

**REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 12 OCTOBER 2014
MORNING SERVICE**

Sing before: Psalm 103:5

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 73:7

Confession of faith: Apostolic

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hell, the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, a holy universal Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting

Amen.

After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 19:7

Law

Psalm: 19:7

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 32:1

Scripture reading: 2 Corinthians 11 and 2Thessalonians 2

Scripture text: 2 Corinthians 11:14

And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.
(2Corinthians 11:14)

...so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.
(2Thessalonians 2:4(b))

It is very difficult to handle the satan because not only does he lie, he always presents a snippet of the truth somewhere.

- He toys with this snippet of the truth as if it is the entire and only truth.
- This is why it sometimes is difficult to distinguish between what is the truth and certain matters.

The satan, so that we must bend away from God, attempts with everything in his power to present the lie as the truth.

- Therefore we must live in such a way that we continually determine whether the things we do and the things life presents to us, serve the glory of the true God.
- The satan makes it his business to observe the relationships of the believers with the Lord.

We read especially in two places in the Bible about it.

- The one time is about the trials Job experienced
 - When the angels in heaven faced God to report to Him the devil was also present.
 - He knows exactly how good the relationship between God and Job is.
- The other time is in Zechariah 3 when the satan stood in heaven and accused the high priest.

From these two passages we learn that he satan does two things:

- The satan listens to reports of the angels in order to know what is taking place in God's council.
- Further he is quick to accuse believers to the Lord when he discovers their sins.

But you must carefully take note of his working method.

- To us he always uses a weak presentation of the truth to damage the reliability of the Lord.
- The moment he manages to shake our trust in the Lord he misleads us to commit sin.
 - In 2 Corinthians 11:3 the Lord teaches that the devil used precisely this method to tempt Eve and that today still he misleads believers in this way.

When the satan tempted man into sin one of his motivations were that he wanted the worship mankind gives to God, for himself.

- Today still his method is the same.

- The more he gets us by his crooked honesty to live according to his standards, the more he takes up the position of God in our lives.

This is exactly what is written in Thessalonians 2:4.

- The devil wants to sit in the temple of God pretending to be God.
- The lawless man meant for the destruction hides in the church, learning the Bible here.

The devil still has the same weaknesses he had in the beginning:

- He cannot plan something original.
- He also possesses no initiative – he always uses the Word of God and hides behind it. When he tempted Jesus in the desert he every time quoted verses from the Scriptures.

The Lord Jesus has already predicted that the devil will use this working method during the final days.

- Jesus said that many will come under His Name and say: 'I am He,' (Luke 21:8)
- The people will fall for these false teachers and their preaching because in Mark 13:21 the Lord teaches that the people will come and say '**Look, here is the Christ!**' or, '**Look, He is there!**'

These people are all forerunners of the antichrist. The devil will thus enter the church and pretend to be God.

This poses a big problem because satan's attack has two attributes making it very difficult to determine whether it is God Himself speaking and working.

- The first is that he comes with only partial truth – sometimes he keeps something quiet and other times he questions matters, but his point of departure is always the truth itself.
- The second is that the attack comes from an unexpected direction: he enters the church as if he is God.

The true believer will in fact be able to sort out the problem, even should it be with great effort because written in 2 Thessalonians 2:6 are the words: **And now you know what is restraining,**

- You know!
- Here it thus deals with faith, because in true faith is also definite knowledge.

We can find this knowledge only at one place, and that is in the Bible under the guidance of God the Holy Spirit.

- The Bible is God's specific revelation.
- The ability of the true believer to distinguish in this heavily armored attack by the devil is thus supported by the knowledge God the Holy Spirit works in him.
- Through the working of the Holy Spirit in him the true believer can thus see through the camouflage of the devil.

The proof to this statement is found in Matthew 13:19:

"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart.

(Matthew 13:19)

If you do not have the knowledge and you do not understand the true gospel then the devil robs you of the truth.

- 2 Corinthians 4:4 joins to this:
whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

The passage we have read – 2 Thessalonians 2:12 – teaches the exact same thing: God sends the power of delusion to mislead those who did not believe the truth. You must realise how easily and practically the devil does this misleading work of his. Consider a few examples from the Bible:

- He eggs David on to lead the people –against the command of God. It happens and punishment follows! (1 Chronicles 21:1)
- We read in 1 Thessalonians 3:5 that Paul inquires whether the tempter (satan) has already tempted the congregation of the Thessalonians and nullified their teachings. Under certain circumstances the devil works with the entire congregation!
- The devil also tempts our lack of self-control! (1Corinthians 7:5)

What makes the attack of satan even more difficult is the fact that during the final days he will do it by means of miracles and signs. These are the things you will be confronted by.

