

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE : SUNDAY 2 OCTOBER 2011 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 37:2, 4

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 18:1, 9

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 25:2

Scripture reading: Romans 6:1-14; Heidelberg Catechism, Sunday 33:88

Scripture text: Romans 6:5-6, 11

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 6:5-6, 11)

Heidelberg Catechism

Q. 88.

Of how many parts does the true conversion of man consist?

A.

Of two parts; of the mortification of the old, and the quickening of the new man. **(a)**

(a)

Rom.6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

Rom.6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Rom.6:5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

Rom.6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Eph.4:22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

Eph.4:23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

Eph.4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Col.3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Col.3:6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

Col.3:7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

Col.3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

Col.3:9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

Col.3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

1 Cor.5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

2 Cor.7:10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

Theme: Conversion is the inevitable result of redemption

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In this way both John the Baptist, as well as Jesus started their preaching. (Matthew 3:2; Matthew 4:17) This call to conversion was not aimed at total heathens and disbelievers, but at people who knew and served the Lord. This call offended many people. Beloved congregation of Christ, just as many Jews took offence to this call to conversion, still today many believers also take offence when they are told to come to conversion. A believer has no need to conversion because the Lord has already made him into a child of God. No, you should rather call the heathen and disbelievers to conversion. We have no problem with that. But should you now come and call us as believing Christians to conversion, then you are injuring my dignity. A call to conversion supposes that there is something wrong, unchristian and unbiblical in my life.

People have this strange idea that should they be redeemed from their guilt of sin by Jesus Christ and cleansed with the blood of Christ by the Holy Spirit and now are children of God, the worst is over. They are now children of God and this will never change. This last sentence is the full truth, should you confess to the predestination.

When carefully listening to what the Lord says, you see that He already, in eternity, chose a certain number of people and through the time made them His children by Jesus Christ and the powerful workings of the Holy Spirit. And there is nothing that can prevent the Lord from carrying out His decision. He will bring the people of His choice to the faith. He will, through His Spirit and Word, lead

and protect the people who have already come to faith so that they will persevere in the faith. The number of the predestination cannot be lessened.

Now it also happens that people in the second question of Romans 6:1 follow a lifestyle, even although they do not confess to the predestination. They hold the standpoint that God is full of love, merciful and charitable. They are correct, but they stress the love, mercy and charity of the Lord so heavily that you would think that God is only full of love, mercy and charity. These are usually also the people subscribing to a "Dear Jesus" theology. To them Jesus is the kindhearted Saviour that never can become angry. And God is the loving God who will always forgive. These people reason: It does not matter if I sin. God is a loving, merciful and charitable God that easily takes pity and forgives just as easily. These people no longer talk about the Ten Commandments, let alone reading or considering it. According to them the times of the Law has passed. We are saved out of grace only and our good works play no part.

The problem with such arguments is that you play the characteristics of the Lord against each other. It is in fact true that God is love, and He also is charitable and He is merciful. And He is always as such. There is not one moment that we would be able to say that God is not love, charitable or merciful. But that is not all we can say about God. In fact He introduces Himself also as just and holy. And He is always like that - just and holy. There is not one moment that God is not just and holy. And therefore He always hates sin.

There are even people confessing the predestination and making the argument of the second question in verse 1 their lifestyle also. They use the fixed decision of God about the predestination as the reason they could just take a shoulder-shrugging attitude towards sin. They argue that you may do whatever you like with your life, you are at least a child of God, He decided as such, and nothing can change this decision of God, not even your own reckless life.

People arguing this way consider themselves very clever. But you cannot use the gift of the Lord to justify or motivate your own sinful desires. Should you do so you are conceited and claim the mercy of God for yourself in a way as if you have the right thereto. God's eternal decision about whom His children are is no justification for us to sin. Should we do as such then we cheapen the grace of God to something like an ordinary article of use. I can squander it, there is still a lot in store. The grace of God is not cheap, it is extremely expensive. It is the life of Jesus Christ that was offered on the wooden cross. It is the Son of God who gave Himself up to be shattered under the load of your and my and the whole world's sin in order that we may receive forgiveness. You cannot just fool around with the mercy of the Lord.

Because that the grace of God is not cheap and facing the mercy of Christ, in which the Holy Spirit has us partaking, comes the answer loud and clear: True believers may definitely not continue sinning in order for the grace to expand! There is no way in which a believer can just persevere in sin, just because God is a charitable God.

The motivation for this clear answer is put by a question: **How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?** This question immediately causes the following question to rise up: But when have we died for sin?

The answer to this question is contained in verse 6; **We...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.** Our old man has already died. This took place when Jesus hung on the cross. Our old man was, together with Jesus, crucified. By this way the Holy Spirit unites us through the faith with Jesus.

When Jesus died on the cross He did not pay for our guilt of sin only. He also freed us from the slavery rule of sin. Our old man, the man that co-operated with Satan against God, the man who held you and me prisoner in such a way that we could do nothing else than sin, was crucified and killed in the crucifixion and death of our Lord Jesus. There the control of your and my old man ended. Therefore a true believer can no longer be a slave to the sin.

