

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 24 MARCH 2013 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: 32:3

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: 116:1, 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 9:7

Scripture reading: Psalm 130; Catechism Sunday 2

The life of a Christian is a life of continual soul-searching.

- It is a life wherein you discover yourself from your sins and then battle with your entire being to overcome the evil.
- This is the background of every one of us gathered in every worshipping service.

In the formula for the Holy Supper it is also clearly put that those who can confess their sins and see their lives in contravention with the law of God can enjoy the physical proof of grace.

- Only those may join the meal of forgiveness at the Table of the Lord.
- But that leaves us with the question: What about every service where we are gathered to the face of the Lord?
- May you just enter the church, sit down and pray and sing as if nothing ever was amiss – or must I also come to worship after I have first searched my soul?

What does soul-searching and self-censure mean? Come, let us first see what it does not mean:

- It does not mean that you only need to reflect upon your sins once every three months.
- It does not mean that we just continue living for times without us having a real perspective on our lives.

It thus means that we must continually regard our lives in the mirror of God's law.

The question about how we know sin is one of the shortest questions and answers in our confession: We know our misery out of the law of God!

- But do we realize at the same time how difficult it is living according this simple answer?
- Most of the times our lives degenerate into a fierce opposition to the Lord.
 - We continually transgress every commandment.
 - It is basically the same as contradicting the will of God and therefore unmasked disobedience.

Do we believe it? No, most of us do not want to believe it.

- Many of us do not want to know that to the law of God we are contradictors and disobedient people the same as our children are disobedient to us!
- And confessions about these sins to God are also not as plentiful in our lives as it should be.

We know all our miseries.

- Or we sometimes at least talk about sins and miseries, although we do not always realize the full severity about it.
- When we ask: Whence knowest thou thy misery? We hear various different answers from the people.
 - One says: My experience teaches me my misery. I struggle daily with it.
 - That is a wrong answer because this answer lacks sufficient depth.
 - a second one says: My conscience teaches me my sins and miseries. Certainly an answer even less acceptable than the first answer.
 - Because in a certain amount we are all unscrupulous. There is not one person whose conscience is not already marred by sin.
 - A third answers that his heart teaches him. It really sounds like a beautiful answer because who of us do not know the language of the heart?

But our confession states that it cannot be.

- You cannot know the circumstance from your heart because our hearts are just as rotten as we are ourselves.
- The Bible in fact teaches that sins come like killing and adultery and bad thoughts from the heart.
- The confession of our sins can thus not be borne in our hearts – our hearts are as blunted as we are and have also suffered the same under the sin.

Where do we then get a measure to gauge our lives?

- We must go to God. He is the Only One who remained untarnished.

- He is the Only One who cannot be affected by the sin at all.
- Therefore the law of the Lord is the only means that can really convert a person.

The law of the Lord never falters.

- The law of the lord is stable and does not change under any circumstances.
- In other words the Law is the only yardstick we can continually gauge our lives against.

The law of the Lord is the only means that can continually move us to repentance – so that we will realize the full reality of our sinful condition.

It is impossible for us to say that there are only about two or three matters we have done for which we have to humble ourselves to the face of God.

- Then our heart and conscience will accuse us of many more things because the law of God puts us guilty in every circumstance.
- There is no guesswork in the Law of the Lord. He commands.

Humbling is also called soul-searching. What is it?

- Soul-searching is thus regarding your life in the mirror of God's law, Soul-searching is further also grabbing with thankfulness onto Jesus Christ and His earnings on the cross, because then only we really learn how much He has done for me.

The law teaches us to love. Jesus gives the summation:

Matthew 22:37: Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

Mark 12:30: 'And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.

Luke 10:27: So he answered and said, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.' "

Then the Lord said "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." That is true.

- In the place of these two commandments the Ten Commandments might just as well have been written
 - Because in the Ten Commandments the first four deal with the love for God and the living out of it.
 - And in the other six it deals with the love for your neighbor and how we must live in love with our neighbor.

