

# REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 20 APRIL 2014 EVENING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 138:2

*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: 103:1

**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 31:4

**Scripture reading:** 1 Samuel 15

**Scripture text:** 1 Samuel 15:22 – 23a

**22 Then Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.**

**23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.**

(1Samuel 15:22 –23a)

Watch out for arrogance and disobedience. They are not such innocent sins as we sometimes pretend them to be. Disobedience and stubbornness are idolatry and rejection of God Himself – no wonder that the Lord rejects such people!

Come let us consider the following matters flowing from the passage of scripture we have read together.

1. **Why is the Lord so angry with Amalek?**
2. **Was Saul really that bad?**
3. **Guard against hypocrisy.**

## 1. Why is the Lord so angry with Amalek?

Why is the Lord so surly towards Amalek? Let us see where the man comes from.

- He comes from a generation that landed outside of the covenant of the Lord because he is a grandson of Esau. The Amalekites and the Edomites are thus related to each other! Later the name Amalekites is used to indicate all his descendants.
- We read that the Amalekites attacked the Israelites in the desert when they were en-route from Egypt to the Promised Land. (Exodus 17:8-13; Deuteronomy 25:17, 18). As a result of this attack the Lord instituted a permanent ban over them and commanded the Israelites to exterminate the Amalekites. (Deuteronomy 25:19; 1 Samuel 15:2, 3).
- At this occasion Aaron and Hur held the hands of Moses in the air and Israel won the battle. A year later, after the report of the spies, the Israelites ignored the command of Moses and tried to enter Palestine from the south. And then the Amalekites defeated them at Hormah. (Numbers 14:43, 45)
- During the times of the Judges we know about two times that the Amalekites attacked Israel.
  - The one time was together with Eglon, the king of the Moabites (Judges 3:13)
  - The second time was together with the Midianites when they raided the crops and cattle of the Israelites. Gideon then drove them out. (Judges 6:3-5, 33, 7:12, 10:12).

Years later Samuel commanded Saul to scatter the Amalekites. Saul then utterly destroyed the entire nation but he did two things wrongly:

- Saul spared the life of Agag, but Samuel killed him. In fact Samuel hacked him to pieces in the presence of the people.
- And then Saul also retained some of the goods that were supposed to be totally destroyed, namely some of the cattle. Because of this the Lord removed Saul as king.

Later, during the times of Esther, we read about a man that tried to eradicate the entire Jewish nation. His name was Haman and he was an Agagite – a descendant of this Agag spared by Saul. (Esther 3:1)

The point is that this entire nation of Amalekites had the same nature than their forefather Esau, who sold his birthright because he was hungry – *they lived in their carnal pleasures and had no respect for life.*

Therefore the Lord decided that because that nation fell so deep into sin that He did not want to expose His children to these people any longer.

## 2. Was Saul really that bad?

If the Amalekites were such bad people, was Saul then so bad because he spared Agag and did not apply total destruction, that the Lord totally rejected him because of that? The answer is: Yes!

- This day was a day that revealed in cold finality what transpired deep in Saul. He was a man who, just like the Amalekites, lived according to his own rules of life and felt nothing towards the Lord and His commandments.
- He did as he pleased and only noted whatever the Lord commanded.

This is why in verse 23 Samuel told him that stubbornness is a sin – it is because Saul was stubborn and followed his own mind.

- Samuel goes on and he tells Saul that stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.
- Saul rejected the word of the Lord! He thus straightforwardly pushed God aside.

All that the Lord then did was that He abandoned Saul and became his enemy – just like Saul abandoned Him and became His enemy.

Saul clearly demonstrates why the Lord had the full right in becoming his enemy:

- Everything despicable he found during the war he torched. But the best goods he kept for his men and himself.
- The Bible teaches that they “did not intend to” totally destroy the best of the loot.
- They thus judged that the Lord was over reacting in the matter and interfered and corrected matters to what they were led to by their own rebellious judgement.

Let me put this same matter more into our own circumstances. They were of the opinion that in some of the matters where the Lord only sees evil there are also some good things that man can live with and even make use of.

This man may not do because the one thing the Lord does not tolerate is somebody interfering with His Will.

- Therefore the Bible continually warns that it is most dangerous to be disobedient to the Lord.
- The Lord always destroys the people who persevere in disobedience.

Obedience of course is only possible when the Holy Spirit lives inside you and you are led and taught by Him. This in turn is made possible through the grace the Lord grants us by His cross-death and resurrection.

