

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 23 AUGUST 2009: EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 144:1

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 66:1

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 103:9

Scripture reading: Hebrews 12

Scripture text: Hebrews 12:17 and Heidelberg Catechism Lord's day 33.

Afterwards, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.

It is only when one is fully aware of the depth of the trouble in which one finds oneself that one is sincerely and appropriately grateful to Him who took one out of that trouble.

- We all know that it is the Law of God that makes us know our sins.
- Everyone who really knows the Law and understands the Ten Commandments, is deeply aware of his own sins.
- But you will only obey the Law if you know where the Law originates and from where it derives the authority to prescribe to us what the Lord expects of a true believer.

The Lord gave us the Law and therefore the Law derives its authority from the Lord.

- The Law reveals the will of the Lord.
- Hence the Law is immutable: the Lord does not change and therefore His Law can also not change.
- All Ten Commandments remain unchanged until the day the Lord comes.

It sometimes appears to us as if the Law is unfair, but you must remember that the Lord created man in Paradise so perfectly that he spontaneously did what presently the Law tells us to do.

- That is why the Ten Commandments did not exist then.
- Thereafter came the Fall into sin and mankind's perdition.
- Now the Law demands of man to do what the Lord expected of him at creation.
 - No particular Law of the Ten Commandments was abrogated because of changed circumstances.
 - Neither are there circumstances or peoples or countries where the Law, or parts of it, does not apply.

The Law became necessary because in the course of time mankind became spiritually and morally depraved.

- The law is the bond that connects all believers to the everlasting life in heaven – because through all the commandments glows the holiness of God.

One should never deal with the Law in a spirit of gloom. We tend to think gloomily of the Law – as if the Lord wants to punish us with it.

- We should see the Law as the legal system of the Lord who lives with us.
- We should see the Law as an instrument that protects us so that we may live a holy life as the Lord wants us to do.
- In a sense the Law is the holiness of the Lord that is around us always.
 - It is His guidance
 - It is His planning to ensure that good happens to us in our life.

It reveals God's love because in it He reveals to us His care and protection.

- Also His power in His love-
 - In the Lord Jesus Christ He makes us, who are His elect, obedient to the Law.
 - What we do wrong, He forgives us.
 - The Lord Jesus Christ dies for us.

That is why no there is no power in heaven or in earth that can remove us from the hand of God.

That is also the reason why it is wrong to resist the Law.

- The Law does not take away our freedom – it only channels our life so that we move towards God.
- Let us put it differently:
 - The Law protects our freedom. God does not want the devil to interfere with it so that we stand accused before the Lord.
 - Should the devil control us, our freedom would be limited as we would then only be able to do that which is acceptable to hell – and then we would be really tied down.

Everything we have said thus far means only one thing: which is, to love God.

- Love of God encompasses also love of one's neighbour.
- That is once again the principle according to which we were created.

Love of the Law of God produces good fruit.

- The fact that I know my misery results in a realisation that I can never, with my own power, achieve my salvation.
- But it also awakens in me a deep desire to be saved.
- It makes me know the Lord Jesus Christ's love.
- In that way my rebirth and conversion is worked.

In the beginning this is not felt to be love.

- The Law is terribly frustrating as it underlines the spiritual poverty in which we find ourselves.
- For we were created so spiritually perfect that we could keep the Lord's Law and now we no longer are able to do so.
- After the Fall into sin we are also poor in love and poor in holiness.

What makes it painful is that every honest person knows that this condition is his own fault.

- It is our own sin that has changed our nature so that our love turns to hate and the bad things in life have become a congenital given.

What now?

- Is salvation possible with a Law that is so holy?
- What do I do with a Law that, with God's authority, demands obedience from me, poor miserable man, and I cannot do it?

Yes, salvation is possible!

- The Law is not a ladder with which one can climb up into heaven as the ancient Jews believed.
- They thought that one was rewarded for each part you kept and so you ascended step by step to heaven.

For us, who in our days believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord puts the matter quite differently.

- He uses the Law to make His grace so much clearer to us.
- The more we know that we are unable to do so ourselves, the more we shall be grateful that Christ did it for us.

We are preparing for Holy Communion. We know that our lives bear the mark of spiritual crime because we repeatedly transgress the Commandments of the Lord.

- Hear the grace when the Lord says to us: Eat and drink for the forgiveness of your sins. My body and My blood have paid for you.
- Let the bread and the wine remind us thereof that the Lord Jesus has atoned all our sins when He bore our punishment of God for them.

These matters ought to make everybody deeply grateful.

- Let us then, each time we read the Law, remember with absolute sincerity how often we transgress the Law – but also how great God's mercy is in that He does not reject us but keeps the Law before us so that we now obey it out of gratitude.
- That is a profound matter: we obey the Law, not to be taken to heaven by it, but because we are grateful because in Jesus Christ we are there already.

Let us read together what is written in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's day 33

33. Lord's Day

Q. 88. Of how many parts does the true conversion of man consist?

A.
Of two parts; of the mortification of the old, and the quickening of the new man. (a)

(a)
Rom.6:1: What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

Rom.6:4: Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Rom.6:5: For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

Rom.6:6: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Eph.4:22: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

Eph.4:23: And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

Eph.4:24: And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Col.3:5: Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Col.3:6: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

Col.3:7: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

Col.3:8: But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

Col.3:9: Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

Col.3:10: And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

1 Cor.5:7: Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

2 Cor.7:10: For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

Q. 89.

What is the mortification of the old man?

A.
It is a sincere sorrow of heart, that we have provoked God by our sins; and more and more to hate and flee from them. (a)

(a)
Rom.8:13: For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Joel 2:13: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

Hos.6:1: Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

Q. 90.

What is the quickening of the new man?

A.

It is a sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ, (a) and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works. (b)

(a)

Rom.5:1: Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Rom.14:17: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Isa.57:15: For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

(b)

Rom.6:10: For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

Rom.6:11: Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gal.2:20: I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Q. 91.

But what are good works?

A.

Only those which proceed from a true faith, (a) are performed according to the law of God, (b) and to his glory; (c) and not such as are founded on our imaginations, or the institutions of men. (d)

(a)

Rom.14:23: And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

(b)

Lev.18:4: Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God.

1 Sam.15:22: And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

Eph.2:10: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

(c)

1 Cor.10:31: Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

(d)

Deut.12:32: What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

Ezek.20:18: But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols:

Ezek.20:19: I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them;

Isa.29:13: Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

Matt.15:7: Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

Matt.15:8: This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

Matt.15:9: But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 89:6.

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

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Scripture: New International Version