

Standing, we sing: Psalm 89:10

10

*“My right hand shall not fail, but will abide with him;
Forever shall My arm uphold and strengthen him.
No foe shall him outwit, no wicked man him humble;
His haters I’ll strike down, his foes shall reel and stumble,
For by My steadfast love his enemies are halted,
And in My faithful Name his horn shall be exalted’.*

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 Christⁱⁱⁱ. By the powerful operation of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Palm 33:2,3

2

*God spoke his word to make the heavens;
His spirit gave the stars their birth.
He gathers all the oceans’ waters
In storehouses around the earth.
Who should not adore him,
Stand in awe before him?
What he spoke was done:
Place and life were given
To seas, earth, and heaven.
Let all fear the LORD!*

3

*The LORD upsets the plans of nations;
He frustrates all that they devise.
But God’s own plans stand firm forever,
And all his purposes are wise.
Blessed is that nation,
Every generation
For whom God is LORD.
Bound to him forever,
Nothing now can sever
God from those he chose^{iv}*

Prayer.

Lord, you are the eternal God and Father, and you are blessed above all. You clothed the earth with splendour and glory, but with great blessings in Christ, you also prepared a place for us in heaven. We praise and thank you Lord, that the Council of your Will to take us out of evil’s hand, is established for all eternity, and that neither our doubt, nor any power can rob us of this privilege. We thank you that you predestined us so that we may be heirs of your eternal kingdom.

With great sincerity we thank you for the foundation of our preservation, namely your mercy in the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowing your mercy and experiencing your peace, our cup runs over. Then the fullness is fulfilled over us.

But against this holiness we rethink our sin with trembling. Our wanton transgressions. Lord, please guard our tongues, so that we never slander your honourable Name. And also so that we do not dishonour any of your children with words. We regularly commit these transgressions, and therefore we beg of you strength from above to overcome these misdeeds.

But also give us the unshaking courage to proclaim your Word and Justice to every man. The courage and conviction to not yield when we hear the voice of your Spirit, which convinces us of your Will and demands. How often must we confess to our shame, that we do not proclaim your ways. And are oftentimes shamefully silent in our weakness. And yet other times stir up evil.

Be with us in the proclamation of your Word. Be near to each office bearer and grant such insight that we may clearly and distinctly say: Thus says the Lord GOD. Also in our worship services, may your Spirit speak, and move us to salvation, but also warn us to repent of evil. Hear us in Christ’s Name.

Amen.

Psalm 42:7

9

*O my soul, why are you grieving,
Why disquieted in me?
Put your hope in God, believing
He will still your refuge be.
I again shall praise his grace
For the comfort of his face;
He will show his help and favor,
For he is my God and Savior.^v*

Scripture reading: Romans 3:20 – 24^{vi} and Romans 8:30^{vii} vv. ; 2 Samuel 9:6 – 13^{viii}.

Text: Romans 3:20 – 24 and Romans 8:30 vv. Catechism Lord's Day 23

²⁰Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. ²¹But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ²²Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: ²³For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ²⁴Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (Romans 3:20 – 24)

The entire faith is grace and judgment. Joy and sorrow.

- Due to our sin we are condemned to the deepest depths of hell.
- Due to our sin we are robbed entirely of the glory of God.

However

- We are inhabitants of heaven because the Lord Jesus Christ delivers us from sin.
- We are clothed with the magnificence of God's presence.
- Faith is the unity which binds all these things to each other.

Faith is to recognise and know these things, and to know the balance there between, and to maintain it.

- Faith is to embrace everything whole-heartedly, without rejecting certain parts thereof.
- It is characteristic of true faith that it adheres to the whole truth, all of it – from the Fall to the resurrection of the flesh and eternal life.

Now the question: What does it matter to you that you believe all of this? Then we answer that it matters a great deal, because these things reassure me that I am declared righteous before God, and an heir to eternal life.

- In the first instance it thus has to do with the worth that I ascribed to justification. We come before God's throne without any right to a meritorious position.
- We are like Mephibosheth in the Old Testament, the son of Jonathan, when David gave all of Saul's possessions to him, in addition to the assurance that he will always eat bread at David's table.

Out of the blue, there was provision for him.

- It was mercy to which he had no rightful claim.
- Therefore he could also answer: What is your servant that you should look upon such a dead dog like me?
- Let us take a look at ourselves. Filthy in our sin.
 - Then God sets the table of grace for us.
 - We receive the bread of eternal life – acquittal through the Lord Jesus Christ and eternal life.

