

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 31 AUGUST 2014 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 25:3, 5

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: Psalm 86:3

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: Romans 8

Scripture text: Catechism Sunday 23; Romans 8:33, 34

33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

(Romans 8:33-34)

How are we righteous before God? Romans 8 describes exactly how.

- In Romans 8:1-15 the Lord reveals that God made us righteous through his Son.
- In Romans 8:16 and the following verses the Lord reveals that we are heirs of God who will inherit eternal.
- The Lord reveals that through the Lord Jesus we receive salvation. It describes how we achieve eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Then Romans 8:30 and the following reveals that the Lord has justified us and that nothing can separate us from God's love.

Hence the Lord reveals how we experience life in full – life filled with mercy and judgement, joy and misery.

- We all know and experience that through our sins we deserve nothing better than damnation.
- Sometimes – although not to the fullest extent – we even experience the fear and terrible grief and reproach like the people in hell experience.
- At times we also experience moments when we know that our sinfulness has deprived us completely of the glory of the Lord.

However, we are not lost, because through our faith we know about more things than judgement only:

- We know that we are still children of God because the Lord Jesus cleansed us of all our sins.
- Also, we know that the Lord will never forsake us. He will be with us forever and He will also call on us when we sin. He then moves us to regret and to repent through the working of God the Holy Spirit.

Faith is to recognise and to know all these things.

The question put to believers these days: What does it matter to you to believe these things? Will it change your life in any way?

- Of course it matters a lot to us, because life is not only about now.
- This present life is also (and especially) about my destiny when I die and the hereafter.
- These things offer me the assurance of my righteousness before God through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- It assures me that life is not futile. I should continue to worship and confess God honestly and sincerely. He will take me up in his kingdom.

Hence it is about the significance of my justification through the Lord Jesus.

- Before the Lord our position is very similar to that of Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, before David. He had no rights; however, David gave him all Saul's property as well as the assurance that he could eat from the king's table.
- Out of the blue someone was going to take care of him. He received mercy which he did not deserve and had no claim to.

We are exactly the same: We are tainted with sin.

- But God lays his table of grace for us.
- Without any merit of our own we receive the Bread of life – the Lord Jesus' redemptive sacrifice, eternal life and all the glory it comprises.

We bear another resemblance to Mephibosheth: *He inherited his grandfather's possessions. He had no claim to those, because his grandfather's sins deprived him of the inheritance.*

Similarly we have been deprived of eternal life as a result of the fall of man and we have no claim to it.

- But by the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ we again qualify for these gifts of grace that we have lost because of the first man who renounced it.

- According to the Lord's justice we only deserve to be condemned forever because of all the sins we have committed. He should punish us with eternal death because we deserve absolutely nothing better.

But this is not the way of the Lord. His justice is different from ours.

- His justice is also compassionate – a justice unknown to us.
- In his love for us He let his Son die and be punished on our behalf so that He can declare us righteous.

In our legal system it is unheard of that anyone who has been found guilty of numerous offences and infamy would get off scot-free without warning or punishment.

But in God's court of law it happens in the case of each one of us! Romans 8:33 puts it clearly that God has given us right standing with him and that no one can condemn us!

We sing about it as such:

Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

(Romans 8:33)

For all these things we can only be extremely grateful: The Lord saves us without any merit of our own. Our conscience will always tell us that we do not deserve God's mercy because our lives are too sinful.

- Everything we receive is only by the mere grace of God.
- He grants us grace through the redemptive sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.
- The propitiation through the Lord Jesus Christ is the only reason why we are declared righteous.

We are in the same position as the tax collector in the parable. He went to the temple to pray.

- By the mere grace of God we stand before the Lord.
- By this grace we may pray.
- By the grace of our Lord Jesus we may move on – justified.

Romans 8 teaches us clearly that we find the fullness of God's mercy only through the Lord Jesus.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

(Romans 8:31)

The meaning of these words is very clear: Only one judgement can be passed for sins. However, the grace of God protects us against his condemnation.

Hence the Scriptures continue and show us that God did not even spare his own Son, but gave Him up for all of us! He also gives all the gifts of grace as well as the Lord Jesus Christ to those who confess Him.

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

(Romans 8:31)

What is the meaning of the words is very clear: Only one explanation can be given about the sin: The grace of God protects us against His judgement.

Therefore the Word continues and points out to us that God did not even spare His own Son but gave Him over for the sakes of all of us.! He also grants to us who confess Him all the gifts of grace together with the Lord Jesus Christ.

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

(Romans 8:32)

What does it mean that the Lord gave Him over for all of us?

- The Lord Jesus subjected himself to the anger and judgement of the Lord for our sake.
- The note listing all our debts was nailed to his cross!
- The Lord Jesus experienced all these things so that we could receive mercy. Why then would God hold back his mercy from us?

This is why the Bible teaches us that the Lord does not hold back his mercy; in fact He grants us his mercy!

But then we have to comply with a very important requirement: We must believe in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour! Listen to the way Romans 5:1, 2 puts it:

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:1-2)

We should stay very much alert and take care that we do not reject the justification through the Lord Jesus.

- We sometimes tend to try and justify ourselves.
- Sometimes we think we can determine the needs of our faith and our souls.
- If we do this we do not understand the justification through the Lord Jesus, because then we only depend on our own power.

There is only one way: We accept the Lord Jesus as our God and eternal Saviour. We believe in Him and know that find real peace with Him. We expect complete forgiveness for all our sins only from the Lord.

Let's read what we confess about these things in the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 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: 89:1, 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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