- We must realize that Jesus Christ again, during the Holy Communion of last week, confirmed to us that He knows all of us and that He also expects obedience from us.
- The Lord did not only tell Saul in the Old Testament to be obedient, but we in the New Testament cannot just do what we want! Consider the words of the apostle Paul in Galatians 2:20:  
**I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;**  
(Galatians 2:20)

Christ must be the focal point of our lives, and we must attentively listen to what He teaches us and asks of us through the Holy Spirit.

In the passage we have read together we have two examples we must always keep in mind. The first is the Amalekites.

- They are there to show us what becomes of people who completely lose the way and then get the curse of the Lord over them. He exterminates them together with all their descendants, even should it take ages.
- The second example is about the man who is supposed to know the Lord and even rules over the children of the Lord. But he is disobedient and stubborn and then the Lord rejects him.
  - The Lord says that such worship is iniquity and idolatry.
  - So strongly the Lord feels about this that He regretted making Saul king over His children (v.35)

### 3. Guard against hypocrisy!

When Samuel arrived at Saul, Saul happily and straightforwardly told him: "**Blessed are you of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord.**"(V.13) Meanwhile the Lord has already revealed to Samuel that Saul did not execute His commandment.

- Most likely Saul reasoned that Samuel would never know exactly what transpired.
- But the Lord has a way of revealing hypocrisy. Therefore immediately Samuel said that he could hear the bleating of sheep and the lowing of oxen. Where do they come from?

Even should the people not see your hypocrisy, the Lord sees it!

- The day we face the judgement of the Lord He will reveal it.
- We can land there in one of two ways: the one when we die, and the other should we still be alive when Jesus Christ appears in the clouds.

Again we get to know Saul as a person who will first lie before he confesses.

- He first perseveres a way in his falseness because he tells Samuel that the soldiers selected the cattle.
- He tries to convince Samuel that he was under enormous pressure and then relented.
- Then there is also this excuse that Samuel must know that only the best was selected because they were planning to offer it.
- Then Saul reveals his innards: They did not plan to offer it to (their?) Lord, but to the God of Samuel "...to sacrifice to the Lord your God..."

From the rest of the argument by Saul it is clear that he thinks that you can sin and just afterwards quickly need to offer, then all is fixed up.

- This is why Samuel tells him that obedience is better than offers.
- It is because a disobedient person is a person who is not converted. This is how Amalek was.

Therefore Saul hears the hard finality from the side of the Lord: Because you rejected the Word of the Lord, the Lord rejected you as king.

- It is of no use taking the Name of the Lord, but you do not know the Lord and you do not live for Him.
- The Lord wanted Saul to be true and obedient. This is why He anointed him as king. But Saul follows his own way and is totally rejected by the Lord.

Last week we in fact experienced Jesus again confirming His Love for us.

- Our salvation and our belonging to Him as children of the Lord and at the same time our eternal life in heaven was again confirmed to us.
- We received the confirmation that Jesus Christ completely atoned us to God. Let us then live in obedience else we travel the road of Saul.

The point is that a time will come when it is too late for regrets.

- You can tease the Lord until His patience with you runs out.
- This is what happened to Saul, because he asks Samuel for forgiveness and to accompany him so that he could go back and worship the Lord.

But immediately the falseness is present: "I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me..."(1Samuel 15:30) This is the real reason for the request!

- Saul does not want to lose face to the people and he only wants to use his admission of guilt in aid of retaining the respect of the people.
- Saul is still trying to use the Lord in service to he whom is Saul.
- To the Lord this is not good enough.

Judas also had this same kind of repent.

- Then you are only sorry about the results your sins have for yourself and you have no regrets about what your sins did to the glory of the Lord.
- The message from Saul, Judas and the Amalekites is that you will obtain the death as reward for your sins should you persevere in it.

Do not let our thoughts and decisions render a larger place than that which the Lord asks from us, because that will cause the Lord to reject us and eventually cast us into hell. The reason for that is that the Lord regards disobedience as total idolatry.

Now this is a service of reflection. Last week he heard from the Lord Himself that our sins are forgiven. We could taste the Lord pouring His grace over us.

- Therefore there is a great appeal to us to live in full obedience to the Lord.
- What the Lord asks is that all of us obey His Word in full obedience.
- What the Lord asks is that we are thankful to Christ for placing us into a new covenant of grace with Him and that this thankfulness must grow and obtain body in our daily lives.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 118:14

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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