

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE : SUNDAY 16 October 2011 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Scripture Versification 9-11:1,2

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: Scripture Versification 2-2:1,3

Prayer:

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation of 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 81:9,10,11

Scripture reading: Isaiah 44:6-23, Heidelberg Catechisms, Lord's Day 34:94-95

Scripture text: Rom. 1:18

God's anger is revealed from heaven against all the sin and evil of the people whose evil ways prevent the truth from being known (Good News)

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness (KJV)

94. Q. What does the LORD require in the first commandment?

A. That for the sake of my very salvation I avoid and flee all idolatry,^[1] witchcraft, superstition,^[2] and prayer to saints or to other creatures.^[3] Further, that I rightly come to know the only true God.^[4] trust in Him alone,^[5] submit to Him with all humility^[6] and patience,^[7] expect all good from Him only,^[8] and love,^[9] fear,^[10] and honour Him^[11] with all my heart. In short, that I forsake all creatures rather than do the least thing against His will.^[12]

^[1] I Cor. 6:9, 10; 10:5-14; I John 5:21. ^[2] Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:9-12. ^[3] Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10; 22:8, 9. ^[4] John 17:3. ^[5] Jer. 17:5, 7. ^[6] I Pet. 5:5, 6. ^[7] Rom. 5:3, 4; I Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14; Col. 1:11; Heb. 10:36. ^[8] Ps. 104:27, 28; Is. 45:7; James 1:17.

^[9] Deut. 6:5; (Matt. 22:37). ^[10] Deut. 6:2; Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Matt. 10:28; I Pet. 1:17. ^[11] Deut. 6:13; (Matt. 4:10); Deut. 10:20. ^[12] Matt. 5:29, 30; 10:37-39; Acts 5:29.

95. Q. What is idolatry?

A. Idolatry is having or inventing something in which to put our trust instead of, or in addition to, the only true God who has revealed Himself in His Word.^[1]

^[1] I Chron. 16:26; Gal. 4:8, 9; Eph. 5:5; Phil. 3:19.

Theme: The grateful believer serves only God with his whole life.

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, each and every person on earth, it doesn't matter whether he lives in the far off rural areas or the city or in a jungle somewhere, knows that there is a God. Each and every culture has some kind of description of a creator of the earth and the people and animals. This knowledge which exist with every human, is part of the general grace of God- or as we confess in the Canons of Dordt a little bit of the light of nature that remained in man after the fall.

The first people that god created were perfect. They knew God completely and loved Him. This is why they served and praised Him perfectly. With the fall man tore himself from the living God. Instead of remaining obedient to God alone, they listened to Satan for a moment. As a result of this thoughtless moment in the life of man, an unknown distance between man and God was created, a distance which held terrible consequences for mankind.

This distance between God and man resulted in man searching for God. Man wants someone bigger and stronger than himself whom he can look up to, whom he can praise and worship. Man searches because God left the awareness that He exists in his thoughts. And now God does not remain hidden from the searching man. The Lord testifies in Romans 1 : **Ever since God created the world, his invisible qualities, both his eternal power and his divine nature, have been clearly seen; they are perceived in the things that God has made.**

In nature and in the work that God still does in His creation, He gives indicators that He is there, that He really exists.

The Question we now ask is, what does man do with the knowledge which God places in reach of man, in nature? Those of us who have come to know God through His spirit and Word have learnt to use the Bible as our glasses when we look at nature. We see the fine art of God in the spring flowers and we see the almighty power of God in a tornado. We are privileged that God has led us to through the Bible, see Him work in nature.

But there are so many other people, who, while they think they are clever and have much worldly knowledge, do not want to acknowledge God's existence. These people, while they are foolish, think that they are very clever. Instead of acknowledging the Creator and only living God and give Him praise, they are of opinion that the creations have the power and abilities which belong to God. Paul says that these people suppress the knowledge of God so that it doesn't have a positive effect on them. These people stray even further. They start worshipping the creations as idols. We know from history that the sun and the moon were worshipped. Even images of animals, birds, people and snakes were made because people thought they were gods.

Now, in Isaiah 44, the Lord makes a mockery of people who turn to idols. Where in the world have you seen that a piece of dead wood can save you. The wooden idol does have eyes, but he cannot see. He has ears, but he cannot hear your prayers. He has a mouth but cannot comfort his worshippers in

time of need. The Lord also says that such idols need to be carried around, because, although they have legs they cannot walk.

Beloved, God starts His Ten Commandments with this commandment: **Worship no god but Me**, because He loves us and wants us to protect us from ourselves. The Lord our God is the only God. He is the First and the Last, apart from Him there is no other God. The things that people see as gods, are creations of their own straying thoughts. Those idols are the spoiled fruit from their twisted understanding. The Lord wants to protect man from his own idiocy and foolishness. That is why, at the beginning of His Law He says: *Worship no god but Me*.

