

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2013 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 71:1, 2

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: 31:1, 19

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 38:1, 2

Scripture reading: Romans 1:16, 16 and Matthew 16:13-23

Scripture text: Matthew 16:19; Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 31

"And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

(Matthew 16:19)

No person can want to belong to a church but not wholeheartedly worship the Lord or want to worship according to his own rules

One of the most upsetting things that can happen in a congregation is that there are people who get angry and take offence because they are castigated and encouraged to worship together with the congregation. But it does happen.

Therefore differentiation has to happen in church:

- The people truly knowing and worshipping the Triune God must be included into the church.
- Those who are unrighteous must be castigated and ministered so that they can come to conversion.

- Those that refuse to truly convert to God must, for the sakes of the Sanctity of God and His Church, be banned from the church.

This is the meaning of the lord telling His church that He is giving them the keys to heaven and that they, on earth, must unlock and lock.

Let us consider the facets of the censure:

1. **The censure and the ministering**
2. **Practical application of the censure**

1. **The censure and the ministering**

The church received a responsibility from the Lord to minister the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

- This is not a responsibility of judging!
- In the first instance is it an act of love: God takes pleasure in the conversion of the sinner and the angels in heaven rejoice about one sinner coming to conversion.

The judgement only comes to be when use have to be made of the censure because somebody does not want to be admonished in love and thus has to be banned from the church of God.

It is also not the church council that decides about these matters. The Lord Jesus Christ is the King of the church – He decides what and how matters in the church must take place.

- The elders act under His command, in other words every decision they take must be according to the Bible about the specific matter.
- Therefore the Lord Jesus teaches and admonishes us continually by the ministering of His Word.
- From the Bible we learn that He is extremely angered about people who persist in sin.

When the church teaches these matters truly and sincerely it already practices the power of the key. Consider the following:

- The ministering unlocks the heavens for people by teaching them the salvation in the Lord Jesus and continuing to minister them.
- The Holy Spirit brings people who hear the proclaiming of the grace of God to conversion so that they then believe.

The locking by the ministering consists therein that all people are immediately taught from the Word of God that they have a specific responsibility towards the Lord.

- The Lord commands them to honour Him by their worshipping.
- They also have the command to keep to the order the Lord instituted in the church.
- Should they not want to stay with the worship and order as taught by the Lord they must be banned from the church.

The Lord only bans those that rebel against Him out of His kingdom – the devil and his ejection is an example hereof.

Not only with every sermon does the Lord proclaim His grace.

- He also does it visibly through the serving of the sacraments.
- There you hear, see and taste the grace of God over you.

But the disorderly may not partake in it.

- He must feel and experience what the results are of that he rejected the Lord so that it can move him back to conversion.
- When somebody bodily feels how bad it is to be treated like an unjust it will bring home the realisation of what the love of God is worth to him.

To the Lord the application of the censure is an act of law.

- Thereby He physically ensures that people who do not appreciate His Love cannot enjoy the same advantage as those who truly love the Lord.
- You cannot hate the Lord but lay claim to His grace.

The righteous will live through his faith – the Bible teaches this. Logically the opposite is also true: Due to his own unbelief the unjust will come to his end.

- The elders must see to it that the minister proclaims these matters because both live in the church of God: the righteous as well as the unjust.
- Consider the words of the Lord Jesus to His people when He said: **“Everybody from Israel are not Israel”**

2. Practical application of the censure

God Himself wants to keep His congregation pure. Should the admonishments that take place in love bear no fruit then the unjust faces God's chair of judgement.

This act of censure comes clearly to the foreground during the service of the Holy Communion.

- From time to time there are people in the church living like non-believers.
- Should they partake in the Holy Communion they would mar the holiness of the Lord and of His sacrament.
- Their public sins are also often offensive towards the other people.

The Lord demands that such people should be admonished in love to correct their lives.

- Should they not want to listen and continue defiling the community of the holy by their sins then the process starts to exclude them from the church – in other words out of the kingdom of God.

This is a terrible matter because from the passage we minister about it is clear that when somebody is legally, in the Name of the Lord, banned by the church on earth from its communion, then that person is also banned in heaven.