But there is a big difference.

- The Lord Jesus teaches here that it does not deal with the one or another commandment. It deals with the law of God in toto.
- We can also put it differently:

Here the Lord Jesus teaches us to leave all the don'ts of the law and comply with the dos of the law only.

- It now does not at all deal with the negatives: you may not kill or you may not steal and you may not commit adultery.
- It deals with the positives: You must love! All these commandments deal with the love. Love for God and love for your neighbor.

The fact of the Lord Jesus here turning around all commandments into positives brings another light onto our lives!

- The fact that I have not yet killed anybody means nothing! Had I the opportunity I might have done it.
- Maybe, because we do not want to fall into the hands of the police, we have not committed murder as yet, but in my heart hatred burns against one of my neighbors.
- The fact of not having committed adultery does not mean that our faith and love for the neighbor will prevent us from it. Possibly it could be that we, only due to public disgrace, refrain from it.

But when Jesus now turns this matter around a new light is shining.

- The wife of my neighbour is his.
 - Due to love that encompasses respect at the same time, I keep myself clear from the property of my neighbor.
 - Considered differently we could also say: out of love for our own wives – who are also our neighbor – we keep our marriages holy.

Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ, without examining each commandment it is clear that we continually live in sin against the love-commandment of the Lord Jesus.

- These commandments just deal with the neighbor and love towards our neighbor.
- How much more guilty would we be should we not approach the love for God in this way.

With all of us much love for God is lacking because we all often put His Person and His Word aside in favour of our own sinful interests.

- Consider the amount of money we sometimes squander in our lives on all sorts of luxuries we allow ourselves – whilst we then do not give the donations we promised the Lord to the church.
 - Then the church of the Lord must sometimes struggle in fulfilling all the financial obligations.
 - Is it true love for the church of the Lord should we deal in this way with God and His church?

The law of the Lord chases all of us. None of us can fully comply with the demands set to us by the law of God. Luckily with God there is much grace.

- The Lord Jesus Christ Himself came to fulfill the law.
- Therefore the law we have read was not written by Moses but by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Moses wrote what *we must not do*. In contrast thereto the Lord Jesus said what we *must do*.

The knowledge of our misery grants us the greatest richness: The knowledge about the salvation in Jesus Christ.

- Thus guard against only doing soul-searching when it is again time for Holy Communion.
- Live like somebody whose heart is raised to Christ at all times.
- Then we will experience the overwhelming love of God.

This full-time reflection has in our times become more necessary than ever before.

- The end of time is approaching and therefore it has become time for the law of God to be not only written on paper.
- It has become time that the law of God becomes a confession, written down into our hearts.
- Therefore we now have to guard more than before against a traditional worshipping. Think about our love for God and our love towards our neighbor.

In chapter 1: 23 –25 James wrote the following in his letter:

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

The law of God is like a good mirror wherein you can see all your faults and should you take note of it and convert yourself, obtain the grace of Christ.

Thus do not today exit the church and forget how our lives look like. That is the person who has lost everything. Observe to see and do something about the matter!

Come let us see what the Heidelberg Catechism teaches about this in Sunday 2:

Q. 3.

Whence knowest thou thy misery?

A.

Out of the law of God. (a)

(a)

Rom.3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Q. 4.

What does the law of God require of us?

A.

Christ teaches us that briefly, Matt. 22:37-40, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and the great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (a)

(a)

Deut.6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Lev.19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

Mark 12:30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

Luke 10:27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

Q. 5.

Canst thou keep all these things perfectly?

A.

In no wise; (a)

for I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbour.(b)

(a)

Rom.3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

Rom.3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Rom.3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

(b)

Rom.8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Eph.2:3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Tit.3:3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

Gen.6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Gen.8:21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

Jer.17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Rom.7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 119:63

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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