

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 30 AUGUST 2009: EVENING SERVICE

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to His Name; worship the LORD in the splendour of His holiness. (Psalm 29:2)

Sing before: Psalm 49:1

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 103:9

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 19:6

Scripture reading: Exodus 34:11-22; 29-35.

Scripture text: Exodus 34:32 and Heidelberg Catechism Lord's day 34.

Afterwards all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai.

One may not decide oneself how one will serve the Lord.

- If one does something that displease the Lord, or one does it in a way different from that in which the Lord wants it to be done, there is trouble.
- In one's dealings with the Lord one must simply bend one's knees before everything He says, otherwise one sins.

In the epistle to the Romans we read the following:

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

- So: the remuneration for sin is death.
- Someone who unrepentantly persists in sin will not see the inside of heaven.

How do we know that in our manner of worship we do not sin and that we please our Creator in the way we adore Him? Surely we do not wish to be killed by our sin?

- We must see that the Law of the Lord goes together with this passage in the Bible.
- The Law as it was given on Mount Sinai, promises two consequences:
 - Firstly it promises reward to the people who keep the Law
 - Secondly it promises punishment to those people who do not keep the Law – to them the Law is a threat.

In this sermon we consider the following issues:

1. **Why did the LORD give the Law?**
2. **The contents of the Ten Commandments.**
3. **What is the purpose of the Law?**
4. **What is now our duty?**

1. Why did the LORD give the Law?

Israel had only recently left Egypt.

- Egypt was a country full of idols.
- It was also a place where the priests of the idols and the soothsayers and magicians were held in high esteem.

One should also remember that Egypt in those days traded with all the peoples of the world as it was known then.

- All the trade routes went to Egypt.
- This brought the people of Egypt into contact with all the idolatries of the ancient world.

The Israelites had lived so long among the Egyptians that many of them also worshipped the idols or, at least, included them in their worship.

- The worship of the golden calf is a clear example of this.
- This was something they had learnt in Egypt and not something they discovered in the wilderness.

That is why the first commandment says:

You shall have no other gods before Me!

- The Lord knew that in Canaan the Israelites would also come to know the idols of the Philistines and Moabites and other nations.
- Because God is also God of History He knew that the Israelites would also worship the idols of these peoples.

It was therefore essential that the Israelites be educated in their religion because they would be exposed to these matters.

- They needed to be taught that there was only one true God and that all other religions were idolatries.
- They also had to be taught that idolatry would be punished because people who practised idolatry had forsaken the Lord.

2. The contents of the Ten Commandments.

The first four commandments teach the people about their relationship with and their duties towards the LORD.

Look at the contents of the Law:

- The first commandment deals with the love for God – worship.
- The second with the service to God (the fact that no carved images are to be worshipped).
- The third is about the Name of God.
- The fourth tells us how the Lord's Day is to be observed.

This was the first tablet that Moses carried with him.

The second tablet contained a whole set of fresh commandments. In this second set of commandments the relationship between man and his fellowman is dealt with.

- The fifth commandment tells us to respect the authority of our superiors.
- The sixth protects life.
- The seventh preserves the sanctity of marriage.
- The eighth protects property.
- The ninth deals with the honour of our neighbour when we are prohibited from telling lies about him.
- The tenth forbids us to have wrong and bad desires.

You can see clearly that the Ten Commandments cover all facets of life.

- With it the Lord reveals to us that there is nothing on earth that is not subject to His rule.
- The purpose of these Ten Commandments to make us know God as the only God and that He alone is God of all that lives.

3. What is the purpose of the Law?

In heaven we shall know the full revelation of the glory of God because the Lord Himself shall be with us and we shall evermore be with Him.

- But here on earth, where we are now, it is different.
- Here we can know the Lord only from that which He reveals to us.

The Lord reveals many things to us:

- He reveals His glory, His power, His almightiness.
- He reveals His will, in other words, what He wants us to do. This includes the manner in which we must worship the Lord.

How does the Lord reveal Himself in that we might know Him and understand His will?

- One of the ways in which the Lord reveals Himself is in the Ten Commandments – that we have read.
- At Mount Sinai the Lord revealed what people must do to worship Him:
 - The Lord gave the Law to Moses.
 - Moses was to command the people to obey the Law, otherwise they would be punished.

The essence is that we must carefully distinguish between our laws and the Law of God because in all our planning and all our laws we must bow before the Law of God.

We have no choice but to obey because the Law of God is unique.

- The Law of God is above all man-made laws.
- It is also essential for all people.

It is, of course, important that we understand that we are in a different relationship to the Ten Commandments that the Israelites out there in the wilderness.

- In their days they were subject to the covenant of works.
- Put simply it means that the keeping of the law was a requirement for admission into heaven.

We are no longer there:

- We are reconciled and saved children of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Which means that we are set free from the compulsion of the Law.
- We are free from it in that, should we be unable to keep the Law perfectly, we shall not go to hell and suffer eternal death as punishment because the Lord Jesus died so that there would be reconciliation for us when we have remorse when we transgress the Law and arise from our sin.

The death of the Lord Jesus on the cross was for our atonement because we are completely unable to keep the Law properly. He then fulfilled it for us.

- We are redeemed in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- In Him we receive the love and forgiveness of God the Father.

