

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2012 MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 173:10

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 33:1, 11

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 130:2

Law

Psalm: 130:2

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 31:17

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Scripture reading: 2 Corinthians 6

Scripture text: 2 Corinthians 6:18

"I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty."

(2 Corinthians 6:18)

The Lord does not give up on believers falling into sin. He continues admonishing them to conversion. Let us consider the following matters coming from this passage of Bible scripture:

1. The lack of differentiation abilities in the congregation of Corinth

2. The characteristics of the faith life of a true believer

1. The lack of differentiation abilities in the congregation of Corinth

Verse 11 starts with the strange expression that the mouth of the apostles is open to the Corinthians.

- ◆ This is a Semitic expression meaning that the apostles are always ready to teach the Corinthians. (**Compare Matthew 5:2: Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying**)
- ◆ Paul puts it strongly: His mouth remains open, in other words he is always willing to assist the congregation of Corinth in preaching and by teaching matters of faith.

The facts prove the sincerity of the apostle Paul's words, who at that stage has assisted the congregation for many years.

- ◆ This could possibly already be the third letter written to the Corinthians.
- ◆ There have already been two personal visits and a third was coming.
- ◆ Still Paul have to continue with ministering. (compare Acts 18; 2Corinthians 12:14; 2Corinthians 2: 1-6)

Because something was wrong with the congregation they were quite antipathetic towards the apostle Paul's ministering.

- ◆ The fault did not lay in a lack of love from Paul but inside the congregation's own innards.
- ◆ *Literary it is written that their innards were too narrow, Inside their innards was to little place for love by somebody else.*
- ◆ Towards the other side it could also mean that they were completely too full of themselves.

Therefore the Lord reiterates the apostle's love in these admonishments. His and Timothy's hearts are large; they love the church of Corinth.

- ◆ The fault for the lack of love thus lays somewhere else than with the apostle.
- ◆ Very fatherly Paul requests the congregation to acknowledge what he now is doing for them.

- ◆ This compromise is that they would leave their narrow-mindedness and make space for him in their lives as well. Paul is specifically referring to love and appreciation towards each other.

The reason for the admonishments now becomes clearer.

- ◆ From the first letter we know that the Corinthians, amongst other matters, kept themselves busy with heathen wisdom and that they easily challenged each other in the worldly courts.
- ◆ On the moral front there were also all sorts of heathen practices.

Should we have to sum up the disposition of the congregation the moment they received this letter, we would say that their disposition towards the apostle (and also the other churches?) was very cool and that they were fairly deeply versed into the heathen lifestyles.

- ◆ Therefore the admonishment that they should not join in with the non-believers is put firstly.

By these words Paul refers to two passages from the Old Testament, namely Leviticus 19:19 and Deuteronomy 22:10.

- ◆ Clear instructions are given there that matters differing in their essence may not be mixed.
- ◆ Per example you are not allowed stitching wool and linen together when making clothing because the one material is quite stronger than the other and will result in the tearing of the weaker one.

Similarly an ox and a donkey may not be hitched in together, or two types of plants may not be planted in the same land. The Bible gives the reason: the two types of plants together will hamper each other so that the full harvest would not be obtained.

The same happens in the life of faith: should a believer join in with the sins of a heathen, then he does damages to his soul. (1Corinthians 5:9)

- ◆ The principle given here by the Lord to the believers are very clear: we may not depart from the world because we are still part of this life, but we must guard against letting ourselves in with people making us equal to the world.
- ◆ The Corinthians practiced the wrong option: they started flowing together with the heathens.
- ◆ Their co-operation started on the basis of equality and full mutual acknowledgement. The same started happening on the field of faith. This was wrong.

2. The characteristics of the faith life of a true believer

By means of a group of questions Paul showed that there are certain extremes in life that, because the one excludes the other, are not at all compatible with each other. He gives a few examples:

- ◆ righteousness and
- ◆ lawlessness and
- ◆ light and

- ◆ darkness (compare Matthew 5:14; Ephesians 5:7-11; John 8:12; Acts 26"19)

The comparison continues and puts Jesus Christ and Belial across each other. Belial of course is the devil.

- ◆ Later in the New Testament this name is also used to indicate the anti-Christ.
- ◆ This judgement makes it very clear that the Lord has no appointment with Belial.

The Corinthians can clearly understand what Paul meant that the Lord and satan also exclude each other.

- ◆ There is no common ground upon which both of them can stand.
- ◆ It is thus clear that a believer and a non-believer cannot go the same route together.

In order of having the congregation understand even better what is behind their sins, Paul joins to something he wrote to them in 1Corinthians 8-10.

- ◆ He specifically wrote about the dangers to a Christian should he remain in contact with heathen offer services. (the eating of offer-meat)
- ◆ Therefore he asked what similarity the temple of God has with the idols. What Paul meant is that the believers must realize that they are standing under a bridge between the Lord and idols should they both, in a syncretic way, be imported into their lives. This may not and cannot.

The image of the temple –as it was in the Old Testament is now used but with a clear change taking place in the New Testament. (compare 2Kings 21:4)

- ◆ The temple of the Old Testament becomes the congregation in the New Testament.
- ◆ As the Lord, in the Old Testament, first was with His people in the pillar of cloud and then moved into the Holy of Holies, He moved with His Spirit into the congregation.

With idols the matter is completely different.

- ◆ Nothing resides or lives inside them.
- ◆ There is thus indeed no relationship between God and the idols.
- ◆ Paul reminds the congregation about the Holy Spirit living inside of them.

... because you are the temple of the living God.

(compare Romans 8:15; Galatians 3:3; 1Corinthians 3:16; Exodus 25:8; Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 11:17, 20:4; 2Samuel 7:14)

Summarizing: the Lord lives between His children and they enjoy His favour, therefore the people must steer clear from any kind of un-holiness and impureness.

- ◆ Therefrom follows the people's calling to be holy people and breaking all ties with godlessness.
- ◆ The individual believers must thus daily conduct themselves inline with the habitation of God the Lord within them.

This cannot happen should the believers live in faith syncretism with sinners and heathens.

- ◆ There is not a foothold where the believer and non-believer can share their faith-life on an equal basis.
- ◆ The words: **do not touch that what is impure** have a very clear relevance to the Leviathan Law. As the Levite had to keep themselves pure when entering the temple of the Lord, so must the Christians, in their daily lives, shy away from moral impurity and all forms of injustice and non-belief.

The Lord assures the believers about the tenderness of His love and care by depicting a specific relationship between Him and them. He is their Father and they are His sons and daughters.

Where does this image come from?

- ◆ From the meritorious fruits of Christ's atonement. He changed us from hopeless sinners into children of the Lord.
- ◆ Maybe you could think that the promise of us being God's children in Jesus Christ are just empty words or that it is vague or possibly just rhetorical.

But then you must know that you are wrong because Paul calls onto it that he lives from these covenant promises.

- ◆ Just consider his life and you will realize that these promises must have extreme power to keep him on his feet through so much suffering and persecution so that he could bring into being so many congregations and serve them for such a long time.

The Lord thus calls on us to purify ourselves from all defilement in the flesh and spirit.

- ◆ We sin daily – daily we have to rise again from the sin because we possess the power of the covenant promises.
- ◆ But we have to continue rising from sin and continue growing to perfection until we depart from this life.
- ◆ Should it be possible, we must strive to ban all forms of impurities from our lives.

We must adopt a style whereby we rely upon the grace of God's promises. At the same time we must keep in mind that one-day we will face His judgement chair giving account of our lives.

Come, let us then live as children of the light, because that is what we are.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Song: Scripture Versification 2-4:1 (33:1)

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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