

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2014 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 123:1

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 136:1, 2, 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 91:1

Scripture reading: Read also 1 Corinthians 3:9 - 21; Ruth 2

Scripture text: Catechism Sunday 24; Ruth 2:12

"The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."

(Ruth 2:12)

Well earned reward from God!

- It appears as if we can, by good works, earn something so that the Lord would reward us for these good works.
- Indeed there are some churches that understand this (and another 15 other) Bible pronouncements like this.

It causes a problem of faith, because why should we attend the Lord's Supper and hear and taste the grace of the Lord towards us, or have our children baptised and hear that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ cleanses us from our sins if we can, through our own good works, earn the rewards for the hereafter?

- The problem is indeed that an over-evaluation of own power brought the devil to fall in the heaven.

- He, in his turn transposed the same thing that brought him to a fall onto Adam and Eve and brought them to a fall: You want to be like God!

This kind of self-over evaluation is certainly more typical to mankind than it was ever before – therefore texts like these are abused by people to over-estimate their own abilities.

- People believe that they are doing things that the Lord has to reward/pay them for it.
- It even goes as far that people believe that they can work a better place for themselves in heaven than what other people will have.

When we this morning investigate in the sermon the *reward given to us* by the Lord we especially find two things:

1. **The reward God gives us is merely the fulfilment of His council of grace He has determined over us a long time ago.**
2. **The reward by God puts us under difficult demands.**

1. **The reward God gives us is merely the fulfilment of His council of grace He has determined over us a long time ago.**

Let us investigate in this sermon a number of these pronouncements so that we can exactly determine what the Bible means by it when it is written that the Lord rewards us.

In this historical passage of the book Ruth Boaz was very glad that a Moabite woman came to conversion. From this follows his words of blessing that all her expectations should come true and that the Lord would be with her.

- It does not easily happen that people from their own culture and faith go over to the culture and faith of others.
- People also do not easily accept such persons.
 - Consider how upset Jonah was when he had to go and minister to the people of Nineveh.
 - He did not want to do it because he did not want that some of them could come to conversion.

But with Boaz it is different.

- By his answer he lets Ruth feel how she attained his deepest respect.
 - She left her family and land of birth to go to an unknown nation.
 - In a certain sense she did the same as Abraham. Because she did for the Lord what Abraham did she may also share in the blessing God pronounced over the descendants of Abraham.
- Boaz describes Ruth's arrival in Bethlehem very clearly by his words: **under whose wings you have come for refuge."**

The well earned reward the Lord gives this woman is indeed nothing else than the fact that she came to conversion and to the true faith in the only God and that God inaugurated her into the Jewish people.

This reward is not something the Lord granted for the first time when Boaz said so.

- We know that the Lord planned and determined everything that happens prior to the creation.
- The reward that Ruth receives is thus just this deed of salvation by the Lord that went into fulfilment over her.

Another such example is where the reward by the Lord is mentioned, and therewith very clearly it is meant the council of the Lord with somebody, we find in 1 Samuel 24:19.

"For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day.

(1Samuel 24:19)

It was where, in the cave, David cut off the corner of Saul's robe.

- After Saul went his way from the cave David called out to Saul and then Saul realised that David could have killed him.
- He then burst into tears. The tears were because that long prior to this event Saul liked David a lot. (16:21)
- Therefore Saul's emotion upon again seeing and hearing David – especially after realising that David could have killed him.
- Saul also truly admits that David is the better.
- Not only does Saul admit his own inferiority towards David but also towards the Lord who sides with David.
- Therefore Saul declared that what David did, nobody else has done and that the Lord must reward him for it.

Saul's words clearly show that Saul understood by reward that the Lord must give the promised kingship to David.

- At that stage everybody already knew that Samuel anointed David as king and said that the Lord selected him to take over from Saul.
- The reward Saul referred to is thus nothing else than the fulfilment of God's predetermined blessing, namely David's kingship over Israel.

Also remember the time when David said that maybe the Lord would reward him because Shimei cursed him.

- It was in fact a wish for the Lord to retract the curse that was over his children because he has now suffered enough, especially because Shimei belittled him to the eyes of the people by this cursing.
- The intention was that the Lord would again repair his kingship. (2Samuel 16:12)
"It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day."
(2Samuel 16:12)

Isaiah prophesied how Jesus Christ as a human would experience His work. In Isaiah 49:4 it is written:

Then I said, 'I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain; Yet surely my just reward is with the Lord, And my work with my God.' "

(Isaiah 49:4)

In this verse the Servant of the Lord complains The Servant of the Lord is an Old Testamental expression prophetically pointing towards Jesus Christ.

- Contrary to his calling he complains about the fruitlessness of his work.
- It does not mean that the Servant of the Lord was not a believer or doubted the Lord or His almight.

This passage is a prophecy that the Jews would not accept the Lord Jesus.

- Therefore the fact of the apparent rejection of Jesus' ministering and also Jesus' personal rejection by the people is prophetically stated here.
- Still He realises that the Lord would go His way with everyone who has heard His ministering.
- The Lord would reward the work of the Servant by having justice metered out to Him.

Justice and reward here means the same. The justice and reward of God exists therein that those chosen by God to be saved would be brought to salvation by the Servant of the Lord.

