

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 14 APRIL 2013

EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: 38:2, 8

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: 68:8

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 66:7, 9

Scripture reading: Genesis 3:8 – 19 and 2 Corinthians 10:15 – 11

Scripture text: 2 Corinthians 11:3 and Catechism Sunday 4

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

(2 Corinthians 11:3)

Adam and Eve transgressed. Then in fear they fled from the punishment, which they knew would follow.

- Their consciences accused them. As is the case with us, their feelings of guilt also got the better of them.
- Sometimes our feelings of guilt slumber, but each time the Holy Spirit re-awakens in us our guilt, and then we flee, just like Adam and Eve did, because the Lord's presence scares us.

But we need more than our consciences to know all our sins and the Lord's punishment, because we are far removed from Adam and Eve's perfection.

- We must be taught it from God's Word

- With that we need the Light of the Holy Spirit so that we may comprehend and correctly understand it.

We learn three things from Genesis 3

1. That the Lord has the right to punish us, even if we do not want to believe that we have sinned.
2. **The punishment is severe due to the magnitude of the sin**
3. **Our punishment is certain, even though God is also merciful**

1. That the Lord has the right to punish us, even if we do not want to believe that we have sinned.

All of us have this question in our head: Is it not unfair of God to punish man after all?

- The Lord knows even better than we do, that of ourselves, we can do no better
- As Adam did, we also sometimes deny that that the Lord's judgment is fair.
- At bottom, this denial of our sin makes the Lord the guilty party - according to this view He is the creator of all life and then it is He who determines people's deeds!
- He knows how limited we are does He not.

What should however concern us the most is: Would the Lord tolerate a sinful man to accuse Him of being unjust?

- The Lord had the right to demand that man must serve Him
- It is after all for that very purpose that He created us, and it is the very reason for our existence.

The faithful also know that God did not merely create us – in addition, He also made us good, so that we could serve Him, if only we wanted to!

- The point is that man changed. Of his own accord he came up with all sorts of warped insights and desires.
- The Lord did not change, but man became wrong. The Lord reveals this in Ecclesiastes 7:29
²⁹ **Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes.** (NKJV)
- The same thing is stated in different words in Micah 6:8 where it is written that the Lord required nothing other of us than just that we should serve Him rightly:
⁸ **He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?** (NKJV)

Summarised:

- The Lord's commandment is as holy now, as it has always been
- It is us, who became unable due to sin and who lost our true nobility.

If we had been created in such a hopeless state that we were incapable of any good from the start, then perhaps we could have felt that the Lord's punishment was unfair. But as it stands, the truth of the matter is entirely different.

- The Lord is good and right
- So that everything that He creates is also good and right – including man
- And thus it was – Up to that point when man decided to turn his back on his Creator, he was perfect and without sin.

From that moment onwards, man has been a very willful creature.

- We resist God and his Law
- We shut our ears to the Holy Spirit and close our eyes to God's grace.
- With all our strength, we sin with abandon

Once we were able to live without sinning, but then we did not wish to live thus. Now, we can no longer live without sinning, and neither do we want to.

The best of all is that one can find people in this condition who believe that they are themselves without sin, and who then justify their lives with the sins of others.

- Just like Adam, we are also mostly inclined to blame others for our failures and errors.
- But God is still as holy as He was when He created Adam, and therefore in His justice He will punish us all. Because the transgression is ours.

2. We confess that by the righteous judgment of God, we deserve temporal and eternal punishment¹

Which is exactly what happened to Adam

- Notwithstanding his attempt to excuse himself on account of Eve's transgression Adam was severely punished for the grievous sin he committed,
- Thorns and thistles would henceforth destroy the labour of his hands (Genesis 3:18)
- Once his work had been accomplished he would die his death. His body would turn back into dust, as it had been before God created him.

Since then, sin has become a huge problem

- It is not merely those daily transgressions of ours which we commit against God and our neighbour that causes the problem
- It is also that which we inherit
- And for all of these sins we are punished with the severe punishment of death

We are cut off at the root – bodily and spiritually

- Bodily – because our bodies die. We decompose up to the point where nothing remains of our beautiful bodies.
- Spiritually – because our sin ensures that our next residence is in the realm of the dead
- This punishment is eternal, and each living day suffers this yoke

Actually our punishment is even worse than that, because it opens up the door to the devil in this life already, so that if God permits him, he here already further ruins us.