The further symbolism is seen therein that Mephibosheth inherits his grandfather's possessions, in other words he gains possession of an inheritance which would have been his anyway, had history run its normal course.

- With faith we also take up the position of heirs before the Lord.
- We inherit the possessions which we would have had, had Adam not fallen in sin.

We are taken into consideration for salvation goods that our earliest ancestor received from God.

- He was in personal contact with the Lord, and His glory was inborn in Adam.
- Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we receive the promise of the wedding with the Lamb - a feast that returns us to the perfect relationship with God.

Each one knows himself. We would be blatantly dishonest if we were to deny that we are filled with unrighteousness.

- Honestly, the Lord should condemn us for all we do, think and say.
- The Lord's righteousness should actually dictate that the only way in which justice can be done is to deny us eternal life, and to repay us with eternal death.

- So often we also feel so unworthy due to the truth of our sin that we cannot view ourselves as heirs to eternal life.

But then there is the faith that teaches that with God there is not only judgment.

- This faith teaches that notwithstanding, we are nevertheless heirs to the kingdom of God.
- In spite of everything that counts against us, we still have the hope of eternal life.

To be viewed by men as being just, is already a big deal for us. How much more then to be viewed thus by God?

- That is the tremendous worth of all of these things that therein I learn to know the Lord's love for me.
- I am declared completely free.

The acquittal is also not merely play, or just by way of words.

- There truly is a court case wherein God is the Judge, and I am tried - and in this case I am acquitted of sin and guilt.
- I am not acquitted because I committed no sins.
- Neither because I am actually innocent.
- I am acquitted precisely because, by virtue of all these things in which I believe, the Lord Jesus Christ frees me. He was punished for all of my transgressions, so that I could be acquitted.

The cause of having been declared righteous is then also the second point of justification, which attention must be paid to.

- No court proceeding allows for someone who is guilty of a whole range of sins and transgressions, to be acquitted out of hand and be declared righteous.
- Nevertheless it happens in the court session over which God presides! Romans 8:33 vv clearly states that God so justifies His children, that no one can lay a charge against him or her!

It is striking in our song: Where is the mouth that dares condemn if God declares His child just?

- We can only say: Acquitted without merit.
- The grace of the Lord alone grants me forgiveness of my sins.
- The Lord's grace is the only cause for me having been declared righteous.

We are in the same position as the publican who went to go pray in the parable.

- By grace we appear before the Lord.
- By grace we can pray.
- By grace we may go away righteous. (That is why question 60 of the Heidelberg Catechism teaches that my conscience accuses me that I have sinned grossly against each of God's commandments.)

Who or what is this grace that allows me to have a share of all of these things? The Lord Jesus Christ grants me this grace.

- It is the fulfilment of the grace of God.
- It comes to the fore beautifully in Paul's argument in Romans 8:
³¹What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

The meaning is that we can make but one pronouncement with regards to grace, and that is that the Lord therein protects me against His judgment.

- Paul continues his argument with the fact that the Lord did not even spare His own Son, but delivered Him for our sake, how will He not with Him, also graciously give us all things?
- We also hear it at the Lord's Supper.

Our Lord Jesus Christ had to stoop under the judgment and wrath of God for the sake of our transgressions.

- As the Bible states it another place: The certificate of our indebtedness, was nailed to His cross.
- If the Lord Jesus Christ had to suffer all these things, why would He then now withhold His grace from us?
- He will naturally not withhold it from us, but He will grant it us!

By our very nature we are averse to grace.

- We are very indifferent at times - just listen to how callous we are when we are reprimanded!
- But the Lord is not indifferent! He plans a grim death for His Son, to thereby avenge His wrath over our indifference.
- Now the Lord shows us mercy, even though we are so reckless and indifferent. Our Guarantor had to pay the ransom for our irresponsibility.

Christ actually grants two things:

- Deliverance from hell and

- Entrance into heaven.

Furthermore we must ask how all of this is possible!

- How can it be that my justification has such tremendous value, and how can Christ's grace cause me to attain all of these things?
- Then the answer is that these things are possible through faith - only through faith justification is possible.

Romans 1:16 and 17 argues that the just will live by faith.