4. What is now our duty?

The fact that the Lord Jesus set us free from the Law does not mean that we are left with no responsibility.

- You must remember that the Lord Jesus changed our status from that of lost ones to that of children of God.
- Childhood brings new responsibilities.

Childhood demands obedience because a child is not free to do as it pleases.

- A child must do as the rules of the household require of it.
- Therefore the release from the Law is not a consent to licentious living.

We therefore remain bound to the Law.

But our bond with the Law is on a different plane from that of the Old Testament.

- Then the Law had to be kept in order to avoid punishment.
- We do not obey the Law in order to avoid punishment because our punishment was already borne by the Lord Jesus Christ.

We keep the Law out of obedience and gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ who fulfilled the Law for us so that the Law cannot accuse us before God.

The Law teaches us that we cannot live without worship.

- Worship is everything your life encompasses.
- Worship is not limited to public worship and what your church does.
- Worship is everything you do each moment and how you account for it to the Lord because God rules over everything.

In short, the Law teaches us to love, to honour and to fear God.

In Colossians 3:17 we read:

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Do it all and thank God.

That presupposes that we keep the Law out of gratitude.

That is so for two reasons:

- The first is that the Law gives us the knowledge to be able to distinguish between good and evil.
 - We are guided by the Lord to have the ability to know what is right and what is wrong.
 - That enables us to serve the Lord in the correct way.
 - But it is also true that as yet we are unable to do so because our nature is too sinful.

Which brings us to the second reason why the Law is a rule of gratitude.

- This Law, which is a terror to us because we cannot keep it, was kept by the Lord Jesus for each one of us.
- After He bore the punishment for each one of our trespasses, He sent us the Holy Spirit to teach us, by virtue of the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, to distinguish between what God expects of us and what He forbids us.

There are many things that we must believe of the Lord Jesus, but concerning the Law there is one matter that stands out.

- That is that in the Law God reveals Him to us.
- But we could not serve the Lord perfectly through it.
- Therefore the Lord Jesus came and kept the Law for us so that we could remain within God's grace.

In that way the terror of the Law disappears in the Lord Jesus.

It becomes a rule of gratitude because it becomes a representation of the ministry of the Lord Jesus so that we may undeservedly enter heaven.

Let us read together the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's day 34:

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34. Lord's Day

Q. 92.

What is the law of God?

A.

God spake all these words, Exodus 20:1-17 and Denteronomy 5:6-21, saying: I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

1st commandment:

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

2nd commandment:

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

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, and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

3rd commandment:

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

4th commandment:

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

5th commandment:

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

6th commandment:

Thou shalt not kill.

7th commandment:

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

8th commandment:

Thou shalt not steal.

9th commandment:

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

10th commandment:

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Q. 93.

How are these commandments divided?

A.

Into two tables; (a) the first of which teaches us how we must behave towards God; the second, what duties we owe to our neighbour. (b)

(a)

Exod.34:28 And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

Deut.4:13 And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

Deut.10:3 And I made an ark of shittim wood, and hewed two tables of stone like unto the first, and went up into the mount, having the two tables in mine hand.

Deut.10:4 And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the LORD spake unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and the LORD gave them unto me.

(b)

Matt.22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

Matt.22:38 This is the first and great commandment.

Matt.22:39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Matt.22:40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Q. 94.

What does God enjoin in the first commandment?

A.

That I, as sincerely as I desire the salvation of my own soul, avoid and flee from all idolatry, (a) sorcery, soothsaying, superstition, (b) invocation of saints, or any other creatures; (c) and learn rightly to know the only true God; (d) trust in him alone, (e) with humility (f) and patience submit to him; (g) expect all good things from him only; (h) love, (i) fear, (j) and glorify him with my whole heart; (k) so that I renounce and forsake all creatures, rather than commit even the least thing contrary to his will. (l)

(a)

1 John 5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

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.

1 Cor.10:7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

1 Cor.10:14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

(b)

Lev.19:31 Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

Deut.18:9 When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.

Deut.18:10 There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

Deut.18:11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

Deut.18:12 For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

(c)

Matt.4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Rev.19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Rev.22:8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

Rev.22:9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

(d)

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

(e)

Jer.17:5 Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

Jer.17:7 Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

(f)

1 Pet.5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

1 Pet.5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

(g)

Heb.10:36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

Col.1:11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

Rom.5:3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

Rom.5:4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

1 Cor.10:10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Philip.2:14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

(h)

Ps.104:27 These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.

Ps.104:28 That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.

Ps.104:29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

Ps.104:30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

Isa.45:7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

(i)

Deut.6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Matt.22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

(j)

Deut.6:2 That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

Ps.111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

Prov.1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Prov.9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

Matt.10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

(k)

Matt.4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Deut.10:20 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

Deut.10:21 He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen.

(l)

Matt.5:29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Matt.5:30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Matt.10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Acts 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Q. 95.

What is idolatry?

A.

Idolatry is, instead of, or besides that one true God, who has manifested himself in his word, to contrive, or have any other object, in which men place their trust. (a)

(a)

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.

1 Chron.16:26 For all the gods of the people are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.

Philip.3:19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

Gal.4:8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

Eph.2:12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

1 John 2:23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.

2 John 1:9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

John 5:23 That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 138:1.

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

Amen

Dr MJ Du Plessis

Reformed Church Bellville

30 August 2009

Scripture: New International Version