

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2014 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 91:4

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 2:6

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 43:3

Scripture reading: 2Kings 17

Scripture text: 2Kings 17:41

So these nations feared the Lord, yet served their carved images...
(2Kings 17:41)

When you neglect your life the Lord gives it over to the destructive work of the Satan.

- It is the same with the church.
- When the members weaken, all sorts of superstition and false faith enter the life of the church and the members, so that eventually it is repulsive to the eyes of the Lord

Israel experienced this truth.

- You know the history and know the amount of godlessness the children practised under the guidance of some of their kings.
- There was no desire for permanent conversion.

Often there was the preaching by the prophets for them to convert else the Lord would send them into exile.

- True conversion remained lacking and therefore these promises of punishment by God went into fulfilment.
- The people were taken into exile. They did not look after their faith and therefore their bodies were taken into exile.
- This resulted into them suffering under it for a long time.

There were all sorts of political turmoil during their times.

- But it was not the failure of their political disposition that caused them the exile.
- The cause is clearly written in verse 7:

For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods,
(2Kings 17L7)

Then it is further told that they worshipped pillars of stone and holy tree trunks and even made golden calves and served Baal. Verse 18 says the following:

Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone.

Verse 20: And the Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight.

This sin by the children of God now also worked through to their land as now suddenly immigrants of all sorts were imported.

- Every nation brought it's own idols.
- The moment Israel gave up following the God of the Covenant, God gave over their entire land to religious decay so that they could themselves experience the dangers and results of rejecting God.

The children of the covenant strayed prior to their exile so far off in their faith that they worshipped idols like golden calves and practised star-service and child-offers.

- This was the start of the amalgamation of their faith to the faith of the heathens.
- The faith of the nations that was to have been exterminated when the children moved into Palestine, was now fully followed.

And now the history worsens.

- Verse 25 tells that the condition with the settling of the new nations so worsened that the Lord sent in lions amongst them.
- No honour was given onto God, only the idols brought from the heathen nations were worshipped.

The lions that devoured these people were there already.

- Characteristic to these lions was that they quickly multiplied every time the land lost inhabitants – this lion plague was naturally to be expected.
- But what worsened the plague was that the Lord sent the lions. Here the nature thus worked hand in hand with the powers of God.

This lion plague now started a series of reactions amongst the inhabitants of the land.

- The remaining Israelites immediately recognised the hand of the LORD.
- They immediately attributed this lion plague to the ignorance of the colonists.
- They do not properly maintain the worship of the LORD.
- In this way the first group blamed the second group.

Thereafter the second group – the immigrants – immediately approached the Assyrian authorities in Palestine.

- But this time there was very little religious considerations coupled to it – this time the motive was purely political by nature.
- They complained in the hope of attaining something above the Israelites. That they would be advantaged should they be successful in this matter

There was thus very clear tension between these two groups of inhabitants of the land.

On their turn the authorities had to compile a report to be sent to the king.

- To them religion now no longer played any role. It was a purely political matter.
- The political unity of the land was breaking up and they would very quickly bring this division under the attention of the king.
- The reason? Should a revolt break out here they would be punished and revoked from their posts.

You must now continually keep in mind the working of God.

- His children abandoned Him and He handed them over to the matters they abandoned Him for.
- Now they suffer under the nations whose idols they worshipped.
- It deals with the church that lost the true worship and now had to bear the results of the amalgamation of the false worships.

In this instance there came a pure political solution of the problems of the church. Israel is the symbol of the church. But when the anti-Christ has to provide a solution it is not so pure at all.

Sargon the heathen has only one aim. The tension in this province must be neutralised. Verse 27:

Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, "Send there one of the priests whom you brought from there; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the rituals of the God of the land."

It sounds very good. Should this happen today we would certainly rejoice and consider it to be a victory for the church and that the church has now again gained a foothold for growing!

No see how dishonestly and religiously incorrect the king executes this good command.

- Only one priest may go. Should more go there it might again develop into churchly friction, possibly sinking his political plans.
- This one priest was selected with great care.