- The content of faith is precisely this entire Council of the Lord, namely redemption from sin and eternal life.
 - Faith is to discover your own self-righteousness.
 - Faith is to also seek your salvation in the Lord.

The fulfilment of the Council of God to save me thus rests on my faith alone – if viewed from my side.

- So it becomes possible to accept Christ unto (my) justification.
- Romans 5:1,2 states it best:

¹Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: ²By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Now we must see ourselves against the backdrop of this justification wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ. Against the backdrop of the entire Council of God with regards to our justification.

Then it is abundantly clear how clumsily we flounder about in our own attempts to justify ourselves.

- We appoint ourselves as judges of our behaviour towards our neighbour.
- We appoint ourselves as the reviewers of the needs of our faith and soul.

If we attempt to continue this practice in our own strength then we thereby miss the justification brought by the Lord Jesus Christ.

- No human can be your judge.
- You can also not be your own judge.
- The Lord Alone is the eternal Judge.

The Lord alone will be the Judge who declares me innocent, if with a true and correct faith, I acknowledge and know my own weaknesses - and if I, with a correct faith expect the peace and forgiveness of sins by Jesus Christ at the cross.

Let us read what is written of these matters in our confession (Heidelberg Catechism Lord's day 23):

Question 59. *But what does it profit thee now that thou believest all this? Answer: That I am righteous in Christ, before God, and an heir of eternal life. (a)^x*

Question 60. *How are thou righteous before God? Answer: Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; (a) so that, though my conscience accuse me, that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, (b) and am still inclined to all evil; (c) notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, (d) but only of mere grace, (e) grants and imputes to me, (f) the perfect satisfaction, (g) righteousness and holiness of Christ; (h) even so, as if I never had had, nor committed any sin: yea, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for me; (i) inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart. (j)^x*

Question 61. *Why sayest thou, that thou art righteous by faith only? Answer: Not that I am acceptable to God, on account of the worthiness of my faith; but because only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, is my righteousness before God; (a) and that I cannot receive and apply the same to myself any other way than by faith only. (b)^{xi}*

Amen.

Prayer.

Lord, we thank you that you instruct and teach us. Grant us a heart to understand if you speak to us, and a spirit willing to be taught. Lead us in this new week, so that we may again live to your honour and glory. We pray this for Christ's sake.

Amen.

Psalm 84:1,2

1

*O LORD of hosts, O God of grace,
How lovely is Thy holy place,
How good and pleasant is Thy dwelling!
O how my soul longs earnestly,
Yea, faints Thy holy courts to see
Mid festal throngs and music swelling.
My heart and flesh cry out to God;
To Him I spread my hands abroad.*

2

*The sparrow finds a home to rest;
The swallow deftly builds her nest
And has her young beside Thy altar.
So, LORD of hosts, my God, my King,
I seek the shelter of Thy wings;
Thou wilt not let me slip and falter.
How blest are those who dwell with Thee
And praise Thy Name unceasingly.^{xii}*

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

Dr. M.J. du Plessis
Reformed Church Bellville
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ⁱ http://www.genevanpsalter.com/attachments/GenPs089_vanderKamp.HTM

ⁱⁱ Psalm 124:8

ⁱⁱⁱ 1 Corinthians 1:3

^{iv} http://www.genevanpsalter.com/attachments/GenPs033_Post.HTM

^v http://www.genevanpsalter.com/attachments/GenPs042_043_Psalter_Hymnal.HTM

^{vi} <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%203:20-24&version=KJV>

^{vii} <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%208:30&version=KJV>

^{viii} <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20samual%209:6-13&version=KJV>

^{ix} (a) Hab.2:4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. 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. 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.

^x (a) Rom.3:21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 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: Rom.3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of 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; Rom.3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Rom.5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: Rom.5:2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 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. 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. Philip.3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

(b) Rom.3:9 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

(c) Rom.7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

(d) Tit.3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Deut.9:6 Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people. Ezek.36:22 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.

(e) Rom.3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Eph.2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

(f) Rom.4:4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. Rom.4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. 2 Cor.5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

(g) 1 John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. (h) 1 John 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

(i) 2 Cor.5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

(j) 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: 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.

^{xi} (a) 1 Cor.1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 1 Cor.2:2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (b) 1 John 5:10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

^{xii} http://www.genevanpsalter.com/attachments/GenPs084_Helder1980.HTM

^{xiii} 2 Corinthians 13:14