

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2009: EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 63:6

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 116:1+6

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 4:1

Scripture reading: Matthew 10

Scripture text: Matthew 10:16 and Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 43

"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."

Be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

It is promised that every true believer who puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be perfectly safe.

- All that is required is faith and obedience.
- Be careful (shrewd) and true (innocent).

The true believer must be as careful as the snake who knows that it is hated by mankind and therefore avoids man as best it can.

- But he must also be as true (innocent) as the doves.
- Innocence (honesty, rectitude) here means to be without guile, peaceful, avoiding quarrels and fights.

This instruction from the Lord Jesus therefore fits in well with the Ninth Commandment which forbids the giving of false testimony.

- The Lord Jesus says that for the Church it shall be more difficult than when a wolf is among the sheep.
- He sends every Christian out as a sheep among wolves. In an aggressive and hostile world you must live a principled life without harming the glory of God.
- Gossiping and mischief-making is dangerous – it is like a wolf among a flock of sheep that can kill all of them.

There are people who exploit scandal-mongering and gossip to vilify the honour of the church (the faithful).

- The enemies of the faithful are people who are near to them and people who are far away from them.
- In the passage we have read the Lord Jesus in verse 17 says that the wolves are Jews and in verse 18 that the Gentiles are the wolves.

Let us consider the Ninth Commandment from this perspective.

1. **The Ninth Commandment aims to protect us from evil.**
2. **The Ninth Commandment warns us to be careful.**
3. **The Ninth Commandment urges us to a serving love.**

1. **The Ninth Commandment aims to protect us from evil.**

Following the example of John 8:44 where the Lord Jesus Christ speaks out against people who go around telling lies we call the trespassing of the Ninth Commandment the *works of the devil himself*.

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.(John 8:44)

The Bible warns us not to be like the devil for Satan is the father of all lies.

- If you live a life of lying and fraud you live according to the style of the devil.
- You may not twist the truth or turn it out of context for that is the way the devil does it.
- If your life is like this you are a follower of the devil.

That is a fact, for the devil is a liar from the very first word he speaks.

- All the troubles we know in the world today are the result of the devil's lies.
- Satan is happiest when we are untruthful and fall into trouble because of these lies.

The warning is clear:

- Do not by your works become children of Satan.
- Words too are works.
- Evil works strengthen the power of Satan.

Unfortunately there are many people who claim to be Christians but who, by the dishonesty in their lives, harm the glory of God.

- The warning comes timely because people are inclined to slander their fellow man.
- To publish stories that are untrue.
- To sow discord and hate and even schism by their untruths.
- In that way the kingly image of God in you is defaced.

Remember that Satan is powerful. He has sufficient power to make us stumble, given the opportunity.

2. The Ninth Commandment warns us to be careful.

God hears everything and judges everything.

- He hears also our lies and our slandering of our neighbour.
- That means that we must realise that God Personally is a witness to all we say

We therefore have no defence should we appear before God about this sin.

The first reason for being careful is that we must know that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is in its conduct and promises always absolutely truthful.

- With God there is nothing but the truth.
- If you as the bearer of the image of God do not display the same characteristic you may expect to be punished by God for this failure.

Which brings us to the second reason for care, namely, God's judgement.

- God's judgement is not something to be trifled with.
- Untruth is directly opposed to God's holiness.
- God Himself promised that He will punish all sin in time and eternally. Which simply means that if you are not a lover of the truth and fail to come to repentance you will be punished with hell.

Satan himself is the best example of this.

- With lies he rebelled in heaven and as a result of this he was banished from heaven.
- Thereafter he caused man to fall into sin and God Himself call s him a murderer of men.
- For this unholy conduct against God and mankind Satan is judged forever. He is in hell.

Please do not think that the terror of hell is not so terrible.

- There is nobody on earth who can bear it.
- The terror of hell is accompanied by the darkest depths of God-forsakenness and pain – much more than we can imagine.

It is interesting that nobody wants to be known as a murderer or a prostitute but generally speaking people do not mind being untruthful and slanderous.

- We do not mind judging others whereas God alone may judge.
- And while God holds all sins equal in His judgement.

Consider what sins are included in the Ninth Commandment:

- bearing false witness
- twisting words
- scandal-mongering
- slander
- condemning rashly or joining others in doing so
- telling lies and deceit.

You see, if we are careful with the Ninth Commandment, we serve the glory of God and of our neighbour. At the same those who refrain from this kind of conduct serve their own honour because, in truth, we do not really respect people who have loose tongues.

3. The Ninth Commandment urges us to a serving love.

The Commandment is somewhat problematical because it is difficult not to speak of other people when conversing.

- One has to speak of others.
- The question is: When may I say something of another? And what may I say?

The answer is that we must love peace and the truth – careful (shrewd) as the snakes and true (innocent) as the doves.

- If we can remember this always we shall also remember that the people we discuss in our conversation also belong to the Lord.
- We shall then spontaneously speak to the greater glory of the Lord.
- We shall then serve our neighbour by our words because we shall only speak of matters that are to his benefit and honour.

Just as lies always cause discord love creates unity.

- The result of mutual love and forbearance is that you will protect your neighbour's honour and defend him when others threaten his honour.
- In that way you will by your life-style show the redeeming image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

See what the Lord Jesus did:

- Throughout His life He noticed the good in people.
- When the adulterous woman was brought to the Lord He told them that he who was without sin should cast the first stone.
- You will not cover your own sins by shouting loudly about the sins of others.
- That is why the Lord sent the woman away with the instruction not to sin again.

See the loving grace He revealed on the cross:

- On the cross Jesus prays that those who crucified Him be forgiven because they did not know what they were doing.
- One of the murderers on the cross confessed his sins:
- The Lord did not blame him for all the sins he had committed in the past
- He only said: Today you will be with Me in Paradise.

The Lord Jesus could have condemned us all to hell for our sins.

- At the Last Judgement He can reveal all the dark patches of the sins filling our lives.
- But He does the opposite – He died for us.

On the cross He laid down His life so that our position before God could be changed.

- He changed us from people tainted by sin to people perfectly cleansed
- In the process He poured out the Holy Spirit on us – the Holy Spirit is the Guardian of our thoughts and our tongue.

Let us continue the struggle until the Lord comes, for the Lord says in Psalm 25:10:

All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of His covenant.

The Lord Jesus Christ suffered for the truth.

- He was slandered but He did not slander in return
- That is why we must, guided by the Holy Spirit, do exactly the same.

Let us read what the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's day 43) says about the Eighth Commandment.

43. Lord's Day

Q. 112.

What is required in the ninth commandment?

A.

That I bear false witness against no man, (a) nor falsify any man's words; (b) that I be no backbiter, nor slanderer; (c) that I do not judge, nor join in condemning any man rashly, or unheard; (d) but that I avoid all sorts of lies and deceit, as the proper works of the devil, (e) unless I would bring down upon me the heavy wrath of God; (f) likewise, that in judgment and all other dealings I love the truth, speak it uprightly and confess it; (g) also that I defend and promote, as much as I am able, the honor and good character of my neighbour. (h)

(a)

Prov.19:5 A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.

Prov.19:9 A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish.

Prov.21:28 A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly.

(b)

Ps.15:3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

Ps.50:19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.

Ps.50:20 Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.

(c)

Rom.1:29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

Rom.1:30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

(d)

Matt.7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

Matt.7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Luke 6:37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

(e)

John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

(f)

Prov.12:22 Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.

Prov.13:5 A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.

(g)

1 Cor.13:6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Eph.4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

(h)

1 Pet.4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 46:1.

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

Amen

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Scripture: New International Version