- It was not just anyone – at any rate not one who kept up all the commands of God the LORD full-heatedly.

That priest was firstly well investigated politically.

- He had to be hundred percent Assyrian orientated.
- Should he then later advance with his word he could appoint other priests from out of the Israelites and immigrants.
- It thus does not deal with the true maintenance of the Levite priesthood.

Verse 28 clearly states that this priest stayed in Bethel.

- From this it is very clear that this priest was one of the false priests who maintained the golden calf worship service at Bethel prior to the exile.
- Because Bethel was the centre where Jeroboam's sinful calf-worship was practised.
- We can even state with the greatest certainty that upon his arrival this priest immediately started rebuilding this pagan temple.

The Bible further tells that the work of this priest eventually was indeed a failure.

- The people did not start to again worship the LORD.
- Every nation built it's own temple and placed and worshipped it's own god inside.

Bethel became a holy place with temples for about all the idols of those times and had a place to worship the Lord inbetween all.

- Then we find the circumstances more or less the same to what we have today.
- The Lord and all sorts of other ideologies are worshipped together in one religion.

Verse 32:

So they feared the Lord,

The idolatry even attained a priest order, like the priest order of the Lord.

- These political rules in the church had at any rate resulted into a political union, but a large falsification in its teachings and religious practices.

This condition did not satisfy the Lord. Therefore He wanted to be re-affirmed to His church in His grace.

- From verse 35 further we read that the Lord entered into a covenant with them and then explicitly commanded them to only serve Him and that they may not fear any other gods.
- In this covenant the Lord also promised that He would save them from their enemies should they only worship Him and reject all the other idols.

But the church had no interest in obeying.

- Verse 40 clearly puts it that they just as disobeyed and stayed with their earlier customs.
- Our verse of text describes this earlier custom: **So these nations feared the Lord, yet served their carved images...**

Where do we stand with our church in the development of this text?

- How many churches of our times have strongly expressed themselves into the political development and battle of our land? To be more precise – our church – are we not possibly too involved with the politics and too little with the religion?
- We must not come with the politics to church like this king of Assyria. Do not mix your church and your politics.
- Find the principles according to what you must live to and your politics must be practised from the Word of God.

Also do not come with an idea by which you want to dictate to God and take certain ideas and want to bend them to fit your viewpoint.

- Listen to what God says and then go and practise it in your politics.
- The church cannot practise politics, else he falls into idolatry as like this instance we read about.

Therefore it is just as important for you not to come to church with all sorts of other and worldly ideas and practice the two together.

- Then you always get the amalgamation of belief and unbelief and you land up where you serve the Lord and carved images.

The text has something important it teaches us.

- We must learn from the history of the Israelites that the Lord will take away our land from us should we abandon Him of worship together with idols.
- We are now strongly in the political struggle. Is our faith right?

It is not necessary for us to practice politics as a religion.

- But it is necessary for us to correctly exercise our faith.
- This indeed is why the Lord Jesus Christ hung on the cross – to teach us the grace of God.

Therefore this is not a sermon of judgement but a sermon of grace.

- The Lord has a covenant with the church: We must serve only God and He promises protection!
- He proved His power to us. He can protect us because His Son had to die and return from death so that He can prove the almight of God to us.
- God can even protect us from death, should we just believe in Him.

Thus pull this faith through to your ordinary daily life and conditions.

- God promised Israel that He would supply should they just believe.
- The insight for the right decision at the right moment is born from your faith and a fixed knowledge and trust in God.
- That is why the Holy Spirit is granted to us. He looks after these moments of crisis.

The death of Jesus Christ proves to us that faith in God is more than enough for this life.

- It is definitely not necessary to amalgamate your faith together with all sorts of other matters in aid of giving power to it.

- A pure worship of God is all that is needed.

Should we not persevere herein God will give us over to these matters we producer ourselves – as like Israel.

- And the results of their worship and the decaying effect thereof are not comparable to the promises by God.
- Thus do not serve, like the nations, God and carved images.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 116:1, 9

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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