

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2013 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Scripture Versification 1-1:7

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: 33:1, 3

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 32:1

Scripture reading: Luke 11

Scripture text: Luke 11:13: Catechism Sunday 20

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

(Luke 11:13)

In our Apostolic Confession we confess the following:

I believe in The Holy Spirit

In the Confession of Nicene we also confess the Holy Spirit – just in more detail:

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

Who or what is the Holy Spirit whom we confess? Where does He come from and what does He do?

- For those who have faith the answers are simple.

- For the unbelievers – in other words people in whom the Holy Spirit does not operate - the being and the Deity of the Holy Spirit are unacceptable.

The Being of God is so vast that as humans, we can comprehend precious little thereof. The believer can therefore do naught, but accept, and believe that which God reveals to him in His Word.

What does the Bible reveal to us?

The Bible reveals that the One True God works in three separate Persons. Each Person works in a unique way to affect our redemption

- The Father is Framer and Keeper (Preserver) of His eternal Council.
 - In this council He decides, amongst others, that humans will live to His glory. He decides which people will exist to His glory, and who will not.
- The second Person of the Deity is the Son - the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - He is our Redeemer and Saviour, because He died for us on the cross.
- The third Person of the Deity is the Holy Spirit.

The Bible reveals that the Holy Spirit's work is that He sanctifies die faithful who belong to God. He makes our access to God the Father possible.

16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

(Ephesians 2:16-18)

This Bible passage clearly reveals how that, by His merit, the Lord Jesus allows our access to God the Father to occur: ... access by one Spirit unto the Father. (Ephesians 2:16-18)

The Holy Spirit guides us to discover ourselves in our sin, so that we may know and seek the mercy of God. We read of this in amongst others, the following passages:

11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

(1Corinthians 2:11-12)

13 "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

(John 16:13)

The Holy Spirit is God Himself. Therefore He proceeds from God the Father and from God the Son, to us.

What does He come to do with us?

- He comes to teach us to understand and know God's grace.
- He leads us to be able to apprehend God's grace.
For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."
 (Romans 8:15)

Think also of especially the words written to the congregation at Corinth.

- They are reminded that they were plucked out from the sin of the world, and that is precisely how they no longer have the sinful spirit of the world living inside of them.
- They now have the Spirit, which is of God - which is to say; the Holy Spirit - who lives in them.
- It was the Holy Spirit who taught them to know the grace of God:
Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.
 (1 Corinthians 2:12)

But if it is so easy and so simple, why then are there so many unbelievers today - even unbelievers who previously were believers?

- Also this answer is provided by the Lord
- It is an alarming answer: The Lord does not give his Holy Spirit to just anyone.
The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.
 (John 14:17)

The disciples also once enquired why there are people who can observe the Lord's miracles and hear His sermons and then become believers - while there are others who observe the same miracles and who hear the same sermons that those who became believers heard, but they do not convert. He then answered them saying:

"Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.
 (Matthew 13:11)

The Lord's answer means that to those who remain unbelievers, God the Holy Spirit is not given. The Holy Spirit works faith in a person. If He is not given to someone, then that person cannot be converted.

There are more similar pronouncements in the Bible. Just listen to the following:

But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given.
 (Matthew 19:11)

And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.'
 (Luke 8:10)

A very striking passage in the Bible is the verse in Acts 5 which beautifully clarifies that witness (in other words: what you believe!) and obedience to God are tied to the fact that the Holy Spirit is given to such people.

"And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

(Acts 5:32)

The sum of it all is that God makes certain people His children. To those, He gives His Holy Spirit. It teaches them to understand that they are the children of God, and then they worship God as their Father.

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

(Galatians 4:6)

In modern times the work of the Holy Spirit is oftentimes ridiculed and denied. The people who do so, can never be saved. They simply cannot be in the eternal life, because God reveals that He simply does not allow such people there.

31 "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.

32 "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

(Matthew 12:32-32)

So where do we stand?

The Lord Jesus Christ seals us in the redemption. That is why God the Holy Spirit is given to us.

He makes us to hear the gospel of redemption.

Then He makes us to believe it!

Through the Lord Jesus Christ, we fully share in redemption, salvation and recreation.

How do I know?

The fact that the Holy Spirit makes me to believe these things means that the Lord Jesus gave Him to me as a seal and guarantee.

Remember the revelation of the Lord, which teaches:

13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 1:13-14)

Let us look what we confess in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 20:

Question 53: What do you believe concerning the Holy Spirit?

Answer: *First, He is, together with the Father and the Son, true and eternal God.^[1] Second, He is also given to me,^[2] to make me by true faith share in Christ and all His benefits,^[3] to comfort me,^[4] and to remain with me forever.^[5]*

^{1]} Gen. 1:1, 2; Matt. 28:19; Acts 5:3, 4; I Cor. 3:16. ^[2] I Cor. 6:19; II Cor. 1:21, 22; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:13. ^[3] Gal. 3:14; I Pet. 1:2. ^[4] John 15:26; Acts 9:31. ^[5] John 14:16, 17; I Pet. 4:14.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 31:15

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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