

Standing, we sing Versification 24:1 beforehand

Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earthⁱ. Beloved, grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christⁱⁱ. By the powerful operation of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Psalm of praise 73:1,10

Prayer

- **Doxology:**
- **Worship:**
- **Confession:**
- **Supplication** (for pardon of sins):
- **Thanksgiving:**
- **Intercession**
(for the need of the congregation, the church, authorities, sinful world and appeal to the promises of God)
- **General supplication:**
- **Illumination of the Holy Spirit** (necessary for the ministry of the Word):

Amen.

Psalm 33:6

Scripture reading: Isaiah 64

Scripture text: Isaiah 64: 8, Catechism Lord's Day 10

⁸But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

Isaiah is busy teaching his people to pray.

- In the preceding chapter Isaiah saw God the Father's judgment over his people
- He realized that his people's situation was very dire

In chapter 63:10 he writes that the people vexed the Holy Spirit with their recalcitrance, and consequently God changed into their enemy. He writes that the Lord will personally fight against them.

With these words the people hear God's judgment pronounced over them, because surely no one can survive a fight with God!

- Who will save them from the pickle they are in?
- The answer is that only One Person can save them, and that is God Himself!
- Which why we read in Isaiah 64:1 that Isaiah begs the Lord to come down from heaven and rend the mountains.

In order to understand this passage we must pay attention to the following three matters:

1. **God's counsel of redemption**
2. **What is the counsel of God?**
3. **What does the New Testament teach?**

1. **God's counsel of redemption**

Isaiah goes to God exactly because that is the only place where redemption is to be found.

- In verse 5 it is written that the Lord meets him who joyfully practices righteousness and who rejoices when he beholds the Lord's works.
- The verse ends with the hope that they will be delivered from their sins after all.

Supplication is always accompanied by the confession of sins

- Which is also what happens here. In verse 6 all the peoples' sins are confessed
- Isaiah confesses that they cannot rightfully insist upon forgiveness
⁶But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. (Isaiah 64:6 KJV)
- He also realizes that it is for this very reason that the Lord has turned from them

We are in that same state of contamination!

- Many of us understand this very well, and it causes us serious reflection on our sin
- Which is why the Lord makes the message known: there is hope!

The prophet appeals to the sincere relation that exists between the Lord and the people (Isaiah 63:13)

¹⁶Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting. (Isaiah 63:16 KJV)

Which is why he says that we are the clay in the Lord's hands.

- The Lords moulds (creates) each one according to His will (verse 8)
- The hope is that, as our Father, the Lord can make something good of us

In Romans 9 the apostle Paul works with the same thought

- Paul writes that God can form what he wills from the clay – the one He can make an object of honour, the other an object of dishonour (Romans 9:21)

Our confession that our destiny is in God's hands is based on amongst others those two passages.

- The origin is to be found in the fact that the Lord created us
¹But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. (Isaiah 43:1 KJV)
- And that He guarantees our continued existence and that He also sustains and preserves us

The Lord's governance maintains us

²⁸For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. (Psalm 37:28 KJV)

²⁰Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. (Exodus 23:20 KJV)

The Lord's counsel is our promise of a life after this one. Our faith in the truth thereof is founded upon the faithfulness of God.

- In some places in the Bible the Lord teaches that we will rise from the dead after we have died – some will rise unto eternal life and some to be in the eternal hideousness of hell! (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:46; John 3:16)
²And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:2 KJV)
- **⁴⁶And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.** (Matthew 25:46 KJV)
- **¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.** (John 3:16 KJV)
- The Lord also reveals that people who convert, are therewith included in God's decree that they will inherit eternal life:
⁴⁸And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. (Acts 13:48 KJV)

2. What is the counsel of God?

We often speak of the God's counsel. Which is why it is necessary to state what we comprehend under the counsel of God

- The counsel of God is all that He upholds (preserves) and governs. In this regard we think of the following pronouncement regarding nations and peoples':
⁸God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. (Psalm 47:8; Psalm 59:13 KJV)
- He is the Planner of all that has happened, that is happening, and that will happen in the furthest future (Hebrews 1:8; Psalm 136:1-9)
- God's counsel is free – no one prescribes to Him what He can and can not do (Job 1:22)
- God's decisions are also permanent. No one can force Him to change His decisions (Genesis 17:1; Job 8:3; Revelation 1:8).

Naturally we cannot comprehend all things contained in God's counsel because we are trapped in time, and inside the limitations of creation. If one wishes to understand the counsel of God, one would have to be perfect, and also have God's insight.

But the Lord reveals His counsel to us. Everything we need to know unto salvation, He makes known to us.

