

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2013 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: 145:5

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: 33:1

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 66:1

Scripture reading: Acts 9

Scripture text: Acts 9:4-6

4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

(Acts 9:4-6)

Jesus Christ converts Paul. It was an overwhelming event. Drastically God changes the history of man so that a hater of the church of God is changed into one of the strongest developers thereof.

The semi-religious Jews called in the help of Saul to eradicate the Christians. But God willed it differently.

- On the way to Damascus God changed Saul the persecutor, into Paul the apostle.
- Then Paul received the command: **"Arise and go into the city..."**

- Thereafter Paul's works clearly revealed his conversion.

1. **The relationship between Christ and conversion.**
2. **The relationship between faith and conversion.**
3. **The relationship between good works and conversion.**

1. **The relationship between Christ and conversion.**

Through the Lord Jesus two things happen with us.

- The first is the dying off of the old man, and
- the second is the resurrection of the new man.

These two things happen simultaneously.

- It may happen because the power of Jesus over us is so strong that we can succeed in overcoming the sin – that is the dying off of the old man in us.
- The less evil we do, the more good things we must do – this then is the new man. It is the converted man continuing to live in the good works of God.

The death of the Lord Jesus depicts this matter very well.

- He dies as an accursed sinner – a convicted facing God for the sins of the people.
- But He arises as a Justified.
- He ascended as a Glorified.

Come, let us consider the real circumstances we are in at the moment.

- We are spiritually dead.
- We cannot easily do good works.
- We easily lie to each other.
- Slander without batting an eyelid.
- Neglect the communion with God.
- Often we are dissatisfied with many of the things God offers us in His goodness.

Therefore something must happen.

- We must be converted else we remain separated from God.
- We ourselves can do nothing about this matter.

Therefore God provides the way to conversion by Jesus Christ.

- First He lets Jesus die to conquer death.
- He grabs us from the hands of the satan – through the working of the Holy Spirit Jesus now places us on the proper road.
- He keeps us there. He continually guides us to God the Father.

He stops Saul in his tracks.

- He admonishes him because he continues kicking against the thorns.
- Then He commands him to arise and go to the city – there he will be told what to do.

We confess that without Christ no conversion is possible.

- It is written in 1Corinthians 15 that we all died in Adam, but we brought back to life in Christ.
- Together with Adam we fell into sin and together with Christ we were saved. Through Christ we have communion with God.
- It is not so that Christ only redeemed our sins to God the Father;
 - Every day He prays for us to the Father. Implores for our sakes.
 - He, through His Spirit, also lives inside of us.

In order of moving us to true conversion the Lord Jesus Christ sends the Holy Spirit to us.

- Time and again the Holy Spirit lets us sink to our knees facing God.
- He gets us to move away from sin.
- He grants us the insight of recognizing the sin when it crosses our ways.
- The Holy Spirit teaches that there is only one way leading to the kingdom of God: conversion and faith in Jesus Christ the living God.

2. The relationship between faith and conversion.

Conversion and faith go hand in hand. Every person pretending to be a converted but who are not is recognized because his actual life testifies to the contrary.

- Nobody can come to conversion without true faith.
- Some people have a false faith, but still pretend to be true converted.
 - We call this legalistic conversion.
 - It is an external conversion.

Judas was such a person.

- He lived so well with the other disciples that nobody could think him to be a traitor.
- But such a superficial good life towards the exterior, lacking the needed internal depth of faith, is not long lasting. It also is not powerful.
- Therefore Judas betrayed the Lord.
- When his external piety was tested to the depth of his faith he followed the road away from God.

With Paul we have an example opposite to the one of Judas.

- On the way to Damascus he comes to conversion and from then on the fruit of conversion is clearly visible in his life.
- Humanly seen there was not another apostle zealously working for the church of the Lord like Paul.
- In a certain way his change of name is symbolic to the dying off of the old and the resurrection of the new man.
 - Saul is the persecutor – the old man.
 - Paul is the zealot – the new man.

3. This brings us to the relationship between good works and conversion.

From our conversion stems good works.

- This is essential because it testifies about our gratitude towards God for calling us to be His children.
- Good works is a deed of daily conversion. It is in fact a search for God.
- You rather flee from evil to God by your good works. Therefore believers continually do good works.

Our good works carry a very remarkable character.

- The good works of a Christian is never aimed upon winning the approval of other people.
- It is also not grounded upon human findings.
- It is always to the honor of God and His glorification.

It is so that we harden ourselves, like Saul at Damascus, against the Lord.

- Let us believe that the Lord Jesus Christ fully atoned for all our injustices.
- Then we can also experience how we do not fight alone against the sin but how the Holy Spirit helps us in this battle.

Often we all fall into sin. But then we will also experience the Lord Jesus Christ saying: Arise ... A believer does not remain in his sins.

Let us lives – also our good works – be a sermon of true faith in Jesus Christ.

- Come let us live so that the unbelievers and semi-believers become jealous about what we have more than they do.
- Such a good life will let them realize that the spiritual ability of the true Christian surpasses the worldly people by far.
- Such a life will testify that we, in our lives, are already atoned to God.

Let us read together what we confess in the Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 33:

88 Q. What is the true repentance or conversion of man?

A. It is the dying of the old nature and the coming to life of the new.[1]

[1] Rom. 6:1-11; I Cor. 5:7; II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:5-10.

89. Q. What is the dying of the old nature?

A. It is to grieve with heartfelt sorrow that we have offended God by our sin, and more and more to hate it and flee from it.[1]

[1] Ps. 51:3, 4, 17; Joel 2:12, 13; Rom. 8:12, 13; II Cor. 7:10.

90. Q. What is the coming to life of the new nature?

A. It is a heartfelt joy in God through Christ,[1] and a love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works.[2]

[1] Ps. 51:8, 12; Is. 57:15; Rom. 5:1; 14:17. [2] Rom. 6:10, 11; Gal. 2:20.

91. Q. But what are good works?

A. Only those which are done out of true faith,[1] in accordance with the law of God,[2] and to His glory,[3]and not those based on our own opinion or on precepts of men.[4]

[1] Joh. 15:5; Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11:6. [2] Lev. 18:4; I Sam. 15:22; Eph. 2:10. [3] I Cor. 10:31. [4] Deut. 12:32; Is. 29:13; Ezek. 20:18, 19; Matt. 15:7-9.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 84:1

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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 24 November 2013
 Scripture Modern King James Version