

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE : SUNDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2012 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 89:12

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 145:3, 11, and 12

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: Isaiah 60:4; Romans 9; and 1 John 1:7

Scripture text: Romans 9:8; Catechism Sunday 27

That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

(Romans 9:8)

Since the beginning the Lord had a rule for us.

- ◆ That rule is that He would fulfill every promise to His children, but we, as His chosen, must keep to His institutions.
- ◆ The Lord says that not one single institution will pass away – He will fulfill everything.
"For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled."
(Matthew 5:18)

Consider the statement the Lord uses in closing His revelation to us in Revelation 22:18,19:

18 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;

19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

(Revelation 22:18 and 19)

The Lord ties our eternal deliverance to His Law and promises – and to our faith in it.

- ◆ He thus cuts every form of own-willed worship to the root.
- ◆ The rule He issues is thus *to believe in the matters He promises and to do as He commands*.

There is actually something very noteworthy to the promises of the Lord – especially if we consider how He reveals it in the sacraments:

- ◆ Should we remove anything thereof – then we are unbelievers.
- ◆ Should we add anything – then we are superstitious.

Let us, in this sermon, consider baptism – and very specifically how, according to the Bible, we must maintain the baptism:

- 1. What cleanses us – the water or the Lord's blood?**
- 2. The sacraments indicate the redemption it deals with.**
- 3. Who, according to the promise, are the children of the Lord?**

1. What cleanses us – the water or the Lord's blood?

Suddenly In the recent years all sorts of different teachings about baptism are presented to the people. It is noteworthy that every so-called church coming to existence has it's own teachings about the baptism.

- ◆ With some it deals virtually only with the water – and then also the amount of water.
- ◆ To those the baptism is only valid when somebody is baptized by full immersion.

The problem with this is that the baptism then becomes the factor engineering salvation.

Carefully note what then transpires:

- ◆ The deep misery taught by such a baptism is that the remission of sins then, on the one hand, does not occur due to the grace of God.
- ◆ On the other hand it also does not happen by the faith.
- ◆ And in the end, also not through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ

The people following that teaching of the baptism understand the visible signs as the visible and tangible mercy – in fact an indescribable power is then attached to the water and act of baptism.

This causes a problem to the careful reader of the Bible: Should the act of baptism then forgive the sins, what part does the blood and Spirit of the Lord Jesus play?

The Lord Himself teaches that there is a very clear connection between the baptism and the faith of the person being baptized. Consider the words of Mark 16:16:

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:16)

This deals with **believing** and **baptism**.

Which one is now the most important?

- ◆ Should it depend upon the baptism, then faith in the Lord Jesus is not needed.
- ◆ Should it depend only upon the faith, then it cannot symbolize the power of the Lord Jesus' mercy.

What then is the truth? In 1 John 1:7 the Lord Himself renders the answer:

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.
(1 John 1:7)

The Lord Jesus died in aid of cleansing us from all our sins.

- ◆ His conformation to God's requirements is accredited to us by God the Father and applied to our faith by God the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ Thus: through the blood of the Lord Jesus and the powerful workings of God the Holy Spirit the workings of the sin against us is destroyed.

God Himself thus engineers the full salvation of His chosen people. No person decides about it or contributes anything towards it. Therefore we also baptize children – God declared them as part of His covenant.

2. The sacraments indicate the redemption it deals with.

In the Old Testament the matter the sacrament dealt with was attached to the sign itself.

- ◆ The circumcision was the sign of the covenant.
- ◆ The lamb at the Passover was the symbol of the Messiah yet to come.

In the New Testament, in a certain way, it is even more so than it was in the Old Testament:

- ◆ The baptism is called the **bath of the rebirth**.
- ◆ It is also called the **washing away of sin**.

For the purpose of properly explaining the matter of salvation the Holy Spirit, in the New Testament, refers to an example from the Old Testament. Here the Lord refers to Abraham and his salvation:

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, (Romans 4:11)

Let us put this passage and the meaning thereof into plain English:

- ◆ Abraham received a Godly guarantee that God justified him.
- ◆ Because he believed in God, he received this guarantee/seal – he believed that God justified him.

- ◆ This guarantee/seal was the circumcision.

What were the contents of this sign? In other words, what did it teach?

- ◆ The Lord said that Abraham would be the father of all believers.
- ◆ They would receive the justness of the faith from God even before they were circumcised.

Now the question is: When did he receive this sign that the Lord had justified him?

- ◆ Even before he was circumcised the Lord justified Abraham.
- ◆ In other words, he was only circumcised after the Lord called and told him that He redeemed him.

