

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 26 OCTOBER 2014 CONFESSION OF FAITH AND PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Sing before: Psalm 32:6

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 100:1-4

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 34:6

Scripture reading: 2 Corinthians 12

Scripture text: 2 Corinthians 12:9

..."My grace is sufficient for you..."
(2 Corinthians 2:9)

The normal human is quite upset when matters in life do not progress in the way we want them to develop.

- We are always very impatient about something that does not fit our personal liking.
- Often you hear believers say that it is of no use praying because your prayer is at any rate not heard so that you could get what you want.

Paul was in exactly the same situation. He was bitterly rebellious about something that bothered him.

- To him it was like a thorn pressed into his flesh.
- He also prayed to the Lord for the removal of this matter, but the Lord did not agree.
- The Lord merely said: **My grace is sufficient for you.**

Paul experienced the matter bothering him as if an angel of the satan was hitting him in his face, but the only comment the Lord had was: **My grace is sufficient for you.**

Come, let us now examine this passage from verse 1 onwards:

- There are people who greatly boast about all they can manage in life.
- The same people usually boast a lot about their faith and everything they are able to accomplish.

Paul starts off immediately by saying that it is definitely of no use to boast on that level.

- He can at any rate not boast about his own successes.
- Indeed he experienced great things in his faith, but they were not things he achieved by himself like the boasters relate about themselves.

Then he tells about his conversion.

- In his narrative it seems as if he is referring to another person than himself, but the reason therefore is merely because he wants to clearly state that from his side he had no hand in this grabbing away to heaven.
- God alone did everything.

He puts it very clearly that somebody, inaugurated into Jesus Christ and truly having a share in the excellent deeds of Christ, does not go about with this kind of boasting as if you personally achieved something.

This is why it is written in verse 3 that he does not know whether he was in the body or out of the body pulled away.

- He – Paul – is completely too weak in this matter!
- He was humanly seen completely in a condition of inability when God revealed these matters to him.

In verse 4 it is again put that a person who is one with Christ and is used by the Lord to reveal the glory of God is worthy of boast.

- But what about Paul as a human? He still is human as well? Where does he fit in the picture of all the godly revelations that happened to him?
- Therewith we must also keep in mind that there were a few such revelations.
 - When he was on the way to Damascus suddenly a light shone around him from heaven (Acts 9:3 onwards)
 - The vision of the man of Macedonia at Troas. (Acts 16:9)
 - The word during the storm (Acts 27:24)

In verse 5 he tells that from his human side he is caught up in weaknesses. And funny enough, he boasts in it.

- The things that irritate us were thus also part of Paul's life – he also had things that did not go according to his own liking!
- He could also only boast in matters like deficit, sickness, shortcomings, and weaknesses, own circumstances wherein matters were not pleasant.
- These are the same things that also are a bother to us.

But Paul's approach differs from ours. He is glad about these things!

- But right at the start he did not feel like this!
- He also had to travel the long road to eventually reach this viewpoint.
- In verse 6 he tells that he could easily boast, but he rather leaves it at that just in case somebody will overestimate him about it.

Verse 7 deals with the turning point of the matter. Paul had a serious affliction that the Lord disposed over him.

- Paul was also very dissatisfied about it because to him it felt like an angel of the satan hitting him.
- Thrice Paul even prayed to the Lord for the removal of the relevant hindrance from him.
- But the Lord did not want to, because the Lord used it to keep Paul on his knees.

Eventually Paul realised the truth of the Lord's words to him: **My grace is sufficient for you.**

- Your rebelliousness is not what it is all about.
- Your own comfort is also not the matter.
- It deals with the grace of the Lord where under and with which you live.

Now you can start understanding the viewpoint of Paul: Should he have had everything comfortable and according to his taste then his battle was cut away.

- Then he was also cut off from the grace of God.
- God sends the tribulations, not to make the suffering the main event but to use the tribulation in pouring out the grace of God over you.

The moment Paul found acquiescence he was not immediately rid of his irritation.

- That which was unpleasant to him remained, so that in fact he had to overcome it and live with it, experiencing the grace of God.
- The crux of the matter is merely that the Lord can dispose a torment or torments over anybody that continually hinders and frustrates him – but so that we indeed can experience the grace of the Lord therein when the matters making our lives difficult do not destroy us.

