

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2013 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: 118:8

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: 66:1

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 36:3

Scripture reading: Romans 7

Scripture text: Romans 7:7; Catechism Sunday 23

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."

(Romans 7:7)

Do you know your misery? Do you really know how miserable your life is? And should you know, how do you know it?

Here the Bible teaches that we know from the law how miserable our lives are.

- But to the Jews resident in Rome this answer was not sufficient.
- They saw the matter from a completely different viewpoint.

To them the law was the thing that saved you.

- They believed that they could achieve their own salvation by doing everything recorded in the law.
- They considered this as their advantage and went around bragging about it!

- They viewed the law as something they could use to enhance their appearance to the people.

Then the Lord had Paul write them a letter teaching the exact opposite!

He writes:

Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

(Romans 3:20)

We stand accused by the law of the Lord.

- The law shows that there is absolutely nothing we can boast in.
- By the law all people stand guilty to the face of the Lord because it so clearly shows up your sin that you cannot have an illusion that on grounds of your wonderful life you can escape the judgement of the Lord.

The Law (The Ten Commandments) tells exactly what the Lord expects from us – and we do have enough common sense to realise that it is exactly everything we are unable to do – should we be honest with ourselves.

Thus no person can use the law to justify himself as it is indeed the law that accuses us.

- When listening to the law we should hear every time how we decayed under the guidance and falsities of the Satan.
- Therefore we confess that the law is the law is the knowledge of our miseries.

Amongst other things the law teaches these three matters:

1. **It lets us realise what, prior to the Fall, your destination was.**
2. **It lets us realise the serious responsibilities the law now places upon us.**
3. **It teaches that our sins and miseries are far greater than what we want to understand.**

1. **The destination of mankind.**

The Lord Jesus gives an explanation of the Ten Commandments and then He summarizes everything:

- You must love the Lord your God.
- You must love your neighbour

In other words: You must fully glorify God.

This is why the Lord created people.

- He planned us a perfect live of loving with Him wherein we also could live in love with our neighbour and then we all could glorify the Lord till eternity.
- All our obedience and spontaneous lives of love towards each other would indeed have been to His glory.

Our work would have been a pleasure, because the earth and our harvests would have supplied, in love and obedience to God, fruit in abundance.

- Because God's love for us is perfect we would have had no shortage.
- We would have lived in a world devoid of any tears.
- The entire creation and everything pertaining to our future was thus prepared to receive and care for us with love.

Should you now take heed it seems that the Ten Commandments only are aimed at repairing the entire disposition of love.

- The first commandments deal with love for our Creator, our worshipping and the day of the Sabbath.
- The following commandments deal with love for our rulers and neighbour.
 - The neighborly love must be so great that we would be prepared not to steal from him, and not to kill him; neither to slander him nor break up his marriage.
 - Out of love towards my neighbour and everything belonging to him we must then also curb our desires.

But now we have a situation where we, because we have loved wrongly, have lost everything!

- We were disobedient to God.
- To be obedient simply means to render love – and in this instance our love went towards the devil.

This is how it happened that we missed our destination.

- Therefore we now sit with the results: Our desire to stay with the will of God is lost.
- Our ability of living without sinning is gone. All that remain is we and the sins closely gathered together.

2. The responsibility the law places upon us.

Every day we get to deal with laws.

- Virtually everything on our earth is subjected to laws.
- Even the animals and plants, even our sciences!

But man gets to deal the most with the law because he gets something added to obey.

- The Lord gave us the law – the Ten Commandments – in addition.
- Therefore this law of the Lord subjects us to such a heavy responsibility.
- We are no longer left over to ourselves to wander further into the swamp of sin until some day we choke in our own miseries.

These Ten Commandments are supposed to bring us back to our destination when we obey this law.

- You see, the law is not a means of fright, it is a means of love.
- Therefore we should not always have difficulty in everything God asks from us – we must comply with joy to the responsibilities the law places upon us because that works the obedience we have lost.

It is also not difficult in understanding why man has it more difficult than the other creatures.

- Man carries the image of God.

- This means that he has the capabilities of knowledge, justness and holiness, which the other creatures do not possess.

Therefore he is subjected to a higher demand: He must comply with the spiritual laws of God.

- All laws have a spiritual demand.
- The obedience of man to the law elevates him into heaven or drops him into hell.

