

## REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 11 AUGUST 2013 EVENING SERVICE

**Sing before:** 36:2, 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: 35:4

**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 46:1, 3

**Scripture reading:** 1Corinthians 15

**Scripture text:** 1Corinthians 15; Catechism Sunday 17

The church in Corinth had a problem. Some of their members preached a false doctrine: they denied the resurrection of the dead.

- They simply could not figure it out and just regarded it as some sort of metaphorical language.
- They learnt that Jesus had been raised from the dead, but they just could not believe that people would rise from the dead.

This false doctrine posed such a threat to the Christians that Paul felt compelled to prepare a special sermon to address this matter.

- He was long in coming to the pointy because he wanted to show the people unequivocally that they should either fully reject the doctrine of the Lord Christ or completely accept it.
- You cannot accept it partially.

Therefore he starts his sermon by referring to the death and burial of Christ. After all, it is logical that he could not preach the resurrection unless he had proven the death of Jesus, otherwise it could have been a seeming resurrection. In fact many people then – and today also – allege that it was a seeming resurrection.

- This is the reason why the specifically mentions the burial of the Lord.
  - His burial is proof of the fact that Jesus Christ really died.
  - He first wanted to prove that Jesus was really dead because the Greeks who loved reasoning and philosophizing could possibly deny that Jesus really died.
- After he had convinced them that Jesus really died and that He was buried, he could start reasoning with them about the resurrection.

Again Paul took long in coming to the point.

- The reason was that the Greeks wanted proof of everything they were told.
- They would not willingly accept anything they hear.
- Paul had to first speak about the occasions where Jesus appeared to the people after His resurrection.

They could not argue about it because there were literally hundreds of witnesses vouching for the truth of the matter.

- Hence the resurrection truly took place.
- The great truth is not only that Jesus conquered death because He is also God – Jesus, the man, also arose from the dead.
- It deals with the resurrection of the flesh (the body)

From verse 5 onwards Paul tells the people that the Lord Jesus appeared to people after His resurrection.

- He first appeared to Peter – Cephas.
  - This Cephas sort of distanced himself from the circle of the disciples.
  - That night in the courtyard he denied Jesus.
  - On this occasion, when Jesus appeared to Peter, He actually reinstated him as apostle.
- Then there was another appearance. On this occasion Jesus appeared to the twelve.
  - These appearances were proof of the fact that Jesus had truly risen from the dead.
  - Every time He instructed the apostles regarding their calling.
- And then the Lord Jesus appeared to more than 500 brothers at the same time.
  - This is not mentioned in any of the gospels. It is mentioned here only. However the implication is clear: Jesus appeared to the church
- The appearances rippled outwards. First Peter, then the twelve, and than to more than 500. These people represented the entire church.

**When the Lord Jesus appeared to them He revealed to them His promise that they would also be resurrected. And as He stood before them He will also raise us from the dead – with body and soul.**

There were more appearances and Paul mentions them, one of which was most important:

- The Lord Jesus appeared to Paul when he was on his way to Damascus.
- On that occasion the Lord Jesus called him to be an apostle.

Now it should have been clear to the Christians that the Lord Jesus has indeed been raised from the dead. Hence he continues with his sermon and starts with the second part.

**Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?**

(1Corinthians 15:12)

*How could people believe and teach the truth that the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead but at the same time reject that people who die will be resurrected?*

This was the false doctrine taught in the church of Corinth. Perhaps we should not be too fast to judge, because sometimes we are also in error about this.

- We say that we will be resurrected, but do not really believe it because we still fear death – almost as if it is a dark night that will swallow us.

Now the Holy Spirit, through Paul's pen, reveals to us that it is absolutely impossible to believe that Christ was resurrected if we do not believe at the same time that people will be resurrected.

- The Lord Jesus Christ really died and He really lives.
- Many people saw Him.
- Thomas was even invited to put his finger in the holes in Jesus' hands to convince himself that it was the Lord Jesus who physically stood before him.
- But if the false doctrine taught by the Corinthians is true then these facts cannot be believed!