The death of our old man is such a reality that Paul wants to stress it even more by saying: **For he who has died has been freed from sin.** The only way to be freed from sin is when the sinner himself or somebody chosen by God has paid the price for the sin. The punishment for sin has already been carried. Christ underwent it in place of us. And because the Holy Spirit makes us one with Christ, His death on the cross is also the death of our old man.

Now somebody could ask: Is our old man really dead? Because when I look in the mirror I see a sinner. I still have this tendency towards sinning, and the believers with me at home suffer under my sin, just as I sometimes suffer under their sin. Is my old man now dead or not? To this we must answer: Yes and no.

Yes, because our old man was crucified together with Christ. But the answer is also no, because part of the old man's nature remained within us. And a nature is not something that suddenly dies. It is killed slowly but certainly. It is a process. This process will continue for as long as you and me are in this life. Only on the day of our own death will this process be completed. Then it would be finally the end of our old man.

Luckily the Lord does not leave us alone to undergo this process. At any rate, should He have left us alone into this process, we would not attempted to die off our old man. Therefore Christ granted us His Spirit so that what He did on the cross for us can become practice in our life of every day. Through the Holy Spirit we put an end to our sinful practices – we die-of the old man.

The dyeing-off of our old man is not something vague and unclear. There are practical steps the Holy Spirit leads us by. These steps are the following: compunction about my sin, hating sin and fleeing from sin.

Having compunction about sin is something completely different to be sorrowful because we suffering due to our sin. When a person has sorrow due to the results of sin it deals with myself and not with God. But the person who has true compunction about his sin is woeful because he dishonored God. Only when I am woeful because I damaged God's honour and disregarded His commandments would my sorrow be part of true conversion. It is this sorrow that the Lord found with David after his adultery with Bathsheba. In Psalm 51 David says: **Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.** Yes, David also sinned against the people, but in the first place he sinned against God and it was so bad that he said:

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned. Another characteristic of this compunction about sin is that you do not tear your clothes, but your heart. Due to your sin you are heartbroken.

Because you are truly heartbroken for angering God by your sin you cannot else but hate sin. To hate sin is more just externally leaving it. There have grow a loathing in your heart against sin, because it is due to your sin that you become an enemy of God. To only externally leave sin and not truly hate it will cause you to nourish sin in your heart and to long for it and this will lead to you sinning again. Therefore we have to passionately hate sin. This we can only manage through the powerful working of the Holy Spirit and our unification to Christ. Christ hates sin and that disposition of Christ must more and more become our own disposition.

This internal dying-off of our old man also becomes visible in our exterior lives. With this we mean that we must flee from our sin. We must not think that we are strong enough to remain close to these places and matters not to be tempted and drawn to sin again. We must give way! Do not remain with the matters you know that are able to get you down again. The Satan is powerful and we ourselves cannot battle and avert him. Go away from the places and matters that can tempt you else you will again damage the honour of God and ignore His commandments, because should you concede to the temptation you will become blind to what is right.

To be heartbroken about sin, to hate it and to flee from it is just one half of daily conversion. The other part, which the Holy Spirit causes to simultaneously take place within us, is the resurrection of the new man. When we hate sin and flee from it, love must grow inside of us and we should flee somewhere, or rather flee to somebody.

Against the heartache and sorrow about sin stands the true bliss in God through Christ. In the life of a Christian there is sorrow and joy: sorrow about sin and joy because we know that God for the sakes of Christ, forgives all our sins. Only in the New World will this joy be perfect. At the moment we experience these mixed feelings of sorrow about our sins and joy in Christ.

Although we experience such mixed feelings we may not lack the bliss and joy. In fact, in the letter to the Philippians, the Lord calls on us to be glad: **Always rejoice in the Lord!** Whatever the world offers us can never have steadfast joy. Only the Lord is steadfast as a rock, let us thus rejoice in Him. The person who does not rejoice in the Lord has not yet made the redemption through the faith into his own. He still fears the eternal death. But the person who embraces the redemption work of Christ and accepts that all his sins are forgiven can be nothing else than joyful. A joyful Christian is a person who knows the true conversion and daily applies it.

In practice this joy in God through Christ means that the Christian who truly converts him and her has a lust and love to do what God wants. What God wants us to do is very clearly described in the Bible and more specifically recorded in the Ten Commandments. The person who finds joy in following the Law of the Lord, fulfills the Law of the Lord.

To live obedient to the Law of the Lord is no problem to the new man, but a joy because thereby he and she, through their lives, render thanks to God for the redemption by Jesus Christ. This can happen because the Holy Spirit unifies us with Christ and Christ's disposition grows more and more in us as the Holy Spirit works with increasing strength in us.

Beloved, daily conversion is not something optional. It is the responsibility of every one of us because we are thankful for the redemption done for us by Jesus Christ.

Amen!

Closing prayer.

Closing Song: Scripture Versification 10-2 [Matthew 6: 9-13]

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. Coenraad Vrey
Reformed Church Bellville
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Scripture Modern King James Version**