

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 15 AUGUST 2010: EVENING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 118:2

*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 150:2

**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 148:5

**Scripture reading:** Ephesians 2

**Scripture text:** Ephesians 2:10; Catechism Sunday 32

**For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)**

Because the believers always wanted to determine their salvation through their deeds, good deeds have been, through the ages, part of their faith-problem.

- Such ideas are of course as close to the devil as possible because this was exactly how he reasoned and subsequently came to a fall.
- In this process of self-evaluation (about how wonderful my works are or not) conceit plays an important role because, no matter how nicely put, the human, should he put good works as the deciding factor in his life, himself becomes god and disposer over his lot in life.

Such a lifestyle of over-evaluation stands in sharp contrast with Romans 3:10 where the Holy Spirit had Paul recording that "There is none righteous, no, not one."

- A little later in this same chapter is written that whatever things the Law says, it says to those who are under the Law; so that every mouth may be stopped and the entire world may be under judgement before God.
- The reason is also given: because the works of the Law will justify none of all flesh in His sight; for through the Law is the knowledge of sin.

**19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.**

**20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:19,20)**

Upholding the law and doing good deeds are exactly one and the same.

In this passage of the letter to the believers in Rome the Lord is thus saying in as many words that even our best deeds are not good enough for the heaven.

This point of the faith is possibly that which, in our times, became the most unacceptable.

- These worships of our times are aimed at elevating humankind to godliness.
- In all of them, everything done in this life by humans, are done as self-disposer of his present and hereafter lot.

The workings of daily life are as such:

- Everyone, by his own achievements, fights for his own niche in life.
- Thereby he even has the right of demanding the things he wants to achieve for himself.

Ages before Christ the Pharisees also implemented these rules.

- They believed themselves to be good people.
- They believed that because they lived so exemplary, God would have to reward them.
- Certain worships of our times teach that God may be forced to act according to the demands set to Him by the people.

Is this viewpoint of the Lord having to reward you for your good deeds according to the Bible?

- The opposing question is of course: What must the Lord do about the times you did not honour Him but in fact sinned against Him?
- In modern worships, because all of them expects the Lord to just provide, there is a specific imbalance:
  - He may not punish.
  - He must forgive sins.
  - Together therewith He also has to reward good deeds.

This is just impossible!

- The fact is that a person is living further from the Lord Jesus Christ and closer to himself.
- Because a change in his trust is taking place, it might not be different: His trust in himself increases at the cost of his trust in the Lord decreasing.

The Bible teaches that we were created by and to God.

- In practice this means that we have received all our grants from the Lord in order to apply it to His honour.
- Good works are thus also grants we have to apply to the honour of the Lord and not for the purpose of achieving something else therewith.

Because none of us were able to maintain the covenant of work, God had His Son live so that He could maintain the law.

- He, actually did not need to maintain the law,
  - because He was God and elevated above the law and
  - on the other hand it is also so that He did not need adherence to the law for sanctification, and because He also was God, He was fully sanctified and without blemish.

He, in our place, kept to the law.

- After He upheld the law, He died a type of death carrying the punishment for the times we did not uphold the law.
- Now we are in the situation where we, because the Lord Jesus sanctified us, are sanctified.

Therefore we now do good deeds – not to attain sanctification, but out of appreciation for being already sanctified.

- Our appreciation stems from the fact that the Lord Jesus sanctified us by carrying the punishment for our sins.
- A life of appreciation of course grants us the will to live for the Lord.
- Only with the true converted is there a need to follow, till the end of his life, the road of obedience to the Lord.

In this way our lives become a prayer of gratitude.

Should we consider what is recorded in Titus 2:14, then we understand that our good works are a proof to the world of a redemption covenant existing between us and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- It is written that the Lord Jesus gave Himself to our salvation of all unjustice and to purify us as children belonging to Him – children diligent in good works.
- Good works are thus nothing else to the true believer than a payment of honour and respect to God the Lord.
- Our lifestyle must thus be a proper proclamation of the holiness present with God and followed by us throughout our lives.

Of course it is so that our faith gives rise to good works. Here we must take great care.

- It is easy to proclaim our good works as fruits of faith, but here arrogance may play a role.
  - There are many people doing good deeds in order of attaining honour, because they are so pious, in the eyes of others.
  - We must also guard against our good works attaining an image of glorifying ourselves by it.

The Bible teaches that the right good works are like fruit borne by a good tree.

- It comes by itself and is not aimed on attaining a reward. (Matthew 17:17)
- This is why such an amount of freedom is reflected by the words of Romans 1:17 saying that the just live by faith.

**For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17)**

Our command is to live as believers in such a way that our good deeds are a sermon to those living outside of the faith and church.

- They must be able to perceive the image of God in our lifestyle and then desire to get to know Him also.
- They should also want to follow Him in their ways of doing things – according to the example we radiate.

A synthetic life does not last at all.

- Eventually it's falseness and weakness will come to the foreground.
- There against the life of the true believer can withstand many and difficult tribulations.

Matthew 7, where the Lord Jesus said: “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord! Lord! shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven.” was in fact also written for us.

- The same passage teaches that during the final judgement there will be many people telling the Lord what all they did in His Name.
- The Lord Jesus tells that they even will declare that they performed signs in His Name.
- Still He rejects them because a living relationship between Him and those people did not exist.

There is only one possible solution: The redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The only way to prove your thanks for it is to pray and to make your complete life a life of thanksgiving.
- In other words to do good deeds by which you praise and thank the Lord for already redeeming you.

Let us read together from the Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 32:

**Q. 86.**

**Since then we are delivered from our misery, merely of grace, through Christ, without any merit of ours,  
why must we still do good works?**

**A.**

Because Christ, having redeemed and delivered us by his blood, also renews us by his Holy Spirit, after his own image; that so we may testify, by the whole of our conduct, our gratitude to God for his blessings, (a)

and that he may be praised by us; (b)

also, that every one may be assured in himself of his faith, (c)

by the fruits thereof; and that, by our godly conversation others may be gained to Christ. (d)

(a)

Rom.6:13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Rom.12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Rom.12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

1 Pet.2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

1 Pet.2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

1 Pet.2:10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

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.5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

1 Pet.2:12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1 Pet.1:6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

1 Pet.1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

(c)

2 Pet.1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

Matt.7:17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

Gal.5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Gal.5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Gal.5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

(d)

1 Pet.3:1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

1 Pet.3:2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

Rom.14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

**Q. 87.**

**Cannot they then be saved, who, continuing in their wicked and ungrateful lives, are not converted to God?**

**A.**

By no means; for the holy scripture declares that no unchaste person, idolater, adulterer, thief, covetous man, drunkard, slanderer, robber, or any such like, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (a)

(a)

1 Cor.6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

1 Cor.6:10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Eph.5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Eph.5:6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

**Amen.****Confirmation of Office bearers.**

Psalm 134.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 149:1, 2

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.  
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

**Amen**

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