

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2009: EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 73:10

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 23:1

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 19:4

Scripture reading: Romans 2

Scripture text: Romans 2:6 and Heidelberg Catechism Lord's day 4

God "will give to each person according to what he has done".

(Proverbs 24:12: **Will He not repay each person according to what he has done?**)

Let us translate this passage into our everyday manner of speech:-

...everybody who sullies himself with sin shall be punished...

We tend to say that the Lord is the guilty One because it is He who is to punish us.

- or we say: He has not chosen that one – it is therefore the Lord's fault that such person is as he is.

The Lord reveals here that by his works/conduct a person shows what is to become of him as what he does shows where he feels at home.

How does the Lord feel about our sins? Clearly the Lord is angered by all that we do wrong (sin)!

We consider the following three issues:-

1. What angers the Lord?

2. The Lord's revelation about the punishment with which He punishes sin.

3. Is it true that the Lord's judgement is immutable?

1. What angers the Lord?

Modern man does not want or wish to know a God who becomes wrathful. He seeks a God who only is loving and forgiving.

But the LORD does not reveal Himself as being such a God.

- He abhors sin.
- He is angered by it and therefore He punishes it.
- Remember the following passages:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. (Romans 1:18)

The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. (Nahum 1:2)

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteousness will be revealed. (Romans 2:5)

In this last passage the Bible is sharp and to the point with us. The Holy Spirit accuses us of three serious offences:-

- He says that we have ***stubborn hearts***.
 - We know this saying well, we hear it also being said of Pharaoh.
 - His heart was hardened against the Lord, in other words, he rebelled against the Lord.
 - He refused to obey the Lord when the Lord spoke to him.
- Then He says that our ***hearts are unrepentant***.
 - The Lord therefore puts the unrepentance squarely upon us! It is our fault that we do not repent fully – because we make our hearts to be unrepentant.
- The third accusation is directed at the end of our existence.
...storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when His righteousness will be revealed.
- We therefore gather the wrath of God. Let us put this figuratively: We store the wrath of God as a dam stores water.

This passage speaks only of trouble! Happily the Bible also speaks of another aspect!

- The Lord is also a God of mercy and love.
- He shows love to mankind in a particular way:- He reforms and saves some of them.
- This He does by Himself becoming man and in this condition He bears His own wrath for sin and reconciles Himself with man
- And He comes as the Holy Spirit to dwell in them. Listen to this passage and hear what the Lord says of these people – these people are you!

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. (Romans 8:9)

What does this say? It says that we have the Spirit of God, therefore we belong to Him!

2. The Lord's revelation about the punishment with which He punishes

The LORD reveals that He punishes all sin. He punishes sin during our earthly life and He punishes sin unto eternity.

Sins are divided into two groups.

- The one group is known as **original sin**. These are sins we inherit from our forebears together with the taint thereof. They are sins in which we share without having participated in them. Consider the following passages:

“...You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me,...(Exodus 20:5)

“And He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children and their children for the sin of their fathers to the third and fourth generation.” (Exodus 34:6+7)

- The other group is known as the **actual sins**.
 - These are sins we did not inherit. They are the sins we plan and do ourselves.
 - These include sins which we commit at the instigation of another or we allow ourselves to be dragged into by another. Consider the following:

“You destroy those who tell lies; bloodthirsty and deceitful men the LORD abhors.”(Psalm 5:6)

“These things you have done and I kept silent; you thought I was altogether like you. But I will rebuke you and accuse you to your face.”(Psalm 50:21)

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.” (Ephesians 5:6)

The Lord punishes both groups of sin fully. There is no excuse for either of them!

The Lord punishes sin twice – the Lord punishes it temporarily and eternally.

- That means that during your life on earth the Lord punishes certain sins.
 - That is temporarily.
 - Temporarily in this sense means that the Lord punishes it in this time – for as long as time continues.
- Then there are sins which the Lord punishes so severely that the punishment continues after death – these are sins which cause one to go to hell.
 - The eternal punishment is banishment to hell.

There are a number of passages in the Bible that stress the matter of punishment. For example, the Lord speaks of punishment that is executed unto hell:

“They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power. (2Thessalonians 1:9)

But the Lord also says that He punishes disobedience with death. There death means that we shall die on this earth – and death is there a sign of hell:

“..but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”(Genesis 2:17)

It is clearly revealed that sin eventuates in the eternal death. The eternal death is nothing else but hell.

“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned-“ (Romans 5:12)

An aspect of the Lord’s punishment that stands out clearly is that someone who does not come to repentance and who is not saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus, is doomed:

“Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of one to come. “ (Romans 5:14)

The Lord also threatens with punishment people who refuse to obey Him:

- Consider the plagues that hit Egypt!
- Each time Pharaoh refused to obey he and his people felt it!

3. Is it true that the Lord’s judgement is immutable?

The Lord is, above all, a God of mercy. The whole Bible testifies to it that the Lord reveals His compassion with people.

But the Lord’s grace is different from our mercy. We think that grace means that one is to be set free from the punishment when one has transgressed.

- That cannot be with the Lord, for then His perfect righteousness would be compromised.
- Why would He threaten punishment if He were to let sin go unpunished?

The Lord’s grace does not take away punishment. His righteousness demands two things:

- One is that all sin be punished. Of this righteousness of the Lord we read in Psalm 119 **“Righteous are you, O Lord, and your laws are right” (Psalm 119:137)**
- Second is that there must be a balance between the sin and the punishment for each sin: **“All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” (Galatians 3:10)**

That is why we read that the Lord reserves the severest punishment – the punishment that encompasses both body and soul – for people who refuse to repent and who remain unbowed.

- It is clear that in this passage the Lord shows a definite balance between the sin and the punishment that follows it:

“God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out of the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power. (2Thessalonians 1:6-9)

Likewise we know that the Lord’s grace consists thereof that He grants relief where anybody shows true remorse for his sins. Consider Deuteronomy 28:

All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God. (Deut.28:2)

This does not mean that the Lord has done away with the holiness of his justice.

- His justice provided a Person who would as our redeemer bear the punishment in our stead.
- He fully punished every morsel of sin on the Lord Jesus and now He grants us His mercy as that is all that remains in His Counsel. His wrath and punishment over sin were exhausted onto the Lord Jesus. Consider the following passages:-

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:17)

So that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:21)

Let us read together what our confession writes about the Lord's justice, His punishment and grace: Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's day 4:

Question 9: Does not God, then, wrong man by requiring of him in His law that which he cannot perform?

Answer: *Not at all; for God made man capable of performing it, but man, through the instigation of the devil, by his own wilful disobedience, deprived himself and all his posterity of these gifts.*

Eph 4:21; Gen.3:13; 1Tim2:13-14; Gen 3:6; Rom 5:12.

Question 10: Will God suffer such disobedience and apostasy to go unpunished?

Answer: *By no means; but He is terribly displeased with our original as well as actual sins; and will punish them by a just judgement temporarily and eternally, as He has declared "cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them."*

Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12; Ps 50:21; 5:5; Nah 1:2; Ex 20:5; 34:7; Rom 1:18; Eph 5:6; Deut 27:26; Gal 3:10.

Question 11: Is, then, God not also merciful?

Answer: *God is indeed merciful. But He is also just; therefore His justice requires that sin which is committed against the Most High Majesty of God, be also punished with extreme, that is, everlasting punishment of body and soul.*

Ex 34:6-7; 20:6; Ps 7:9; Ex 20:5; 23:7; 34:7; Ps 5:4-5; Nah 1:2-3.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 31:1+15

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

Amen

Dr MJ Du Plessis
Reformed Church Bellville
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Scripture: New International Version