

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 28 MARCH 2010: EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 1:1

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 33:6

- **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 65:2

Scripture reading: John 3.

Scripture text: John 3:13+14 and Heidelberg Catechism Lord's day 7.

“No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,”

They, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, have the eternal life. That is the most important thing in life that we have to cling to, for we know that all people sin.

- We see ourselves that all people are in some way the servants of Satan.
- And it is simply not true that all people know God.

The Lord gives us the knowledge that they, who believe, have the life eternal.

- The incredible is that the Lord does not say that they, who are without sin, have the eternal life. He does not demand perfection.
- He demands belief in Jesus Christ.

Let us consider in this sermon the following:

- 1. The relationship between sin and salvation.**
- 2. The death on the cross and faith.**

1. The relationship between sin and salvation.

Throughout the centuries mankind has had difficulty in explaining the relationship between sin and salvation.

In essence it is about the difference between

- What Adam did to mankind and
- How the Lord Jesus Christ redeemed mankind.

The truth is that the Lord put Adam to a test.

- The moment he fell into sin all his descendants would fall with him.
- Practically it means that all future generations of men would be born in sin and would live in sin. That applies to us as well.
- That explains the misery in which we find ourselves.

Can we escape from this misery? The answer is plain: Yes, we can, but we require a Mediator who is able to lift this burden of sin from us.

What must this Mediator be like?

- The Bible reveals that he must be human being because God does not punish another creature for the sin of mankind.
- The Mediator must be perfect so that he does not bear any sin for which he is punished for then he would be unable redeem others.
- The Mediator must be God so that he would be able to endure the wrath of God without being consumed thereby.
- The Lord Jesus Christ was all these.

He truly died and arose from the dead to propitiate our sins with God so that we could once again live within God's grace.

- To many people this poses a serious problem.
- If the Lord Jesus is God, His ministry must be perfect. Why, then, is there still a hell and why am I still every day under attack from sin?

That is why we examine in our confession (Question 20) the question whether all men are saved by Christ as they have perished in Adam.

- Let us put the question slightly differently and more in the idiom of our day: Is the range of the Lord Jesus' merit on the cross as far as the range of Adam's fall into sin in Paradise?

That is a very delicate question because not all people are saved!

- We must know that Adam and his descendants are in trouble.
- We must also know that there is a Redeemer.
- And we must know where we fit in with His ministry of salvation.

When we want to explain a matter such as this we must know that we are dealing with the Counsel of God and that we must obtain clarity on a number of issues that are connected to the redemption.

- One such issue is the Lord's election (predestination).
 - The election throws much light on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, because it reveals that Jesus Christ definitely did not die for all people.

- He died only for those who believe in Him. They receive the true faith through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

There is therefore a great difference between the consequences of the fall into sin and of the salvation through Jesus Christ.

- At the fall into sin the whole of mankind and the entire creation was cursed because of the sin of man.
- Adam's crime then becomes the birthcurse of every person.
- The similarity between the two occurrences is that both are effective – the one effects death and the other effects life.

2. The death on the cross and faith.

The death on the cross was totally different from Adam's deed, for Adam acted in complete disobedience to God whereas Jesus acted in total obedience to God the Father.

The difference between the two occurrences is:

- Adam's deed encompasses all people who are physically descended from him
- The Lord Jesus' deed encompasses all people who are His spiritual descendants
- This is what John 1:12 writes:
- **Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His Name, he gave the right to become children of God –**

All people who reject the Lord Jesus therefore never become children of God. That is also clear from John 3:18:

Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

The cross of the Lord Jesus therefore, effects a clear distinction between people.

- It differs from the perdition that came about through Adam because all mankind, without distinction, shares in Adam's fall
- The passage we have just read puts it clearly that all who fail to accept Jesus remain in Adam's curse.
- The true believers enter God's rest, whereas regarding the others there is an oath of the Lord that they shall never enter His rest. It is written in Hebrews 4:3:
 - **Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, 'So I declared on oath in my anger, They shall never enter my rest.' And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world.**

The further differences between the act of sin of Adam and the act of redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ is also shown in the different covenants of which each act is the source.

- Adam is the head of the covenant of works. He had to cultivate and protect creation.
 - Eventually this covenant became the Ten Commandments, the Law.
 - Paul calls this the "covenant of death" because nobody can keep it.
- In contrast to this the Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the covenant of grace.
 - This covenant is limited: only those who believe in Him receive grace.