The sign of the circumcision was thus just only a confirmation by the Lord about something (predestination prior to the creation of the world) He had done long ago!

In the same way the believing child does not receive the baptism as sign that he has now come to the faith.

More modernly put:

- ◆ He does not receive the Holy Spirit because he is being baptized.
- ◆ He is baptized because he already has received the Holy Spirit!

We have a very practical example of this in the vision Peter had when Cornelius and his people were baptized:

15 And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."

16 This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

17 Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate.

18 And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.

(Acts 10:15-18)

3. Who, according to the promise, are the children of the Lord?

When we are taught about the Baptism, we must also look at the people being baptized – in the way the Lord sees them.

- ◆ He sometimes has a very special name for these people being baptized.
- ◆ He calls them **the children of the promise**. Why does He do this and what does He mean thereby?

One such place where the Lord uses this name is in Romans 9:8

That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

(Romans 9:8)

If we start in the Old Testament and we search for all who were circumcised and why, then we might come under the wrong impression that all our predecessors must only have been circumcised people.

- ◆ Isaac was the child of Abraham – and the Lord commanded that all boys must be circumcised on the eighth day after birth.
- ◆ But then, what about Ishmael? He also was a child of Abraham.
- ◆ He was, together with Abraham, circumcised on the same day – and we all know that he went to hell.

The contents of the covenant are very clear that the circumcision is a sign that God is their God and that they are heirs to the kingdom of God.

The Bible explains what and who the children of the promise are:

Abraham already had a child when Isaac was born – Ishmael.

- ◆ But the Lord did not want Ishmael to continue having the blessings of the covenant the Lord entered into with Abraham.
- ◆ Therefore the Lord explains that the blessing had to go over to the child of the promise.
- ◆ The Lord explains that Isaac is the child of the promise. Listen how the Lord puts it:
But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise,
(Galatians 4:23)

The Lord draws this same line to the people accepting, in the times of the New Testament, the redemption by the Lord Jesus in the faith:

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.
(Galatians 4:28)

Through Abraham, we thus inherit the contents of the covenant, namely that God is a God to us and that we are His people (chosen children). This of course is only valid for people who believe in the Lord Jesus!

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
(Galatians 3:29)

The Lord Jesus expanded the grace of the covenant so that it does not only include physical descendants of Abraham who could be saved.

- ◆ He sent His disciples to take the gospel to all nations, people and languages.
- ◆ He commanded that all those who believe and come to conversion must be baptized in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.
(Galatians 3:14)

We, of course, must not separate the baptism from the predestination. The words of the Lord Jesus' High Priestly prayer remain with us forever:

6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

7 "Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You.

8 "For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.

9 "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.

10 "And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.

(John 16:6-10)

Let us read together what our confession teaches in the Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 27 about all these matters:

Q. 72.

Is then the external baptism with water the washing away of sin itself?

A.

Not at all: (a)

for the blood of Jesus Christ only, and the Holy Ghost cleanse us from all sin. (b)

(a)

Matt.3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

1 Pet.3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Eph.5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

Eph.5:27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

(b)

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

1 Cor.6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Q. 73.

Why then does the Holy Ghost call baptism "the washing of regeneration," and "the washing away of sins"?

A.

God speaks thus not without great cause, to-wit, not only thereby to teach us, that as the filth of the body is purged away by water, so our sins

are removed by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ; (a)
but especially that by this divine pledge and sign he may assure us, that we are spiritually
cleansed from our sins as really, as we are externally washed with water. (b)

(a)

Rev.1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead,
and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in
his own blood,

Rev.7:14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which
came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood
of the Lamb.

1 Cor.6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are
justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

(b)

Mark 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be
damned.

Gal.3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Q. 74.

Are infants also to be baptized?

A.

Yes: for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; (a)
and since redemption from sin (b)

by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than
to the adult; (c)

they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the christian
church; and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers (d)

as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, (e)

instead of which baptism is instituted (f)

in the new covenant.

(a)

Gen.17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in
their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after
thee.

(b)

Matt.19:14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of
such is the kingdom of heaven.

(c)

Luke 1:15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong
drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

Ps.22:10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.

Isa.44:1 Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen:

Isa.44:2 Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help
thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.

Isa.44:3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

Acts 2:39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

(d)

Acts 10:47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

(e)

Gen.17:14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

(f)

Col.2:11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

Col.2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Col.2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 89:2

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

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 9 September 2012
 Scripture Modern King James Version