

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2014 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Scripture Versification 19-1:1

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 84:1, 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 99:4, 5

Scripture reading: Romans 6

Scripture text: Romans 6:4; Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 26.

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

(Romans 6:4)

We can live a new life. Differently put: We can live a new and eternal life .It sounds unbelievable, because we are all caught up in sin.

- Yet this text says that God raised us from the dead so that we can live a new life.
- A life in which we trample on sin because we triumphed over sin. Proof of it lies in our baptism.

Let's consider this matter along the following three viewpoints:

- 1. How does the church of Rome understand this letter?**
- 2. How do we understand the letter?**
- 3. The close relationship.**

1. How does the church of Rome understand this letter?

The religious integrity of the people who read this letter is tested.

- Do they understand what grace entails?
- Do they understand the meaning of living a godly life in Christ?

Hence the question: Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

- Is it true that the Lord's grace is greater than the sins we have committed against the Lord?
- Can we abuse the Lord's commandments in such a way?

The answer to this is strongly negative:

- Of course not, because that would be a crass denial of the grace of God.
- No man who truly realises what the Lord has granted him through the death of Jesus Christ, would try to abuse the grace of God in such a way.
- This is why the Scriptures reject such an ungodly conclusion.

What then? A truly faithful know what grace is – the fact that it is undeserved and immeasurable.

- He realises that it may not be abused.
- He realises that man should live in and from it.
- This is why the truly faithful will make an effort to match his lifestyle with the grace he receives from God.

He, who goes on sinning, does not live under the grace of God, but is a slave to sin.

- He is still trapped completely by the power and violence of sin.
- Such a person exposes himself to the devil's sphere of influence.

Note how the Lord starts with a question in verse 3: Or don't you know?

* With this question the Lord says that we who have been converted, or have grown up as believers, know all this very well.

A true believer is completely different

- He is distinguished by his resistance against sin/
- The true believer turns away from sin.

In this regard two things are important:

- First, we cannot be used by sin – sin loses the ability to get hold of us and use us for its own purpose.
- Second, the Lord uses a word in this passage saying that the separation between evil and us happened in a moment.
 - That is to say: somewhere in the course of history there was a moment when we died, and when the cord between evil and us was cut completely.
 - That happening is final and complete.
 - At that moment we died to sin.

The following question crops up spontaneously: When was that moment when I died to sin? I don't know of any time that I died, because I'm still alive – or does the Lord perhaps mean spiritually?

- In this passage the Scriptures refer to Jesus' death and his burial.
- The death of Jesus was substitutionary, so much so that during our life on earth the Lord regards the death of Jesus as our own death.

For this reason Paul says in verse 4 we were buried with the Lord Jesus through baptism into death. Hence the Lord Himself links our salvation to the baptism.

- When we have our children baptised, we always say that the Lord's covenant is passed on to our children, and it is confirmed visually by the baptism.
- Here the Lord puts the matter in a different perspective: The moment when Jesus died, we also died.
- Our baptism is proof of it- We died with Christ, hence we are also baptised into his death.
- Hence our baptism takes us straight into Jesus' tomb.

2. How do we understand the letter?

When we go to Jesus' tomb we find it empty. There's no one in the tomb. Jesus isn't there, neither are we. The Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, and He raised us with Him.

- The Bible then immediately says what the result of this was.
- Verse 7 says that he who has died has been freed from sin.
- Verse 10 also says that the death Jesus died, He died to sin, and that the life He lives, He lives to God.
- Hence my baptism means that I share in the resurrection of Jesus, because I have left the tomb with Him.

And this brings us to the fact that we also share in what verse 10 says. It reads:

For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

(Romans 6:10)

When we read this, along with verse 4, we arrive at the following:

- The Lord Jesus was raised from the dead through the glory of God.
- God displayed his power when He raised Jesus from the dead, because through that He proved that He had the greatest power in heaven and also ruled over the powers of hell.
- Nothing can stand in the way of God in his glory.

But now we must remember that we rose from the dead with Jesus. God's powerful deed applies to us too. Its meaning for us is twofold.