- He reveals to us that He decided that Jesus would come to earth to redeem all the faithful.
- He determined that our redemption is inalienable, as it is established in the merit of Jesus Christ
- He also determined that this redemption entails that through Jesus Christ He is also our God and Father.

3. What does the New Testament teach?

How does God's counsel of redemption coincide with me?

- In Ephesians 1:11 it is written that God has united us under one Head, namely Christ.
- It is also written that in Christ we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will.

According to which it is abundantly clear that God's plan to redeem us, was established and cemented since very long ago. Fixed and unchangeable.

- God's counsel refers and applies to every moment of our existence, because the Lord Jesus teaches for example in Matthew 10:30 that even the hair on our head is counted.
- By which is meant that every single thing that happens to us, is in accordance with His purpose.

The eventual purpose of God's counsel is the preservation of the elect

- It leads to the Lord casting the devil and all evil into hell, and Him gathering the elect in heaven at the end of time.
- By which is not meant that the Lord rules over only people. He literally rules all things – including plants, animals and the earth itself.

So that you will understand that we have a huge responsibility during this life on earth.

- God created us with virtues and strengths and abilities
- We are people of courage, enthusiasm and art and all sorts of things
- Throughout our lives these things must be brought into the service of His glorification

We live in a time where many things happen that try to push God from His throne

- For example; scientists who teach that God created nothing, because each thing developed out of itself
- Some ideologies teach that redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ works no salvation, but that certain social systems can bring about an outcome of blessedness for people in this life
- Then there are numerous people who quite simply refuse to believe that God exists at all

It is into such a life that God sends us with our gifts

- To proclaim that God lives and
- That He disposes of and over all things

We must joyously proclaim this truth because it is true

- By His word, the Lord teaches us that He provides for us
- And that at the Second Coming He recreates us
- That by His Word and Spirit, He preserves us in Lord Jesus Christ on grounds of His merit.

The Lord also rules over all evil that may beset us

- There is no evil that can creep up on you without the Lord knowing and willing and allowing it
- The Lord will allow the devil – as in the case of Job – to tempt us, but the Lord will not allow him to test you beyond your strength

Calvin wrote somewhere that each day the devil must appear before God and obtain His permission to test and tempt people, just as if he were a regular servant.

- And for this reason the Lord will allow the devil to test you, only if your faith will thereby be strengthened, and the Lord thereby glorified

When he survives affliction a believer will always recognise God's hand in events

- Because the grace of the Lord is always so much clearer when compared against the backdrop of the havoc wrought by Satan's works
- The grace of the Lord causes our faith to grow, not wane, in times of crisis

Which is also why He cause His Son to die

- So that by His merit, we can persevere in faith
- So that His crucifixion would direct us towards the ultimate purpose of God's counsel – the Hereafter.

The Lord affirms that He is with us until the end of time

- The entire gospel affirms that He reconciled us with God
- And that the Hereafter is coming

Then let us prove our fidelity in worship and faith

- Knowing that we are objects formed from clay, with the pupose of exhibiting glory
- Let our faithfulness to the Lord reflect it

Let us read Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 10

Question 27. What dost thou mean by the providence of God?

Answer: The almighty and everywhere present power of God; (a) whereby, as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs (b) heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, (c) fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, (d) riches and poverty, (e) yea, and all things come, not by chance, but be his fatherly hand. (f)ⁱⁱⁱ

Question 28. What advantage is it to us to know that God has created, and by his providence does still uphold all things?

Answer: That we may be patient in adversity; (a) thankful in prosperity; (b) and that in all things, which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, (c) that nothing shall separate us from his love; (d) since all creatures are so in his hand, that without his will they cannot so much as move. (e)^{iv}

Closing prayer

Closing Psalm 146:1,3,8

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.^v

Amen.

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ⁱ Psalm 124:8

ⁱⁱ 1 Corinthians 1:3

ⁱⁱⁱ (a) Acts 17:25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; Acts 17:26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; Acts 17:27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: Acts 17:28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Jer.23:23 Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? Jer.23:24 Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD. Isa.29:15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? Isa.29:16 Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding? Ezek.8:12 Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth. (b) Heb.1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; (c) Jer.5:24 Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. Acts 14:17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. (d) John 9:3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. (e) Prov.22:2 The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all. (f) Matt.10:20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. Prov.16:33 The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

^{iv} (a) Rom.5:3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; James 1:3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. Ps.39:9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it. Job 1:21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. Job 1:22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. (b) Deut.8:10 When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. 1 Thess.5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. (c) Ps.55:22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. Rom.5:4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: (d) Rom.8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Rom.8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (e) Job 1:12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. Job 2:6 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. Acts 17:28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Acts 17:25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; Prov.21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

^v 2 Corinthians 13:14