

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2012 MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 18:5

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 19:3

Confession of faith: Nicene

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

And we believe one holy universal and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 33:3

Law

Psalm: 33:3

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 36:2

Scripture reading: 1 Peter 3

Scripture text: 1 Peter 3: 21, 22

...who has gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been put under his rule.

This is the greatest moment in the entire history – the moment when Christ arose from death.

- In heaven was the biggest rejoicing and everybody in heaven knelt to Christ.
- In hell there was a crisis – because to them the resurrection of Christ was the beginning of their misery. It was the judgement that they would never be able to escape the suffering.

The theme of this chapter is Peter writing that we must have a solid trust in the Lord.

- The hope on the Lord is immovable.
- And the right hand of God the Father rules over everything.

Peter preaches the practice of life.

- We must not think that because we are saved, we will have no battle.
- We also must not think that the virtues and effects of Christ's redemptive sacrifice on the cross will cause us to have less misery in our lives.

On the contrary, in life we will experience a difficult life, but we must always understand that we have a responsibility towards God. We must live with the greatest responsibility.

From verse 13 to 17 Peter refers to the believers and their calling.

- They are in their battle as Jesus Christ was in His humiliation.
- But they must also keep in mind that the humiliation of Christ was so large that He had to die.

The contrast of the humiliation was the enormous glory in which the Lord Jesus arose:

- He relocated from death to the right-hand of God the Father.

- He must now serve to our strengthening.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not only suffer in humiliation. He also did not only suffer derision.

- Eventually He was elevated to the height where He took His seat at the right-hand of the Father.
- This must strengthen us in our battle: we must not give up.
 - We must continue battling every wrong because eventually the Lord Jesus Christ will gather us in heaven.
 - His resurrection is the guarantee. That is the grace side of this text.

The judgement side of this matter is God demanding account from you about the way in which you bear your suffering. When evil and suffering descend upon us we must continue responding with the good. Verse 14:

But you are happy if you undergo pain because of righteousness; have no part in their fear and do not be troubled

Even should the satan, this side of the grave, take your life away from you – should he be permitted to do so – still it cannot cause you fundamental damages, because it does not rob you from eternal life with God. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus proves this to you.

Indeed, the fact that the Lord Jesus had to suffer for the sakes of salvation until He died on earth worked the redemption for those who love and serve Him.

- Not only through the fact that the Lord Jesus died, but especially through the fact that the Lord Jesus arose from the death.
- Without the resurrection the cross-death would have lost its meaning. Therefore Paul writes in Romans 8:28 that for those who love God, everything works for the best – for those called to His Will.

Thus, as long as you handle your life and misery with the proper responsibility, no fundamental harm can be done to you.

- You must thus truly do what God commands you.
- You must unconditionally do what pleases God.

Then you share in the resurrection of Christ.

Verse 15 sharpens this responsibility.

- In your life and battle you must not only do the good.
- It must be much more than just doing the good – you must strive towards the good.
- There must be effort and dedication in striving towards the good – with intense zeal you must strive doing things in the way God's commandments require.

It deals with the keeping of God's commandments. This includes all matters like:

- The battle against human injustice – of which we under no circumstances may be part of.
- It deals with faith and the proclaiming of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ: His death and resurrection.

But then, in my life, must be a practical living of denying the sin. Then only, as God puts it here, are you blessed.

Now of course it is not that easy living so honorably to the face of the Lord.

- The satan cannot leave us alone should we live with such holiness.
- The better you want to live, the more bitterness you will experience, this the devil will see to! He cannot stand our joy in the Lord!
- But, because God grants us the grace and honor of suffering for Him and His sakes, we have no reason for complaining,

These matters are not only recorded here in 1 Peter but also in Philippians 1:29:

...because to you it has been given in the cause of Christ not only to have faith in him, but to undergo pain on his account...(Philippians 1:29)

It is not just suffering because Peter writes:

But give honour to Christ in your hearts as your Lord; and be ready at any time when you are questioned about the hope which is in you, to give an answer in the fear of the Lord and without pride; (1 Peter 3:15)

It deals with more than the suffering coming over us. During our entire life we must recognize the Lord Jesus Christ in His greatness and glory.

- There must be a living awareness that we will not share in the resurrection of Christ should we not recognize the grace of God in Christ or possibly neglect our responsibilities!

Together with this we must keep in mind that during the times of Peter's life it was the custom that a master can call his slave at any time and demand from him an account of his actions.

- In such a way a husband could also call his wife or children to immediate account about matters of faith.
- Here Peter thus depicts the relationship between the Lord and us: Just like the man of the house, the Lord can also call us to responsibility and account in the faith and handling of our lives.

Then Peter preaches grace and judgement, as we know it from history.

- During the times of Noah there was large wickedness. And in those times the Lord sent Noah to preach the judgement should they not come to conversion.
- Noah also preached to them that they were wicked and that the Lord grants them hundred and twenty years to convert themselves, else He would eradicate them.
- The people made fun and in unbelief carried on living. To the people there was no shard of redemption!

On the destined time Noah and his household entered the ark and God locked the door.

- The judgement of the Lord became true because the rain started and everybody drowned.
- Only Noah and his household survived.