Adam performed an act of the flesh, hence the punishment for it is also in the flesh.

- Your body dies and is buried.
- This death is a symbol of the spiritual death that came about because of the fall into sin.

For this reason the Lord Jesus Christ comes to redeem both the body and the spirit.

- He dies exactly as we do and is buried.
- But He arises from the dead and brings us back into life with Him.
- That is why in this life this covenant stresses the spiritual – your soul is saved but on the last day your body is quickened and re-united with your soul,

In this covenant the emphasis lies on the Holy Spirit and His ministry.

- Only through faith are we incorporated into the redemptive ministry of Jesus.
- This worked by God the Holy Spirit because nobody is able to believe unless the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, moves him to believe and to persevere in the faith.

If everything then turns on faith, we must know what faith is and what it entails.

- In the epistle to the Romans the apostle Paul writes (at 1:17) that the righteous will live by faith alone.
- Faith is therefore of the utmost importance.

In the first place faith is knowledge.

- That means what you know because it is revealed to you in the Bible.
- It is the duty of everyone to study the Bible and to make your own that what is written there.

Faith is also trust.

- You must accept what is written in the Bible as true.
- You must trust that the Lord's counsel of salvation as it is revealed therein also includes you.

Put differently:

- The Bible reveals how the Lord redeems from sin people who have fallen into sin.
- By His grace I am included in that redemption.
- I am reprieved by God.

Our creed is a concise version of the contents of the Bible:

- The first part of the creed says what we know and believe of God the Father: He is our Father and the Creator of heaven and earth.
- Thereafter we confess that, from God's perspective, Jesus Christ is the only-begotten Son of God, but, from our perspective, He is our Redeemer.
- We confess His passion and His arising from the dead.
- We also confess Him to be the Highest Judge who shall judge the living and the dead at the end of time.
- Then we confess the Holy Spirit and his ministry, the church, the resurrection and the eternal life.

He who understands these matters and makes them his own no longer lives subject to the slavery of fear of death and life after death. These matters give us the knowledge and the trust to live courageously until we stand before the throne of God in the Hereafter.

Let us read what the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's day 7, writes:

7. Lord's Day

Q. 20.

Are all men then, as they perished in Adam, saved by Christ?

A.

No; (a) only those who are ingrafted into him, and, receive all his benefits, by a true faith. (b)

(a)

Matt.7:14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Matt.22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

(b)

Mark 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

John 3:16 For 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 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Isa.53:11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Ps.2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.

Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Rom.11:17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

Rom.11:19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

Rom.11:20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

Rom.3:22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

Heb.4:2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Heb.4:3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

Heb.5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

Heb.10:39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Heb.11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Q. 21.

What is true faith?

A.

True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in his word, (a) but also an assured confidence, (b) which the Holy Ghost (c) works by the gospel in my heart; (d) that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, (e) are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits. (f)

(a)

James 2:19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

(b)

2 Cor.4:13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;

Eph.2:7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Eph.2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Eph.2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Eph.3:12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

Gal.2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Heb.11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Heb.11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Heb.11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

Heb.11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

Heb.11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Heb.4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

James 1:6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

Matt.16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Philip.1:19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Rom.4:17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

Rom.4:21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

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

Rom.1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Rom.10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Rom.10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Rom.4:16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Rom.4:18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

Rom.4:19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:

Rom.4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

Rom.3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Rom.3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

(c)

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

Matt.16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

2 Cor.4:13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;

John 6:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

Eph.2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Philip.1:19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Acts 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

(d)

Rom.1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Rom.10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

1 Cor.1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

Acts 10:44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

Acts 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

(e)

Rom.1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Gal.3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

Heb.10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Heb.10:38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

Gal.2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

(f)

Eph.2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Rom.3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Rom.5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Luke 1:77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

Luke 1:78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,

Q. 22.

What is then necessary for a christian to believe?

A.

All things promised us in the gospel, (a) which the articles of our catholic undoubted christian faith briefly teach us.

(a)

John 20:31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Matt.28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Q. 23.

What are these articles?

A.

1. I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:
2. And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord:
3. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary:
4. Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried: He descended into hell:
5. The third day he rose again from the dead:
6. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty:
7. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead:
8. I believe in the Holy Ghost:
9. I believe a holy catholic church: the communion of saints:
10. The forgiveness of sins:
11. The resurrection of the body:
12. And the life everlasting.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 128:4.

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

28 March 2010

Scripture: New International Version