

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 12 AUGUST 2012 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 8:5

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 19:1

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: Isaiah 64

Scripture text: Isaiah 64:6 ; Catechism Sunday 24

But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.
(Isaiah 64:6)

By a very deep confession guilty people confess their sins to the Lord. Still they are special, because right from start God chose them as His children. Many times the Lord revealed Himself to them by speaking to them and performing wonders and miracles. God Himself led them through their entire history.

The following two matters are worthy of closer attention:

- 1. Inability to good works.**
- 2. Compelled to good works.**

1. Inability to good works.

You would expect people coming for ages the road together with the Lord to be able to do real good works for the Lord.

- But we read that it was completely different.

- **But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.**
- **We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.**

The works of these people were not good.

- The things they done during their existence of a nation – their works – were like dirty clothing to the Lord and therefore they were punished by banishment.
- Involuntary the question arises: If the people like these who always knew, heard and seen the leadership and presence of the Lord fared so badly in their good works, what will become of us?

Beloved congregation, you must keep in mind that because they lived under a totally different covenant there of course is a big difference between these people and us.

- They lived in the times of the Old Testament when the Covenant of Work was still in force over them.
- We fall under the times of the New Testament and the times of the Covenant of Mercy.
 - We do not need salvation through our works.
- We, through Jesus Christ, become freed from sin and righteous.
 - For this salvation we need faith, not works.

With matters as they are every believer could ask:

- If I thus have to believe, why must I still also do good works?
- Another question often bothering believers is: Seeing that I already have forgiveness of my sin by the Lord, why should I still have to do good works as well
 - Because the good works add nothing to my salvation!

When reading the letter to the Romans we find it is written that all people sinned to God. And there is only one reward paid by God for sin, and that is death.

- That puts this entire matter into its proper perspective: The live of everybody earns him the violence of hell.
- We all are very far from perfect.
- Even our best efforts are not perfect to the Lord.

Should you apply this to yourself it simply means that we cannot laud in being saved in Christ but our lives show us as somebody belonging to the devil.

- You thus do not do good works in aid of gaining salvation thereby.
- You do good works to show you thereby announcing the distinguishing signs of your Saviour.

How well do your lives show you as belonging to the Lord?

Do you remember the lawyer asking the Lord what the great commandment in the law is? (Matthew 22:36 onwards.) Then the Lord Jesus answered:

37 Jesus said to him, " You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

38 "This is the first and great commandment.

39 "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

Test your life to this. Do you love the Lord this much? The answer is: No! Any believer answering "yes" to this question is audacious because the way we live out our faith proves that we do not love the Lord that much.

- How easily do we stay away from church should we receive visitors! Then you put your visitors above the Lord!
- Often we just stay at home due to laziness.
- Some of our members do all sorts of work at home during the Sabbath of the Lord!
- We thus despise His command that that day has to be holy and a day used only for getting our relationship with Him back on the par and for exercising communion with Him.

Can you honestly confess loving the Lord if you cannot even keep an appointment with the God who loves you so much that He offered up His life for you?

2. Compelled to good works.

We must do good works because in John 15:5 the Lord Jesus teaches that everybody living in Him will bear good fruit in life, like branches grafted to a good vine.

- Hereby the Lord very clearly tells why He asks good works from us.
- We do it because we are like the branches grafted to the good vine.
- We are grafted to the bliss of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we must bear His fruit.
- The good works we do are thus only due to God's grace over us.

Let us put the matter differently:

- Should you want the Lord to reward your good works then you imply thereby that the death of the Lord Jesus was unnecessary because you, by your own powers – by your own good works – can enter heaven.
- Or you hold that the works of Jesus was not enough and that you, by your good works, must render a contribution in order of adding to His work of redemption.

Both of those standpoints are incorrect: God provides the full redemption in Jesus Christ.

We are compelled to do good works even although God provides us eternal life in the salvation.

In Isaiah 64:8 we read:

But now, O Lord, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter...

In the New Testament, in Romans 9 Paul has a sermon about this verse of scripture.

- He introduces God as a Potter manufacturing all sorts of articles from clay.
- Some clay is used to make dishes and some is used to make pots.
- Some of the clay is used in making a vessel for honour.

- From the other clay a vessel for dishonour is made and put away for the day of judgement.

And then there is the striking sentence: Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" The clay cannot blame the potter for making a specific article!

- A flask cannot be a dish, neither can the opposite be true.
- The Potter followed His will in the manufacture of every article.

The side of grace is that God created the believer to glorify God with his good works.

- Because we were made as such in Christ we must, by the work we do, glorify God every day.
- We do not do good works in order of gaining access to heaven thereby.
- We do good works because through Christ we already are on our way to heaven – and now our good works just proves it.
- Our good works are thus just due to gratefulness.

Does such a teaching not cause people to become bad and forget their responsibilities?

- The answer is that that every person who truly believes will not have his faith disrupted by such irresponsibility.
- He will doubly realize his responsibility and therefore strive harder in doing good and right so that God can be worshipped thereby.

Persevere thus with joy in your good works.

- We know that we cannot gain bliss by our good works.
- But we also know that it is not necessary to earn salvation because we already have it.
- We do good deeds to display our gratitude to Christ for this salvation.

Let us now read Catechism Sunday 24:

Q. 62.

But why cannot our good works be the whole, or part of our righteousness before God?

A.

Because, that the righteousness, which can be approved of before the tribunal of God, must be absolutely perfect, (a) and in all respects conformable to the divine law; and also, that our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin. (b)

(a)

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. 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.

(b)

Isa.64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Q. 63.

What! do not our good works merit, which yet God will reward in this and in a future life?

A.

This reward is not of merit, but of grace. (a)

(a)

Luke 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

Q. 64.

But does not this doctrine make men careless and profane?

A.

By no means: for it is impossible that those, who are implanted into Christ by a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness. (a)

(a)

Matt.7:18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: Psalm 73:12

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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 12 August 2012
 Scripture Modern King James Version