2. The reward by God puts us under difficult demands.

The New Testament brings this matter of reward much closer to us because the Lord applies this principle to our daily lives.

- It is true that the Lord disposed His Will over us, but it is just as true that we have a responsibility in the way we handle it.
- As an example consider Matthew 6. There the Lord deals with the way we treat the poor.
 - He specifically referred to the way the Pharisees gave alms.
 - The helped the poor in such a way that they wanted recognition and honour for it.
 - The Lord accents that people who in this way and with such motivation give alms have already received their rewards for it.

The words mean that you cannot count upon the grace of the Lord, because foe him there is no grace.

- The way in which such a man lives also proves that he does not subject himself to the blessing of the Lord because he is his own god with his own laws.
- Therefore there is no reward for him with the Lord. (Matthew 6:1 18)

In the same Bible passage the Lord Jesus does not only refer to rewarding. He also refers to retribution.

- He says that God will publicly requite us.
- God will reveal His justice to all eyes.
- The matters that take place in secret will be brought to the open and be put right.

The reward referred to is thus not something we have earned.

- Here it is the fulfilment of God's deed of redemption over every person.

- The fact of the matter is that every person will live his life in the way God predetermined it for him.
- A godless will be godless and a believer will live in faith.
- The hypocritical earthly life of the Pharisees is thus in compliance with the reward God determined for them.

We ourselves come under heavy crossfire when the Lord chastises the New Testamental churches and their members in 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17:

16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

(1 Corinthians 3:16, 17)

People in Corinth became believers and came to conversion, but under their own conditions: They wanted to retain all the sinful matters belonging to the heathens.

- The Lord reprieves the congregation with salvation and with the guidance of His Holy Spirit, but the congregation reacted thereupon in the way it suited them and not in the way the Lord wanted it.

The Lord says that we are His building.

- The fact that we are the building of God does not mean that we are without responsibility. Danger threatens!
- Not everybody will be rewarded with the eternal life!

The responsibility is depicted by the naming of different substances: gold, silver, valuable stones, wood, hay, stubble.

- You thus cannot live like you want and consider it to be good enough. Verse 13 clearly refers to God's judgement over your responsibility: The works of everybody will be made known...because it can be revealed by fire; and the fire will test the works of everybody, whatever it is.
- The fire is the judgement of God. The moment you face God in judgement all your works will be judged.

From these - and many more passages in the Bible – it is clear that we cannot by our works insist on a reward from the Lord.

- Seen from the other side the reward the Lord grants us is not a payment for something we have earned.
- The Bible makes it very clear that no man is just, not even one.

Of course all people do not live the same distance from the Lord.

- The believers do sin, but they try every time to rise from the sin and to do what the Lord asks from them.
- There against it is logic that a total unbeliever will not live and act in the way the Lord expects from him.

Therefore it is written in verse 15 somebody whose works will burn out entirely will also suffer damage.

- When somebody's life proves unbelief than such a person cannot expect the Lord to reward him with eternal life.
- Still we who are so unable are saved – but not from ourselves. It happens through Jesus Christ.
- Jesus Christ died for the believers only.
- Indeed it is a great deed He does on the cross,
 - Because He dies for people who, due to their sin, should have no reward from the Lord.
 - But He attains for them the reward of the eternal life. This is why the Bible teaches that we will be saved, but like through fire. The Lord Jesus was in the fire: He bore the flames of God's wrath over our sins.

Jesus died for the salvation of everyone of us who believe in Him (reward!)

- He says in His High Priestly prayer to His Father that none of those given to Him by the Father became lost.
- Those are the same people the Bible teaches about that the Lord will reward them.
- These people for whom Jesus died was of course the church through the ages.

The church was sinful since his first member.

- But still the Lord did not reject this unholy church.
- Through His atonement the Lord sanctified us.
- He personally atoned our evilness to God, and in that way removed it from us.

Now we are the holy dwelling of God the Holy Spirit. He guides us into taking for ourselves the reward God put away for us in Christ, namely the eternal kingdom of God.

- We should be rewarded with the eternal death because the Bible teaches that the reward for sin is the death.
- Still we are rewarded with the eternal life. Complete with atonement and exemption of all our sins through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again consider that we in all our misery may approach God without any power from ourselves. We come in the power and grace of Jesus Christ and God the Holy Spirit, so that God the Father can always again assure us about the reward He put away for us.

Come, let us look at what our confession teaches about these matters:

Sunday 24

62. Q. But why can our good works not be our righteousness before God, or at least a part of it?

A. Because the righteousness which can stand before God's judgment must be absolutely perfect and in complete agreement with the law of God,[1] whereas even our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin.[2]

[1] Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10. [2] Is. 64:6.

63. Q. But do our good works earn nothing, even though God promises to reward them in this life and the next?

A. This reward is not earned[1]; it is a gift of grace.[2]

[1] Matt. 5:12; Heb. 11:6. [2] Luke 17:10; II Tim. 4:7, 8.

64. Q. Does this teaching not make people careless and wicked?

A. No. It is impossible that those grafted into Christ by true faith should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.[1]

[1] Matt. 7:18; Luke 6:43-45; John 15:5.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Song: Scripture Versification 39:4

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
 7 September 2014
 Scripture Modern King James Version