Paul also pointed out another consequence of this false doctrine.

- If we do not believe that people – you and me – will be rise from the dead like Christ, then we could just as well tear up our Bibles because then the gospel taught by the apostles is false.
- Because then they teach us that God raised His Son from the dead, while in fact He did not do it.
- Then the content of our faith is nullified.
- Then we are left with absolutely nothing.

What is more, our faith would not only be without and substance, it would also bear no fruit.

- If the gospel is not true, then it means that we are like Adam and Eve, still in the depths of sin.
- This could even imply that there is no God and no Saviour if we reject these truths.

But now we need not doubt the truth of the promises because there were witnesses who experienced and saw all these things. They saw how Christ died. And they saw when He had been raised from the dead.

The resurrection forms a very important part of the Gospel.

- If the Lord Jesus Christ had died for our sins but had not been raised from the dead it would have been of no benefit for us because then death would still have had power over us.
- The resurrection indeed proved that we receive complete forgiveness of sins through the death on the cross because the Lord Jesus was able to grant it.
- And then and there He proves the fruits of His salvation: He rose from the dead and tells us that He would raise us from the dead in exactly the same way.

Now the Corinthians should know that they have complete forgiveness of their sins – but they must also believe in the resurrection of the dead. These two matters are linked.

Of course you understand that these matters had practical implications for the Corinthians – and also for us.

- Paul tried to make the Corinthians understand that a believer should be joyful when his relatives die and should look forward to the day on which he would follow them.
- In this life death is the only way to enter eternal life.

Without the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ there would not have been hope for those who die.

- Without the resurrection life would have ended the moment of death.
- This is what Paul referred to when he said:  
**If only for this life we have hope in Christ, ...**

*Such people will be ashamed when they die because then there will be no propitiation through the Lord Jesus Christ – no resurrection into the perfect life in the Kingdom of God.*

In a joyous tone Paul continues:

**But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, ...**

- It means that we will also be raised from the dead.
- This same body of mine will live again.
- The Lord Jesus Christ is the first fruits of the harvest, and we shall follow in His footsteps.

There are people who entered eternal life in a different way:

- Elijah and Enoch were not raised from the dead.
- Also they did not conquer death.
- It was the Will of God that they passed death.

The dead whom Christ raised from the dead eventually had to die again. Otherwise Lazarus would have been still alive.

- Hence the Lord Jesus Christ is the First who rose from the dead.
- He is therefore the only One who has the power to conquer death, and in such a way that He can also bring other people back from the dead.

Through the man, Adam, we must all die, because by him we are all sinners. And only by one man, Christ we are conquerors of death because He conquered death and also saved us from it.

**21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.**

**22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.**

(1Corinthians 15:21-22)

Beloved, do not fear the day when you must die and also do not think that your loved ones who have passed away are lost. Learn from the Word of God that through the power of God the dead will become alive.

In verse 42 Paul compared a burial to what happens in springtime when the farmer sows the seeds so that they can sprout and grow.

- At a funeral we think of death.
- But remember that the Lord teaches us in this passage that our bodies are planted like grains of corn until God lets them rise again into a new life.

Let us then live in the knowledge that we live to all eternity.

Let us now read what our confession teaches about it in Catechism Sunday 17:

Sunday 17

45. Q. How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?

A. First, by His resurrection He has overcome death, so that He could make us share in the righteousness which He had obtained for us by His death.[1] Second, by His power we too are raised up to a new life.[2] Third, Christ's resurrection is to us a sure pledge of our glorious resurrection.[3]

[1] Rom. 4:25; I Cor. 15:16-20; I Pet. 1:3-5. [2] Rom. 6:5-11; Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 3:1-4. [3] Rom. 8:11; I Cor. 15:12-23; Phil. 3:20, 21.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 147:1, 2

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