

**REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 22 JUNE 2008: MORNING SERVICE (Part 1 of 2 parts)**

**Sing before:** Psalm 96:3

*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 113:1

**Confession of faith:** Nicene

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

And we believe one holy catholic\* and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

**Amen.**

*After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 86:5*

Law

Psalm: 86:5

**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 63:2

**Scripture:** Galatians 4

**Text:** Galatians 4:30

**But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave-woman and her son; for in no way shall the son of the slave-woman inherit with the son of the free woman."**

It is impossible to worship Christ whilst at the same time indulging in any form of self-reverence or worship of a false faith, or any form thereof.

- It is just not possible at all to be addicted to yourself and also be redeemed by Jesus Christ.
- As such it is also impossible to bring any obstinacy into your faith and put it on the par with the true faith as demanded through his Word by the Lord.

### **What was the crux of this heresy?**

Here the Bible refers to a "slave" and a "freeman" These two are also directly contrasted towards each other.

To be able to understand this Bible passage we have to look at the meaning of these two words

- The "slave" mentioned here by the Lord, is not a servant.
  - It is somebody addicted to sin and the world.
- The freeman is in direct contrast with this worldling.
  - With the word "freeman" the Lord is implying those who experience the freedom of being redeemed by Christ.
  - It is the truly faithful being referred to here.

We start with the slave. When we talk about him we especially look at the things inherent to man, not experiencing the freedom of the Lord Jesus.

- A slave believes that he can redeem himself.
- A man, enslaved to himself, mostly reveres himself, sometimes even adores himself.
- Therefore the slave, mentioned in this Bible passage, is haughty, high and mighty and conceited.
- He distrusts others and is by nature a mischief-maker.

*Somebody enslaved by the ideas of the world binds himself to whatever means most to the materialistic kingdom of the world, often completely forgetting the copiousness of the Lord's Kingdom.*

This is how a slave of the flesh looks like.

- The Lord has a very strong and definite verdict over this type of person:
  - The Lord will reject these people because he or she cannot, together with the freemen in the Lord Jesus Christ, inherit the heaven.
  - No provision is made in the Lord's plan for the enslaved to, together with the freemen, walk in the New Jerusalem.

We of course must remember the background against which Paul wrote about this:

- There were false teachers in the parish of the Galatians. This letter, in fact, was written to them.
- They preached that faith in Jesus Christ only, is not enough for your salvation.

According to their standpoint the mercy of the Lord is lacking.

- Actually we are wary to state it, but the real standpoint of these people is that the ability of the Lord is lacking.

- Those of you acquainted with modern tendencies of faith will be aware that presently quite a few standpoints are on the par with theirs.

The crux of the faith preached in Galatia was that you had to supplement your faith with all sorts of exterior services, for example circumcision in conjunction with Christian faith, still had to be adhered to.

At face value this approach does not look too bad at all because man and his own personality is hereby well acknowledged.

- We could argue that it is better following a direction in faith where both the mercy of the Lord and the inputs from mankind are accepted.
- Certainly that could do no harm.

Many times it happens that when taking something at face value it will be shown as incorrect when tested against the real facts. This is one of those cases:

- A viewpoint that all sorts of things must be maintained in conjunction with Christian faith, in fact is harmful.
- In order to strengthen Christian faith you cannot add all sorts of exterior and human inventions to faith.

The proof for that is recorded here in the Bible.

- The exterior things taught by the false teachers in Galatia were not aimed at furthering faith.
- They simply were symbols of status used to boost their self-esteem in stead of furthering the prestige and glory of God.

*These exterior things deprived the freedom in the Lord Jesus Christ from the people because the Lord Jesus, in fact, freed us from all these exterior signs of faith!*

Therefore, in this letter, the parishes in Galatia were urgently warned that they should be wary of exterior worship!

- Exterior worship is not true and sincere worship.
- Exterior things in your worship is a type of worship actually embattling the Lord Jesus and not, even though you might pretend it to be, the main focus of your worship.

Exterior worship is tempting because it has rules and all sorts of things binding you – just like the Pharisees used to do.

But that type of worship brought no freedom, it was an addiction to manmade worshipping rules and gave no freedom in God.

**Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full from extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup and of the platter, that the outside thereof may become clean also. (Matthew 23:25-26)**

- Still today, it is exactly the same. There are people disliking the rules of God. They do not want to allow the Holy Spirit to work with them within God's rules and boundaries.
- They have the empty argument that the church should change. The church should move away from the ways of God into the ways liked by humankind.
  - Immediately there are rules!
  - More rules and also more demanding than the rules of the Lord were.

The main thing is that everybody, wanting to become part of the salvation, then will have to subscribe to those conceited new rules.

- Should this not happen, reference, with a type of spiritual snobbishness and contempt, is made to the “outdated Worship” into which the laggard is caught in.
- Ishmael’s slave-worship was typical of this.
- The worship of somebody, tied by own rules or bending the free worship of the Lord therein, is sightless and devoid of everlasting future.

Listen to the teaching by the Holy Ghost about people applying the law of the Lord incorrectly – as it fitted them!

**For the law having a shadow of the good [things] to come, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. (Hebrews 10:1)**

Exterior worship, in this life, can provide a lot of satisfaction to those who practice it – but that is all. Exterior worship is false and does not grant life at all.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing Song: Scripture versification 14-2:1 (Habakkuk 3:17 – 19)

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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