

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 24 AUGUST 2014

MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Scripture Versification 19-1:1

Let us commence this meeting with God by declaring openly to one another and to God:

Psalm 32:1

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 145:1,12

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 us men and 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 at 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 in 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

Law

Psalm: 25:3

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 107:10

Scripture reading: 1John 5: John 8:1-11

Scripture text: 1John 5:16

If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life...

(1John 5:16)

Don't we often do the opposite! Are we not more likely to delight in seeing our neighbour fall into sin – especially when it is someone we dislike!

- That what the Jewish leaders did when they brought the adulterous woman before Jesus was typical of the sinful nature of mankind.
 - They wanted her to be judged.
 - They wanted her to be stoned.
 - No one of them wanted her to repent and neither did they want to see her restored in her honour and the community.

The question remains: Can we really judge this lot of Pharisees? Don't we often do the same? How much more/less love of the Lord is there in our hearts?

To set us free from our own hate and lust for blood the Lord gives us this holy command through the words of John:

- Pray for your neighbour who sins!
- The Lord shall answer your prayer.
- And give life eternal to your neighbour!

John is here at the end of the first epistle he wants to write. But there are some final words the Holy Spirit wants him to write before he closes his letter.

- A few points he wants to emphasize so that the congregation will remember them.
- These matters are about prayer.

The reason is clear from the letters of John:

- The congregation has a large lacking of respect for each other.
- Everyone just sat on his own throne.
- Therefore the Lord wants everybody to alight from their thrones and face Him on their knees.

They must pray to Him!

Listen again to verse 13:

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

That is the reason why the Lord Jesus died for them! It would seem that the addressees of this letter had slipped somewhat in their faith.

- Now their faith and the prospects of the faith are being re-invigorated.
- At the same time it is explained to them that they have responsibilities that they as true believers must exercise.

In verse 13 the relationship between prayer and the life eternal is noted.

- We who believe must know that we have eternal life.
- The Name of the Son of God guarantees this.
- That Name is Jesus, which means "the *Lord saves*".

But we cannot part these words from the start of the chapter!

- The Lord Jesus saves those who can and want love.
- The Holy Spirit puts it clearly that those without love will be lost! How else? They bear the mark (logo) of the devil.

Thereafter (verses 14 and 15) the Lord reveals things about the contents of prayer and the certainty that our prayers will be answered!

Verse 16 tells us of a matter about which there should not be any prayer.

- That is the sin that leads to death.
- We know from Matthew 12:32, Mark 3:29 and Luke 12:10 that is the sin against the Holy Spirit.

"Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

(Matthew 12:32)

"but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation"

(Mark 3:29)

"And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven.

(Luke 12:10)

But, at the same time, the Lord tells us that we must pray for our neighbours' other sins.

It is remarkable that the Holy Spirit continually returns us to the love!

There are certain conditions that govern admission to the eternal life:

- The first is belief in the Name of the Son of God.

- With it comes the obligation to pray.
- In our prayer there must be included a prayer for the forgiving of the sins of our neighbours – this can only happen should we love the relevant neighbour.

It is as if the Lord tells us here that we have our neighbours' life in our hands. Faith and the eternal life are inextricably tied together.

- When you lose faith you lose with it the life eternal.
- But your faith is wider than your faith in God only - it also includes your neighbour.

Often this attitude is lacking in our lives.

- Perhaps it is vaguely present on some occasions but we lack the true Christian love for our neighbour.
- We are not so concerned for our fellow Christians as if our own life was at stake! We should be! They are shareholders with us in the eternal life!

Verse 14 tells us that we may approach God with confidence. He will give us what we pray for.

- The Lord answers us when we pray. Isaiah 30:19 tells us that the Lord will be gracious to us when we call to Him.
- It is not only a prayer for our own misery. No, the Lord says that a people will live in Zion. I must pray for God's people. He answers us all in our troubles.

The same is said in Matthew 7:7:

"Ask and it will be given to you."

Or in the words of John 14:13 and 14 where Christ tells us that He will do all we ask in His Name so that the Father may be glorified by it.

- The Lord answers our prayers tangibly.
- He actually answers. But He may do so in a way different from what we expect.
- But the answer of our prayers is so actual that we are often answered even before we have prayed!

This brings us to the important point of prayer that the apostle John wants to emphasise in this chapter.

- Pray also for your neighbour.
- Do not pray only for his wellbeing. But pray also for his weaknesses.
If anyone sees his brother commit sin ... he should pray.

That is a terrible demand.

Remember the parable of the publican and the Pharisee who stood praying.

- The Pharisee went to the temple to thank God that he was better than the poor publican.
- Actually he was thanking God because he was glad that he need not become reconciled with him! Thankful that their lives were on separate ways!
- This sounds very much like those of us who are so irritated by the failings of our fellow brothers and sisters.
 - When we do pray for the conversion of others – is it from the heart

- or only lip service without any conviction or compassion lacking true depth and compassion.