- In the passage we have read it is written that the satan will reveal himself in the church by all sorts of powerful deeds and signs and miracles.
- He will thus look like the Lord Himself as who else in the church will do these types of things?

It will be very difficult to unravel these things when it comes to the end of matters.

- The matter will even become more difficult because satan also works through people – he has an entire set of prophets in the church.
- We read about them throughout the entire Bible: Since the earliest times they are there and they will be there when the Lord comes in the clouds.

What now? We want to come and celebrate Holy Communion and you do not want to join the table not knowing who are on the acre of the faith!

The Lord gives you the following consolation:

- The Lord Jesus beat the satan by His knowledge of the Bible when the devil tempted Him.
- Every time the Lord Jesus pointed out to the devil that it is not all that is recorded in the Bible – there are more things written than the text the devil quoted and you should read all together.

You do have the Bible. And you do have the Holy Spirit guiding you. You have all the means given by God.

- What is more is the fact that Jesus Christ already broke the power of the devil.
- By every act of Jesus the devil was beaten yard by yard, until Jesus Himself majestically arose from the grave to confirm His rule over the satan.

At the Holy Communion the Lord will again confirm it to you.

- He will again assure you that, as believers, you will remain standing against the devil by the power He attained.
- Holy Communion teaches that God has already granted you the victory. We must just realise it with responsibility, accept it and put it to use.

Even if the satan casts a third of the stars to earth as described in Revelation 12:4 then still the Lord Jesus beats him and his angels. (Revelation 12:9)

- Therefore we read in Luke 10:18 that the satan fell like a bolt of lightening from heaven.
- The Lord even reveals to us why it is as such: They fought and the angels of the devil were driven out of heaven by Michael the arch angel – so final that there is no longer any place for them in heaven.
- The Lord Himself beat the devil. This is why he fell like a bolt of lightening from heaven and also no longer has any access to heaven.

Now listen to the consolation.

- Even should the satan enter the church and pretend to be God Himself, he still arrives here as a loser.
- He is not God and he lost against God. The time is very near when God will finally destroy him.

It is as if the Lord classifies the satan in the same category as a wild animal because in 1 Peter 5:8 it is written that the satan goes around like a roaring lion to devour everything that crosses his path.

- He has the power of destruction but even in that he is entirely limited.
- A part of his work of destruction is that he pretends to be an angel of the light and thereby tries to mislead the people

You will recognize him every time – maybe not always easily, but if you know God and His Word you will recognize the devil.

- Part of the grace of Jesus is that the Holy Spirit never forsakes you.
- He remains with you with insight and ability to distinguish.
- God never leaves His children in the lurch.

But you must also listen to the judgement in this matter. The Bible teaches that there are half-hearted believers. Obviously they are negligent in their lives of faith. Therefore it is written in the Bible that the satan comes to steal the true gospel from these people and replace it with a false one. (Matthew 13:19, 39)

Here it is written in the Bible that the Thessalonians do know what it is that keeps the devil at bay. You have heard who it is keeping the antichrist at bay and why. Jesus Christ and God the Holy Spirit keeps him at bay until the ministering of the Word has gone its full way over the earth. Let me put it differently: Jesus Christ keeps the arrival of the antichrist back until the cross-death and resurrection of the Lord has its full effect amongst the chosen in this world.

Verse 11 and 12 puts another matter clearly:- a less enjoyable matter: the antichrist is used by the lord in His service. The antichrist is indeed against the Lord but thereby he serves the Lord by leading those who do not belong in the church away from the church. He thus executes a cleansing function in the church.

It can never happen to the believers to be led astray because the Lord reveals clearly in verse 13 that He has chosen us to be of the first saved. We who in the final times of the existence of the earth prepare to celebrate Holy Communion, must know that we will have to properly reflect and arrive at the table of the Lord praying, but with true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the eternal God and Saviour.

The claim of this passage is thus that you must fully worship God – multiply your knowledge from His Word. Live so that you always first test and reflect. Make sure that you distinguish the appearance of the satan in time and live your life properly to the glory of the true God.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm 36:1

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

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