Now someone can argue that we do not do such foolish things anymore. We are Christians of the twenty first century. We are not going to bow in front of a dead statue and ask him to save us. In any case, we know God as the living and almighty God. Brothers sisters and children before we come to the easy conclusion that we obey the first commandment 100% we must first listen to what we confess in our answer of question 95. Idolatry is not only to have an image in the place of God but also to **besides Him have something in which you place your trust**. The Lord says this in His Word: **Worship no god but Me**.

Things in which we easily place our trust, instead of in Christ, is so ordinary and within our reach. Pay attention, amongst us there are people who, if they don't have money become depressed and negative but if their purse is filled with money they are friendly and their spirits are lifted. In what do these people place their trust, joy and happiness? On money and riches, nothing else. On what does their prosperity depend? On possessions, nothing else. Is this then not an Idol as well, as these people cannot or do not have the desire to place his trust in the Lord.

Maybe this other idolatry that many people are guilty of. We can so easily feel close and in awe of a person. When those people aren't there anymore we feel that our whole world is falling apart. We can easily talk about many of our fellow citizens who view, old president Mandela as some kind of saviour. We can easily talk about the majority of people who expect to have salvation for his soul in a political system. But haven't we Afrikaners and Christians done the same in the past? Today, there are still people who, after 17 years of a government change still feel, powerless and disillusioned, because it isn't a white Afrikaans government anymore they still feel powerless and see no future for the country.

Just as bad: in earlier times many Christians were less outspoken about pornography and trading on Sundays, we were in a comfort zone- our previous government did the church's work as well. Concerning these issues, the government maintained law and order. And now that we have a government, that does not only strive for Christian values, we have nothing to say. We do not know what to say and we do not know how to be prophets towards the government. We were so attached to a Christian government, which did the work that we Christians should have done and we very easily accepted that the government would uphold our values.

Maybe some of us can say that we do not place our trust in money or possessions to be happy. Others can perhaps say that they are not attached to people and institutions. But, and this is the spear-point of this text from Romans, not one of are not guilty of disobeying this commandment. This we conclude from two words in verse 18 namely, ungodly and unrighteousness. Ungodliness is the desire that man has to be god over his own life. Unrighteousness is a broken life in which man does wrong over and over.

If we were to be totally honest with ourselves we will see these things in our lives as well. Every time we decide, in a certain situation, to act as we want and not pay heed to what the Lord advises we are

ungodly. In that moment we want to be god in our own lives. We do not trust the Lord's judgement but we trust in our own. My own sinful desires, and not God's will becomes the standard I weigh my life with in that moment. Who are we serving then, who do we acknowledge as god of our life? Not the Lord and Almighty God, but ourselves. This type of mindset, beloved congregation leads to self-destructions. For this reason man is his own worst enemy.

When we pay attention we will see that when the first commandment is not important to us anymore, when we do not want to acknowledge God as God and wait for all thing that are good from him, it becomes easier to ignore the other nine commandments. Take a good look, each one of the sins which Pauls mentions from verse 24, is relevant to one or more of the other nine commandments. If we do not acknowledge God as our only and living God, we will not heed what He has to say to us.

For the sake of the sanctity of our souls, we must steer clear of anything that we want to place into or next to where God belongs in our lives. Did you hear? For the sake of our sanctity, for the sake of our everlasting life with God, we must stay away and flee from these things. God demands from us that we shall love and serve Him alone, with our hearts, souls, minds and strength.

To enable us to be obedient to the first commandment, the Lord even went as far as protecting us from ourselves. Because He allowed His only Son to be hammered to the cross, because of our ungodliness and unrighteousness, He also gave us His Spirit. The Holy Spirit lets allows us to get to know the one true God, perfectly, through His Word. From the bible we get to know God as the almighty, omnipresent, all-knowing God. We get to know Him as the Creator of everything that exists. We get to know Him as a God who is compassionate. He looks for and saves people. He went as far as sacrificing His Son in order to protect us.

Isn't this love and grace which God revealed and still reveals to you and me enough proof to trust in Him alone? We can trust God, He will never beat around the bush with us. He will not give us a snake if we ask for a fish. He will not do us short or keep things from us which can aid us in becoming sanctified. It is, however, for our sanctity that He demands from us to Love Him alone with our whole heart and to fear and praise him. We can expect everything that is good from Him.

That is why we can continually beg from the Lord to guide us through His Word and Spirit so that we can submit ourselves to Him. The Lord wants to give His Holy Spirit and grace to only those who with the deepest desire continuously prays and give thanks therefore. The Lord wants us to love and serve Him with our entire lives. That is why He, if it is my and your deepest desire to obey Him in everything, will allow His Grace and His Holy Spirit to work in us so that we can obey the first commandment more and more.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 73:11,12

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

Rev. CCA Vrey
Reformed Church Bellville

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