Originally we were voluntary obedient to the law.

- We were also created so well that we could easily execute the law – indeed, Adam and Eve spontaneously did everything correctly. They had no need to first recall what the law dictated every time.
- But now the Fall destroyed this condition – spontaneous obedience no longer exists.

Therefore the law is so strict with us.

- There is an element of compulsion present in the law.
- The entire law has commands:
 - You may not have **other gods**
 - **You may not kill**
 - **You must work and do all your work**
 - Do's and don'ts

That is not all. There is still another reason why the law is a matter of great concern.

- The Lord asks for full obedience: 100% perfect obedience.
- His will must be done completely, not just half-and-half.

We may also not mix our laws with the laws of God. This is the type of thing we do nowadays. We try doing everything half right only, so that we satisfy everybody.

3. When we now contemplate all these matters and we are sober and honest, then we realise that our miseries are much greater than we would like to realise.

The Catechism asks: Can you support and keep all this – the law - fully?

The answer is fairly upsetting: *No, because by nature I am prone to hating God and my neighbour!*

It is already bad that we sin against God, but now we must realise that we aggravate this condition daily. In Ephesians 2:3 the following is written:

and were by nature children of wrath
(Ephesians 2:3)

The sin is now already so much part of us that we inherit it like we inherit bodily attributes. It is also recorded in the law:

For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,
(Exodus 20:5)

This now causes contradiction to be inside of us:

- We were created by God to love, but we are guided by the devil to hate.
- We sometimes act as if the Lord must serve us. We turn God into the kitchen servant of my life.
 - I never am too ill to work, but I am too ill to attend church.
 - I am too poor for a proper church contribution, but we have more than enough money to regularly drink and buy all sorts of luxuries.

We also must be honest in our preaching. All these things are just one side of the matter.

- The law is not the executioner, full time executing the judgement over me.
- The law of the Lord is also a rule of thankfulness.

The Lord Jesus Christ arrived to maintain this law.

- To Him it was just as difficult as to anyone of us because the Lord Jesus was also a human.
- He experienced a life of stress in which He did not commit a single sin so that He could free us from the death sentence.
 - He had to round off His perfect life with an accursed death because your and my sins – contradictions of the law – handed Him over to the wrath of God.
 - All the punishment and wrath of God befitting each one of us, was suddenly emptied upon Him so that we need not suffer it.

But this does not grant us the freedom to transgress the law as many times as we can.

- Because when I now read the law then I come under the impression of the greatness of God's grace.
- No the responsibility of leading a life of grace rests upon us.

Let us do so, because there is hope for all of us.

- With the Lord there is not a gospel teaching only that we will be punished.
- It is a Gospel of salvation.

Come let us together read what our confession about these matters teaches in the Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 23:

59. Q. But what does it help you now that you believe all this?

A. In Christ I am righteous before God and heir to life everlasting.[1]

[1] Hab. 2:4; John 3:36; Rom. 1:17; 5:1, 2.

60. Q. How are you righteous before God?

A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.[1] Although my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all God's commandments, have never kept any of them,[2] and am still inclined to all evil,[3] yet God, without any merit of my own,[4] out of mere grace,[5] imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ.[6] He grants these to me as if I had never had nor committed any sin, and as if I myself had accomplished all the obedience which Christ has rendered for me,[7] if only I accept this gift with a believing heart.[8]

[1] Rom. 3:21-28; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8, 9; Phil. 3:8-11. [2] Rom. 3:9, 10. [3] Rom. 7:23. [4] Deut. 9:6; Ezek. 36:22; Tit. 3:4, 5. [5] Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:8. [6] Rom. 4:3-5; II Cor. 5:17-19; I John 2:1, 2. [7] Rom. 4:24, 25; II Cor. 5:21. [8] John 3:18; Acts 16:30, 31; Rom. 3:22.

61. Q. Why do you say that you are righteous only by faith?

A. Not that I am acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of my faith, for only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ is my righteousness before God.[1] I can receive this righteousness and make it mine my own by faith only.[2]

[1] I Cor. 1:30, 31; 2:2. [2] Rom. 10:10; I John 5:10-12.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 31:17

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

Dr MJ Du Plessis
Helping Reverend
Reformed Church Clanwilliam
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