- Which is why we are tormented by sickness, misery and heartache and adversity of all kinds and at every level.
 - We struggle in our work, marriage, family life, political life etc.
- In this way the faithful and unfaithful alike, groan under the effects of disobedience

And then the particular punishment that the Lord visits on those who are not part of the elect follows.

- In the Final Judgment they are not at all excused
- They are sealed in eternal darkness – hell, where despair and recrimination and regret abound.
- The Lord says a fire burns there, that will never be quenched (Mark 9:43)

3. This punishment will certainly be executed, but we are forgiven everything through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Question 11 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks if the Lord will still punish us, while we know that He is also merciful

- Naturally! Merci does not mean or imply that we can continue to irritate the Lord with our sin unto eternity and that He must just keep on forgiving us for it!
- If God were to not punish sin then He would not be just
- If sin were not punished then it would mean that God does not put the devil in his place.

But God does fittingly punish all sin, as He does also fittingly punish the devil

- Sin is cultivated by the devil and his forces
- But over-against the devil and his forces, God vindicates His Holiness. Which is why He justly punishes all sin with the maximum penalty.

Which is not say that God is not merciful

- God's pronouncement of His punishment of Adam and Eve could almost still be heard when He announced the promise of deliverance
- A descendant of this sin-fallen Eve would crush the serpent's head. Christ will be born, and He will take our punishment upon Himself. He will re-open the path to heaven.

We no longer have this promise in hand – the Lord Jesus is no longer still to come.

- He has already come. We live in the fulfillment of this promise.
- But this Lord Jesus Christ came to bring about a strict division
 - On the one hand He redeemed those who
 - Believe in salvation in Him
 - Continuously strive to lead better lives under the voice and guidance of the Holy Spirit
 - On the one other hand He brought certain death and destruction to those who tempt God with their wrong lives. There is no mercy for those.

Listen, repent and be converted.

- There is no sin which God does not forgive – sin against the Holy Spirit being the only exception

- Which is the sin to know, to hear but to none-the-less reject God's grace

But for all our other sins, there was the cross, on which the Son of God suffered punishment.

- On that cross He suffered God's curse over us and our earth and conquered it
- With that He unlocked the doors to eternal life for us - if we convert.

Come let us read together what we confess in the Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 4.

Q. 9.

Does not God then do injustice to man, by requiring from him in his law, that which he cannot perform?

A.

Not at all; (a)

for God made man capable of performing it; but man, by the instigation of the devil, (b) and his own wilful disobedience, (c)

deprived himself and all his posterity of those divine gifts.

(a)

Eph.4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Eccl.7:29 Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

(b)

John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

2 Cor.11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Gen.3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

(c)

Gen.3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Rom.5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

Gen.3:13 And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

1 Tim.2:13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

1 Tim.2:14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

Q. 10.

Will God suffer such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

A.

By no means; but is terribly displeased (a)
with our original as well as actual sins; and will punish them in his just judgment temporally and eternally, (b)

as he has declared, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them." (c)

(a)

Gen.2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Rom.5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

(b)

Ps.5:5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

Ps.50:21 These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.

Nah.1:2 God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.

Exod.20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

Exod.34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

Rom.1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Eph.5:6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

Heb.9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

(c)

Deut.27:26 Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.

Gal.3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Q. 11.

Is not God then also merciful?

A.

God is indeed merciful, (a)

but also just; (b)

therefore his justice requires, that sin which is committed against the most high majesty of God, be also punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment of body and soul.

(a)

Exod.34:6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

Exod.34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

Exod.20:6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

(b)

Ps.7:9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

Exod.20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

Exod.23:7 Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.

Exod.34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

Ps.5:5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

Ps.5:6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

Nah.1:2 God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.

Nah.1:3 The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 89:17

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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 Scripture Modern King James Version