This is the grace from the history of Noah:

- Noah had to suffer and experience ridicule for the sakes of the Word and command of God.
- Seen from a human viewpoint the sinners treated him unjustly.
- But when the judgement broke loose God protected and kept him alive.

This is the point Peter is making here in verse 17 when he writes that it is better to suffer when the will of God demands it.

- God's will for Noah was to suffer all the derision so that eventually he could be saved because notwithstanding the derision of the people he stayed with what God demanded from him.
- Therefore his suffering served to his conversion and redemption – through derision he was guided to the glory of God.

But from verse 18 the grace changes to judgement.

- Peter now starts telling that Christ also suffered for the sin – the Just for the unjust.
- Eventually he was killed in the flesh, but made living by the Spirit.

It is the resurrection that is referred to here.

- In the following verses Peter writes how devastating the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was to the people in hell.
- The Lord Jesus Christ arose through the Spirit and preached to the spirits in prison.

Take note:

Should we now just read this verse without bringing it in conjunction with all the verses preceding and following it, then it appears as if Jesus went to hell and there preached to the spirits. The Roman Church explains it as such. This is the text they call upon when they teach that conversion after death is possible.

But that is incorrect, because should the Lord Jesus have gone to hell, was He physically there? By His spirit He could not have been there because on the cross he called out: **Father, into your hands I give my spirit** (Luke 23:46)

This causes serious questions:

- When was the Lord Jesus in the hell, because it is very clearly written in the Bible that it was whilst He arose from death?
- For how long was He there?
- And the most important question is What purpose would it have served for Jesus to have gone to hell because He in fact did not save the people in hell?!
- What purpose would it have served preaching to them and what would Jesus have told them?

Let us answer all the questions from the Bible.

- Not only was the Lord Jesus a human, He also was God and for His Godliness it was definitely not necessary to physically go to hell and fetch people who have died in His Name from there.

- He indeed is so powerful that those who die in His name are immediately after their death in heaven. He Himself tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. (Luke 16)
 - Immediately after Lazarus died he was in heaven.
 - The rich man also immediately after his death opened his eyes in hell and saw his brothers still wickedly living on earth.

What now? The sermon delivered by the Lord Jesus Christ was the fact of Him arising from death. *The resurrection itself is the sermon!*

- Everybody in heaven and hell saw it. It was not a sermon of words.
- The resurrection of the Lord was a solemn announcement to all forces and powers that He is God having power over death and life.
- It was a proclamation of His triumph.

To the spirits in prison it also was the element of judgement. When Jesus arose they saw it themselves and immediately realized that in eternity there will be no grace.

Then the next question: Here it is clearly written that Christ has “gone”

- Our verse of text tells where He gone to. Verse 22 very clearly says that Jesus **has gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God.**
- Those words refer to the ascension. Peter sees the resurrection from death and the ascension as one action. That is the sermon that was delivered!

Now you see how it fits into the previous verses saying that we, for the sakes of God's demands, must suffer.

- The Lord Jesus Christ suffered and He overcame so that we definitely will share in His grace – His resurrection is the proof.
- He died and arose so that those who do not believe and are irresponsible definitely will be cast in hell – and His resurrection is again the proof.
- There is no place or containment between heaven and hell. You are either in the one or the other.
- We believe in the Lord Jesus and therewith suffer and bear the derision for the sakes of the Lord and are redeemed.

Summarized: *Either you do not believe and are irresponsible and you go to hell. No other option available.*

The example of Noah was used for two reasons:

- Firstly because the Bible reveals that the people of Noah's times were the most wicket up to that date.
 - Through the resurrection they obtained the proof that they will never leave the hell because they did not want to heed Noah's words.
- The second reason is because Peter says in verse 21 that the Flood already was a prophecy pointing towards the baptism.

By the Flood the world was cleansed by the water because all the non believers drowned.

- The water is the symbol of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - But on the other hand Noah and his fellow believers were in fact saved to life by the water.
 - At the end of the verse Peter says very specifically that it was not only by the death of Christ but in fact also by His resurrection.

In this matter we clearly see the workings of the Triune God.

- The Father planned the redemption. He also commands Noah to preach so that the people must convert themselves.
- The Lord Jesus Christ dies and He arises from death so that those who heeded the sermon and suffered the derision without giving up the faith or obedience may be gathered to God.
 - But this same Lord Jesus Christ also preached by His resurrection that no redemption is possible to those who are irresponsible.
- The Holy Spirit had these facts written down. He lets these matters speak to us.
- The Holy Spirit now lets us discover our sins and guides us to redemption and faith in this salvation. In this way we are saved.

Are many people of our times not possibly living in such a way that we, like the spirits in the prison, have the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as a definite damnation?

We must be sober. We are people knowing about better.

- We have the gospel of redemption in the Lord Jesus.
- We have the sacraments referred to herein. Every Sunday God addresses us twice.

What do we do? Do we listen? Do we do what is proper although we experience difficulty? Do we render upon God everything becoming Him or does the world and comfort carry more weight? Do we pray regularly? Do we regularly read the Bible? Do we teach out children in God's Word?

Now listen what God says. The resurrection preaches grace to those who are responsible. But it preaches eternal doom en equal measures to those who do not want to listen.

Amen.

Closing prayer.68:9

Closing Psalm:

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

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