctity. It must become apparent in our lives.

What then must we do when we consider the enormity of our sins? We must repent and consider the promises of baptism - the sign that the Lord's Name is written on our brow.

Let us read what the Heidelberg Catechism says in Lord's Day 26:

Lord's Day 26

69. Q. How does holy baptism signify and seal to you that the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross benefits you?

A. In this way: Christ instituted this outward washing^[1] and with it gave the promise that, as surely as water washes away the dirt from the body, so certainly His blood and Spirit wash away the impurity of my soul, that is, all my sins.^[2]

^[1] Matt. 28:19. ^[2] Matt. 3:11; Mark 16:16; John 1:33; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3, 4; I Pet. 3:21.

70. Q. What does it mean to be washed with Christ's blood and Spirit?

A. To be washed with Christ's blood means to receive forgiveness of sins from God, through grace, because of Christ's blood, poured out for us in His sacrifice on the cross.^[1] To be washed with His Spirit means to be renewed by the Holy Spirit and sanctified to be members of Christ, so that more and more we become dead to sin and lead a holy and blameless life.^[2]

^[1] Ez. 36:25; Zech. 13:1; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 12:24; I Pet. 1:2; Rev. 1:5; 7:14. ^[2] John 3:5-8; Rom. 6:4; I Cor. 6:11; Col. 2:11, 12.

71. Q. Where has Christ promised that He will wash us with His blood and Spirit as surely as we are washed with the water of baptism?

A. In the institution of baptism, where He says: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16). This promise is repeated where Scripture calls baptism the washing of regeneration and the washing away of sins (Titus 3:5; Acts 22:16).

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing: Scripture Versification 1-1: 1, 7 (24:1, 7) Ephesians 1:1-14

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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14 August 2011
Scripture New English Bible**