- First, the infinite grace that I should never have any doubts about what will happen to me the day I die, because God explained through my baptism that I share in the resurrection of Christ.

- That is to say clearly: I'm going to heaven because Jesus raised me from the dead for the kingdom of God.
- But, secondly, we now have the responsibility to live this new life like people who have been raised from the dead.

So often we argue that there are certain things we simply cannot do:

- I cannot stop drinking.
- Or there's a specific sin I cannot break with.
- Or, I know something I have to do is against my principles, but I'll have to do it because my employer expects me to do it.

Do we know the truth? Not a single text in the Bible justifies such a statement. When we make such a statement, we do not speak the truth. That part of you has died.

- Jesus the Lord raised us from the dead so that we can turn away from any sin, because our old nature (the one that could be manipulated by evil) went into the tomb with Jesus Christ – that part of us died.
- The Lord says that you can turn away from sin because He has already resurrected you so that you can live a “new life”

Our new nature came to life.

- This is the part which is not available to sin.
- Hence we cannot claim that we are not able to live a new life for Christ.

3. The close relationship

There is a very close relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and us.

- Together we died.
- Together we went into the tomb.
- Together we were raised from the dead.
- Hence we must live in the new life He obtained for us – we must live in his life!

Now it sounds very difficult – as if we have to be alert every moment to see from where sin is sneaking up on us. But this is not exactly true. Our point of departure is not in sin – it is in Jesus Christ.

Let's consider this from another angle. How strong is your personal communion with the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we practise our faith? It's one thing to have faith, but practising it is a complete different story, in other words to strengthen and expand it.

- We must practise our prayers every day and we must pray regularly and earnestly when we experience stress.
- However, in our prayers we must also praise God joyfully for all his blessings.

Prayer is probably very much neglected by us, because often we only pray for relief when we are in distress or when we need something. We do thank God for his goodness and love, but do our words reflect joy and jubilation when we utter them?

Our congregation is so deeply dependent on God.

- We live in turbulent times where the authority of the Bible is questioned and human rights are at the top of the agenda.
- In many conversations people openly deny God. We often witness it.

Brothers and sisters, it should be of great concern to us that we have this new life and that we really want to live in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- In the first place we do it for the sake of the glory and holiness of God Himself.
- But in the second place we also do it for the sake of our salvation – and at the same time for the holiness of our congregation.

This is of the utmost importance, because when the Lord Jesus comes on the clouds of heaven, it should be very clear that the Clanwilliam congregation has not been plodding on in sin, but that it has been a congregation of the Lord Jesus and has lived a new life and will enter the kingdom of God as conquerors over evil.

Let us read together Catechism Sunday 26.

69. Q. How does holy baptism signify and seal to you that the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross benefits you?

A. In this way: Christ instituted this outward washing[1] and with it gave the promise that, as surely as water washes away the dirt from the body, so certainly His blood and Spirit wash away the impurity of my soul, that is, all my sins.[2]

[1] Matt. 28:19. [2] Matt. 3:11; Mark 16:16; John 1:33; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3, 4; I Pet. 3:21.

70. Q. What does it mean to be washed with Christ's blood and Spirit?

A. To be washed with Christ's blood means to receive forgiveness of sins from God, through grace, because of Christ's blood, poured out for us in His sacrifice on the cross.[1] To be washed with His Spirit means to be renewed by the Holy Spirit and sanctified to be members of Christ, so that more and more we become dead to sin and lead a holy and blameless life.[2]

[1] Ez. 36:25; Zech. 13:1; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 12:24; I Pet. 1:2; Rev. 1:5; 7:14. [2] John 3:5-8; Rom. 6:4; I Cor. 6:11; Col. 2:11, 12.

71. Q. Where has Christ promised that He will wash us with His blood and Spirit as surely as we are washed with the water of baptism?

A. In the institution of baptism, where He says: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16). This promise is repeated where Scripture calls baptism the washing of regeneration and the washing away of sins (Titus 3:5; Acts 22:16).

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 71:1, 2

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
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