

## REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2014 EVENING SERVICE

**Sing before:** 48:4

*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: 81:1, 4

**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 31:3

**Scripture reading:** Psalm 96

**Scripture text:** Psalm 96; Catechism Sunday 36

David uses the language and words, which God gave him to praise the greatness of the Lord on the earth.

- The Lord did not give us language merely to enable us to chat to one another. He gave it (particularly) so that we could glorify and exalt Him through it.
- It is a very special privilege that we have, to be able to praise God
  - That we have a language with words, so that we can pray to God to help us in our need.
  - And to thank Him for all His blessings.

But our language places upon us a tremendous responsibility in our relationship with God.

- We are baptised in the Name of the Triune God.
- There we are indicated as His property, which demands that we worship Him in complete truth.

The contrary is so often the case. We neglect these admirable duties and gifts of ours. Our neglect in this respect manifests itself in two ways:

- Firstly, we do not praise the Lord in our words, as we should.
- Secondly, we use His holy Name idly and in vain - His Name which was given to us in our language.

This is the whole point of the third commandment. The sad truth is that we frequently fall so far that we simply misuse the Name of the Lord in our conversations, even without our realising it.

It is a very serious sin to use the Name of the Lord in vain.

- Using it in vain means that we use it in circumstances where it is clear that it is not used with due reverence and respect.
- When we call upon God's Name in prayer, we do so with deep respect and expectation. And then God hears our prayer.

Somebody using the Name of God to curse must see himself in a relationship towards God.

- To whom is he speaking when he utters a curse?
- It cannot possibly be to God, because to God one speaks with great reverence and awe.

God listens and hears us when we speak His Name in prayer.

- But who listens when God's Name is bandied about in an ordinary conversation?
- Can anyone who utters curses expect the Lord to look upon him with caring love when he mentions one of the Names of the Lord without due reverence, or shouts it aloud?

Using the Name of God idly or in vain means literally that we are playing the fool with God. We keep on calling upon Him, but we do not speak to Him.

Consider the part played by God the Holy Spirit in this matter.

- The Holy Spirit teaches us to know the Name of God.
- He teaches us to worship this Name.
- He also teaches us what to pray when we stand before God.

A person using the Name of God in vain must realise that he is using the Name of God because the Holy Spirit inspires him to do it.

- Just the question: In whose Name does the person who uses the Name of God attend the worship services?

From the beginning, Christians were accustomed to extend good wishes to one another in the Name of the Lord.

- In the New Testament, people greeted one another with the word: Grace (be to you).
- Those with a more pronounced Jewish background, greeted one another with the word: Peace (be to you).
- The apostle Paul combined the two, which is why we read in the Bible that he greeted people with the words: Grace and peace be to you!

A greeting in the Lord, because He gives grace and peace.

- Such a Christian greeting is therefore nothing less than a prayer.
- You pray that God bestow upon this person before you His grace and peace.

But again he who uses the Name of the Lord in vain is devoid of this advantage as how could he one moment deride God and the next moment implore the blessing onto somebody. That is surely not possible.

Such a person will have to live without blessing.

- He then lives together with the wrath of God.
- One could probably be justified in saying that blasphemy is a prayer to the devil. Because anyone who blasphemes thereby testifies openly that he is an enemy of God.

This matter of blasphemy and of using the Name of the Lord in vain goes further.

- The false oath which people swear also falls into the category of blasphemy and using the Name of the Lord in vain.
- When you take an oath, then it means that you call upon God as Witness to endorse the truth of what you are saying.

If you swear a false oath, then you call upon the Righteous God of all truth to support your lie.

- In that case, such a person openly scathes God's holiness.
- For that reason God's wrath is aroused by this type of sin.

But there is yet more to the matter. It does not concern only swearing falsely, but also swearing unnecessarily.

- God's Name should be used very sparingly and with the greatest reverence.
- He cannot be called upon for every triviality.

This does not mean that we may never swear an oath. On the contrary!

- A true oath manifests both the recognition and the glorification of God's Name.
- But the oath carelessly sworn in everyday company is not to the honour of the God of heaven and earth.

Now it would probably be very easy to maintain that we do not share in these sins, because we do not curse, nor do we swear unnecessarily. That may be so.

- But there are nevertheless some of us who do use the Name of the Lord in vain in one another's company.
- Our concern for God's holiness must be so great that we admonish with all due charity those who do so in our company.

We cannot simply say that the matter does not concern us, because our neighbour's salvation and God's glory are most certainly our concern! We therefore share in these sins if we allow them to continue, and make no effort to prevent them.

Also consider this:

- Cursing comes from the heart.
- If we use God's Name in curses, it proves that everything we confess in the Name of Triune God is nothing but a lie, because we are prepared to deny the same God with blasphemy.

That is why we are threatened with punishment if we commit this sin.

**Because the Lord will not allow the person who uses His Name in vain to go unpunished.**

The righteousness of God cannot go unavenged.

- The patience of God cannot last forever.
- Therefore this sin is punished. Thoroughly. With eternal death.

Actually, this is logical, for who could expect such a deliberate sinner to live with the God whose Name he had misused to swear and curse by? Hell is the only future destination for the transgressor of this commandment.

But this commandment does not merely forbid us to use the Name of God in an unholy way.

- It summons us also to the holy calling to indeed use God's Name because we must
- But with reverence and in profound worship.

We read in Psalm 50:15

**Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."**  
(Psalm 50:15)

Beloved let us then not tempt the patience of the Lord in this commandment.

- Let us uphold the honour of God's Names and so also teach our children.
- Let us glorify His Name. Let us believe in His Name. Let us praise in His Name.

Let us now read Catechism Sunday 36 together.

Sunday 36

### **99. Q. What is required in the third commandment?**

**A.** We are not to blaspheme or to abuse the Name of God by cursing,[1] perjury,[2] or unnecessary oaths,[3] nor to share in such horrible sins by being silent bystanders.[4] In short, we must use the holy Name of God only with fear and reverence,[5] so that we may rightly confess Him,[6] call upon Him,[7] and praise Him in all our words and works.[8]

[1] Lev. 24:10-17. [2] Lev. 19:12 [3] Matt. 5:37; James 5:12. [4] Lev. 5:1; Prov. 29:24. [5] Ps. 99:1-5; Is. 45:23; Jer. 4:2. [6] Matt. 10:32, 33; Rom. 10:9, 10. [7] Ps. 50:14, 15; I Tim. 2:8. [8] Rom. 2:24; Col. 3:17; I Tim. 6:1.

**100. Q. Is the blaspheming of God's Name by swearing and cursing such a grievous sin that God is angry also with those who do not prevent and forbid it as much as they can?**

**A.** Certainly,[1] for no sin is greater or provokes God's wrath more than the blaspheming of His Name. That is why He commanded it to be punished with death.[2]

[1] Lev. 5:1. [2] Lev. 24:16.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 68:2

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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