Nobody knows what Paul's problem was. It also is not important to know it.

- What indeed is important is that God used this matter to prevent Paul from boasting in the wrong way about his own importance.
- The entire matter enriched his spiritual life so that he could reach the point where he could see past his personal interests his faith as a gift from God.

The will of God is thus not always to free us from that what torments.

- His will is for us to also glorify Him in it.
- Usually it works with all people as it was with Paul: Such matters immediately forces a person into a prayer-battle with God and it usually leads to the deepening of the faith.

The grace of God is everything you have received and are still receiving.

- It is everything you need to live and to be able to serve God.
- It is also the matters we are rebellious about, because should we are true in our faith, those things will move us closer to God – wherein the grace of God can indeed be seen.

You should never become rebellious and think that life is treating you unfairly. Then you say that God does not know what He is doing to you.

- The most important is that we must realise that the Lord has a life-task for us and that He enables us to be able to do it.
- In the case of Paul it is indicated that indeed it was the hindrances in his life that aided him to also be able to do good – although in the beginning he did not consider it to be so!

The rest of the verse underlines the matter heavily: God does not want to work where there is anything to do with human powers and abilities.

- You must disappear so that the work of God can be highlighted.
- He works where the human is weak. In this way His grace is then also illuminated.
"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Paul then submitted to his shortcomings, because the fact that he was able to continue and still serve the congregations indeed proved that the power of God rises above that of man and when man's abilities run out, God's power still executes His will with great ease!

The Christ-ministering underlines the same.

- Since the Fall there was no man able to control life so that he could dispose the good over himself, and at the end of his life lived so perfectly that he could lay claim to God allowing him access to heaven.

Then the Lord Jesus Christ arrived and He came to live physically.

- The purpose thereof was indeed that everything taking revenge upon our human bodies and human spiritual life, must come down upon Jesus.
- Therefore He is also accosted by poverty, hunger and thirst.
- The people also despise him, and He is even hated.

His condition was even worse than that of any man ever was or could have been.

- But He does not lose the faith or the ability to also be God.
- Eventually He voluntarily entered death.

But that is not how it remained.

- With this serious hindrance over Him He arose on the third day from death to thereby show that no negation or hindrance could stop Him – not even the death which we fear the most.

Then this is also where Confession of Faith and the celebration of Holy Communion fit into.

Our confession of faith confirms that we believe in the Almighty God who disposes our lives in such a way that no afflictions in life are insurmountable.

- Our Triune God disposes over everything: life, death, pleasure, afflictions, shortcomings, abundance and everything...
- By His death and resurrection He gives the guarantee that when we live in Him these matters cannot prevent us to execute His will, because His death was a deed of grace confirming to us that we would be on the New earth. He Himself brought His grace over us.
- His cross-death was in a certain sense even a demonstration that our power is useless in comparison to His – we do not need our power because His power completed everything for us.
- His power writes and determines the history of heaven and earth.
- His power is also not carried by our power – He remains God, even whether we are there or not.
- Because we are weak and when we are weak He executes His will.

Beloved when we celebrate Holy Communion we do it without rebelliousness about everything that dissatisfies us.

- Here at the table of Holy Communion your own arrogance and your own importance must completely disappear.
- What links you to the Lord is in fact your own weaknesses.
- You cannot work anything good and therefore you must come to hear from His mouth that you are not just simply washed away to hell by your weakness.

We come to the table because we have a need to again hear that indeed the power of the Lord works our entire/perfect salvation.

- That it so works that His grace washes over us and that the work of the Holy Spirit also washes through us so that we can retain the faith and graciously also may see and experience the blessing of God in our troubles.

The Holy Communion is the word of the Lord to each one of us:

"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Amen

Confession of Faith.

1. Amelia Karyn Clack.
2. Laurette Frances Coetzee.
3. Francois Petrus Bredenkamp Coetzee.
4. Menante Joane du Plessis.
5. Angelique Erasmus
6. Kevin John Widdows.
7. Marc Anthony Widdows

Psalm 134:3, 4.
Closing prayer.

Closing Song: Scripture Versification 19-1

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

Dr MJ Du Plessis
Helping Reverend
Reformed Church Clanwilliam
26 October 2014
Scripture Modern King James Version