

# REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2013 EVENING SERVICE

**Sing before:** 138:1

*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: 68:9

**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 25:6

**Scripture reading:** 2Corinthians 3

**Scripture text:** 2Corinthians 3:8; Catechism Sunday 25

**...how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?**  
(2Corinthians 3:8)

Faith comes practically to expression by our worship and living out of our religion. The verse of text especially deals with one facet thereof, namely the spiritual aspect of our worshipping.

- "...the service of the Spirit."
- It deals with our faith and belief.
- You could say that literary the entire sum of our faith is worked by the Holy Spirit.

By this sermon we are preparing for the coming celebration of Holy Communion and therefore we consider the following two matters:

- 1. The relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Sacraments.**
- 2. The relationship between the Sacraments and our daily conversion.**

**1. The relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Sacraments.**

How does the Holy Spirit work? We know that He works the faith in us and strengthens our faith. But how does He do it?

- The most important tool the Holy Spirit uses when He brings us to faith and strengthens the faith in us is the ministry of the Gospel. In other words He works with the Bible.
- The Holy Spirit works with the ministry of the Word on two levels.
  - The first is by the preaching.
    - It is when we are together in the worshipping service and the Lord teaches us by His Word.
    - Under this heading we can also include our own reading of the Bible and Bible study.
  - But the Holy Spirit also uses the ministry of the Word on another level.
    - This is namely through the sacraments: The Baptism and the Holy Communion.
    - In their being these sacraments are nothing else than ministry of the Word.

The Sacraments are “visible ministering” whereby the Holy Spirit explains our salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The faith of all of us has a way of wearing away should we not continually rebuild it.
- Therefore the Lord instituted the sacraments into His church so that the Holy Spirit can continually, through the sacraments, again work new life in our faith.

The Holy Spirit uses the sacraments as such:

- We see, feel and taste **that what we believe**. It thus makes it easier to understand the invisible promises of God.
- Furthermore the sacraments **indicate a specific road or way of faith**, namely that we must live from out our salvation by Jesus Christ.
- We **hear consolation** when we use the sacraments: We belong to the Triune God and all our sins are completely forgiven.

The message of the sacraments is thus exactly the same as that of every sermon. It is ministry of the Word just presented in another way because it uses the visible elements by the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine at Holy Communion and the water at the Baptism, to reveal the great power of God to us.

- We must just keep in mind that the Sacraments themselves do not change things insides of us.
- The baptism itself, as it happens, does not purify the person being baptized to the eyes of God.
- The baptism is only the token of Jesus cleansing you by His blood.
- The Holy Spirit uses the sacraments to again bring the promises of the Lord to you.

We can say that the Holy Spirit sharpens us by the use of the sacraments because the grace we hear about at the Baptism and Holy Communion is the command of God to be obedient to Him.

- We are sharpened every time to anew be obedient to Him.
- Let us put it differently: the Holy Spirit uses the sacraments to again aim us at Christ.

## 2. The Sacraments and our daily conversion.

The Holy Spirit uses the sacraments to strengthen our faith, in other words so that we may know the Lord better but also to sharpen us in our daily conversion.

- If we are true by our faith and truly ready to break away from our sins the Lord changes us.
- He changes us so that we forfeit the evil we do and continue with a good life.

Therefore we confess the sacraments as holy tokens of truth.

- They are God's guarantee about His promises.
- It is His guarantee that after all the ages He still keeps to His promises and that He is still busy bringing it in completion over us.

In the Bible we only find two sacraments namely the Baptism and the Holy Communion. **We must keep in mind that God the Holy Spirit does not work differently in the Old Testament than in the New Testament.** This means that the sacraments we got to know from the New Testament must also be present in the Old Testament.

- In the Old Testament the Lord institutes the circumcision as the token of His Covenant and in the New Testament it becomes the Baptism.
- In the same way the Passover in the Old Testament is the token of salvation and of the Covenant, whilst in the New Testament it is replaced by the Holy Communion.

The contents of both the sacraments are that the blood of Jesus Christ redeems us. Therefore we may not despise or belittle the sacraments because the Holy Spirit uses both sacraments in aiming our entire life outlook upon Jesus Christ.

Each sacrament only illuminates it from another side.

- The Baptism teaches that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all the taint of our sins, so that we may face God in purity.
- The Holy Communion teaches that the Lord Jesus paid fully with His body and blood for all our sins so that God no longer needs to punish us for it.
- Both the sacraments teach that God grants us the eternal life as a result of the earnings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore we must take great care in the serving of the sacraments. We must carefully reflect and consider what it deals with.

- You do not use Holy Communion prior to preparing yourself for it.
- And you do not baptize your children before you have not reflected about the gravity of bringing your child to God so that God can confirm the full contents of the covenant and salvation onto him/her.

It also has a further influence: When the sacraments are served to us we must live like believers respecting the contents of the sacraments.

- We cannot bring our children to baptism because the Holy Spirit guides us to do so and because the Holy Spirit uses the baptism to minister salvation to our child, but we do not bring this child up as a believer.
  - Then the Lord will punish us because we disregard our oath to the Triune God and do not honour it.

This is the same kind of sin against the Holy Spirit than what Ananias and Sapphira did when they lied to the Lord.

- In the same way may we also not live unholy should we have partaken in Holy Communion because then we deny everything promised by the Holy Spirit through Holy Communion.

Let us read together Catechism Sunday 25:

65. Q. Since then faith alone makes us share in Christ and all His benefits, where does this faith come from?

A. From the Holy Spirit,[1] who works it in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel,[2] and strengthens it by the use of the sacraments.[3]

[1] John 3:5; I Cor. 2:10-14; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29. [2] Rom. 10:17; I Pet. 1:23-25. [3] Matt. 28:19, 20; I Cor. 10:16.

66. Q. What are the sacraments

A. The sacraments are holy, visible signs and seals. They were instituted by God so that by their use He might the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel.[1] And this is the promise: that God graciously grants us forgiveness of sins and everlasting life because of the one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross.[2]

[1] Gen. 17:11; Deut. 30:6; Rom. 4:11 [2] Matt. 26:27, 28; Acts 2:38; Heb. 10:10.

67. Q. Are both the Word and the sacraments then intended to focus our faith on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation?

A. Yes, indeed. The Holy Spirit teaches us in the gospel and assures us by the sacraments that our entire salvation rests on Christ's one sacrifice for us on the cross.[1]

[1] Rom. 6:3; I Cor. 11:26; Gal. 3:27.

68. Q. How many sacraments has Christ instituted in the new covenant?

A. Two: holy baptism and the holy supper.[1]

[1] Matt. 28:19, 20; I Cor. 11:23-26. Holy Baptism

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 86:6

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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