- You can thus not go to another church if you are under censure or already banned from the church because it is the Lord of the church censuring you and no other church can nullify the action of the God of the church.
- Once you are banned out of the church you are also banned out of the heaven.

What all does this deal with? **It deals with it that we are in the church to worship the Lord and to glorify Him.**

- The Lord must be honoured. Everybody who wants to be members of the church must join into this glorification of the Lord – of course in the way He prescribes it.
- When there are members who do not want to do it, then it is clear that they are at the wrong place and therefore they must come to conversion or leave the church.

The censure thus deals in the first instance with the honour of God.

- It is logical that the honour of God also includes the honour of His church.
- A church is not honourable should it house people who resist and rebel against God! Such people are a bother to the Lord because they bring the honour of God and the worshipping by the other church members into play.
- And this bother and offensiveness must be removed from the church of God.

Now you must not get the idea that the censure is a broom that can be used by the church council to sweep those they do not like out of the church.

- It is not possible that something like this can happen because it is not their church.
- It is the church of God and you may only deal with the people of God in the way that the Word of God prescribes.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the sole Head of the church and all the people in the church belongs to Him

- Therefore He executes censure over people who do not want to listen.
- The church council must merely be the instrument administering the will of the Lord in the church.

This is why in the case of the dismissal of an elder or deacon the help of two neighbouring churches is called in.

- And in the case of the ban or cutting off of a member the entire classis.
- And in the event of the dismissal of a minister the help of the entire Particular Synod.

The help of these meetings is called up to make sure that the will of the Lord is executed over the person involved.

Because God is a God of love the censure also firstly works with love. The censure firstly always tries to convert the sinner.

- In practice it works in the way that the church council visits the member and tries to get him as far as to lay off the things that do not promote the holiness of God.
- The sinner could possibly need help to overcome his problem and then he has the right of requesting the help of the church council in this matter.
- But the final aim must be true conversion.

The purpose of the censure is to shame the sinner so that he would leave his evil.

- Therefore the sinner is also denied partaking in Holy Communion.
- He must practically see that there are certain principles issued by God and that God keeps the order by always adhering to these principles.

We have this principle in the Bible amongst others in John 3:18 onwards

18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil...

(John 3:18, 19)

The Lord Jesus guarantees two things

- The salvation of the righteous
- The ejection of the unjust.

The church thus proclaims to all salvation and grace by the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Those who do not accept it are people we do not exercise communion with.
- They must be banned out of the church.

Come, let us examine ourselves and see if we experience the peace of the eternal life in our hearts and have the will to serve the Lord fully. Then we are at home with the congregation and family of the Lord.

Let us read the Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 31:

83. Q. What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven?

A. The preaching of the holy gospel and church discipline. By these two the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and closed to unbelievers.[1]

[1] Matt. 16:19; John 20:21-23.

84. Q. How is the kingdom of heaven opened and closed by the preaching of the gospel?

A. According to the command of Christ, the kingdom of heaven is opened when it is proclaimed and publicly testified to each and every believer that God has really forgiven all their sins for the sake of Christ's merits, as often as they by true faith accept the promise of the gospel. The kingdom of heaven is closed when it is proclaimed and testified to all unbelievers and hypocrites that the wrath of God and eternal condemnation rest on them as long as they do not repent. According to this testimony of the gospel, God will judge both in this life and in the life to come.[1]

[1] Matt. 16:19; John 3:31-36; 20:21-23.

85. Q. How is the kingdom of heaven closed and opened by church discipline?

A. According to the command of Christ, people who call themselves Christians but show themselves to be unchristian in doctrine or life are first repeatedly admonished in a brotherly manner. If they do not give up their errors or wickedness, they are reported to the church, that is, to the elders. If they do not heed also their admonitions, they are forbidden the use of the sacraments, and they are excluded by the elders from the Christian congregation, and by God

Himself from the kingdom of Christ.[1] They are again received as members of Christ and of the church when they promise and show real amendment.[2]

[1] Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5:3-5; 11-13; II Thess. 3:14, 15. [2] Luke 15:20-24; II Cor. 2:6-11.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 32:1

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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