Sometimes we pray that the Lord should forgive someone but the issue must be correct.

- Is the reason for us praying that I love God and my neighbour and that I truly want the glory of God and the salvation of my neighbour?
- The reason for us praying must be that we feel the need to be reconciled with our neighbour before God.

We should know the power of prayer. The Lord's brother James writes in chapter 5 verse 15 of his epistle that the prayer offered in faith will heal the sick and that the Lord will raise him up.

Even if he has sinned he will be forgiven.

The same words as in our text! Then James adds the following in verse 16:

"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

Elijah was a human being.

- On his prayer it did not rain for three years and six months.
- And he prayed again and the rain fell before they were home.

We must remember that the power of prayer is still as strong today!

We should think of this with great respect, for, bearing in mind that prayer is so powerful, we know that there are people in heaven who are praying. (Revelation 6:9-10)

9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

(Revelation 6:9-10)

The people under the altar.

- Those who died the death of martyrs because of the Word of God and their faith!
- These people are praying impatiently that the Lord should judge the earth and avenge their blood!

"How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

"How long, sovereign Lord?" is what they pray! They are impatient and in a hurry!

We must pray fervently that the Lord may forgive us our sins.

- Mine, but also the sins of my brother and sister.
- The Lord must keep them in life so that we may share the eternal life together – time is running out!

The Lord has our life in His Hand.

- The Lord gives life to those who sin and answers our prayers for one another!

- John and James write that we must pray for one another, for our brother and sister and the Lord will forgive them their sins and give them life eternal.

Where did they find this notion? Ezekiel 33:11!

"Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

(Ezekiel 33:11)

Together with repentance God gives life.

- He does not want us to die!
- That is the reason why the Lord answers our prayers when we pray for our neighbours' eternal life!

Every sin makes you guilty before God. And every sin is terrible.

- Yet God in His Counsel determined that He would forgive us our sins in the merit of the Lord Jesus.
- The sins are those that we commit against ourselves and against our neighbour. Sins such as lacking love for our neighbour God will forgive after true remorse.

The Lord forgives us the sins we commit while we believe, because it is possible to sin while believing.

- But then we must be truly remorseful and repent and fight against such sins.
- But the Lord does not forgive us if we vacillate between faith and unbelief!

There is another matter of faith of which our text speaks, which is also written in Matthew 12:32:

"Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

(Matthew 12:32)

The sin against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. The Lord never forgives it! Hebrews 6:4-6 also tells of this:

4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

(Hebrews 6:4-6)

Those who were once enlightened by the Holy Spirit and then reject it. They can never again be saved.

- It is an unforgivable sin to believe in God through the working of the Holy Spirit and to accept all the promises and gifts from Jesus Christ and then to reject it all.
- That God never forgives us. Man cannot play games with God.

The sins of our neighbour for which we pray are the same sins that we commit, but it may not be the sin of rejecting God.

- We must remember that when we pray for our neighbour we may not do so as if we are without any sin when praying that our neighbour's sins be forgiven!
- We must also not pray with the confession that we know the love of God – but not have it when it comes to others!

It is when we have an honest relationship of love with God that we also through our prayers serve to effect the salvation of our neighbour.

- Although we may be unable to make him turn away from the wrong he does we can still pray for him.
- Our prayer is more effective than our conduct towards him
 - We cannot "write off" a fellow believer who abuses liquor simply because he does not react favourably to our admonishment. But we can still pray and God can give him life.
 - The Holy Spirit can still cause him to repent – even sooner than we may think.

As with all our religion the power of our prayer is founded in Jesus Christ and His merit. On the cross He not only died for our sins – He also prayed for us

"Father forgive them for they know not what they do!"

- Through it we receive the eternal life, otherwise mankind would have been doomed for eternity.
- He conquers death for those for whom He prayed.
- For them too He also prepares a place to receive them.

The Holy Spirit is now working in us and with us.

- When we see our neighbour sinning we must experience true sorrow.
- We must know that we commit the same sins and that he/she is as powerless against his/her sin as I am against my sins.
- Then we shall know not to hate but to love.
- Then we know how to understand how large his misery is as well as his desire of living forever with God As great as our own need and desire.

Let us then not disappoint the working of the Holy Spirit in us.

- Let us pray and glorify God.
- Let us also pray for the forgiveness of the sins of our neighbours.
- So that we may together live eternally.

Amen

Closing prayer

Lord, let your Regal Word teach us and your Spirit lead us to truth and honour. Teach us to forgive our neighbours their sins and also to plead for their forgiveness and life eternal. Let us together praise you, O Lord and together be victorious to your glory. For Christ's sake.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 104:20,21

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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24 August 2014
Scripture: Modern King James Version**