

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2012
EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 15:4

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: Psalm 89:1, 14

Prayer:

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation for 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 95:6

Scripture reading: Hebrews 6

Scripture text: Hebrews 6:17,18

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:(Hebrews 6:17-18)

During the times of the New Testament there was virtually no nation without Jews living amongst them!

- Wars in particular caused them to be scattered amongst the nations.
- It is remarkable that these Jews and their descendants clung to their religion, not easily losing it.

Many of the Jews came to conversion, becoming Christians. This epistle to the Hebrews is written to the Christians coming from the Jewry. Why?

- Because they clung to the Jewish traditions in such a way – even after coming to conversion – that they put Moses above the Lord Jesus!
- Should they not be corrected this would have resulted in the complete deterioration of their faith!

They had to be taught how the Lord Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament and its applications – and therefore it changed.

- But, on the other hand, the danger of them throwing everything overboard existed – and that is wrong also!
- Therefore this passage in the epistle deals with certain remaining matters! These they were not allowed to change!

This epistle also deals with one of the commandments remaining since the exodus. It is a commandment dealing with taking an oath.

And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.(Leviticus 19:12)

Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name (Deuteronomy 6:13)

Keeping these matters in mind, let us again look at Hebrews 6.

- In verse 1 the writer points out that we should not stop at the first principles of the doctrine of Christ.
- The problem then arises of some people developing wrongly in their growth of faith!
 - Verse 4 – 6 clearly shows the existence of some who, after moving through Christianity, becoming heathens!
For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.(Hebrews 6:4-6)
 - These people, in the eyes of the Lord, are like thorns and briers growing in the field, killing the wheat.
But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.(Hebrews 6:8)

How serious is the Lord about it that people giving up their faith cannot be redeemed again, and that He will burn them like thorns and briers?

So serious that He took an oath on it!

In the eyes of the Lord taking an oath is extremely holy and exceedingly important! This brings us to the practical matters of taking an oath. What is our attitude towards taking an oath?

We consider the following aspects:

- 1. Due to sin, taking an oath is necessary.**
- 2. When it is urgent and essential to the truth we are allowed to take an oath.**
- 3. This has to be done to the glory of the Lord.**

1. Due to sin, taking an oath is necessary.

Had there been no sin on earth, taking an oath would not have been necessary.

- Everywhere truth would have prevailed.
- All people would have been honest, doing everything that is right in the eyes of the Lord.

The truth, on the other hand, is that since the Fall we mostly do not live close to the Lord.

- The lives of all people are riddled by sin – and together with that, with lies.

Thanks to the goodness and mercy of the Lord there still is place in our lives for the truth!

Seeing that, in our earthly lives, truth and lies are so intertwined the Lord grants methods whereby it can be unravelled as to what is from the devil and what may continue existing before God.

What does the devil cause people to do?

- He causes people to lie – unashamedly.
- Sometimes they do not lie outright but render distorted reproductions about matters – knowing that they are deliberately distorting the truth.
- He causes people to fearlessly suppress the truth when it has to be revealed.

Therefore the Lord grants us the permission that we, in serious matters, like the serious matters in Hebrews 6, may through swearing of an oath, compel the truth to be told.

What is the principle?

- The principle is that by taking an oath it brings a person back to facing God directly!
- Should he be under oath and lie God will deal with him by burning him like the thorns and briars – because he made a mendacious witness out of God.

Therefore we may not just take an oath in conversation. God instituted the oath exclusively for matters pertaining to His glory in everlasting life or everlasting death.

2. When it is urgent and essential to the truth we are allowed to take an oath.

The revelation of the Lord is in fact the revelation of truths hidden to us, but which, in order to be able to know and serve Him to eternity, we must know.

When under oath, we symbolically are face to face with the Lord.

- The witness is compelled, in the name of God, in confessing the truth.
- Only somebody having the total disposition of hell will, when under oath, abuse the Lord's holy Name and stand in service to Satan!

The oath is thus used in order to curb and destroy the lie.

Is it necessary?

- Yes, definitely, because the Lord teaches that He is living and existing in an empire where there is everlasting and inaccessible light.
 - (That light is of course only inaccessible to us during our sinful struggle of existence.)
- In contrast to this illuminated God and His Kingdom stands a black and dark kingdom under rule of the Satan.

The oath is meant to let the light of God shine through the dark of this kingdom of lies – in order that the light of God's truth may illuminate everything.

- In practice: The light of the truth carried by God must shine in church and court – and literally in all places of our lives.
- We thus may grasp and use the oath as such an instrument – but for nothing else than that.

The oath that we may take and must swear stands directly and clearly against matters like unfaithfulness, fraud, slovenliness and falsehood.

The oath has a very strong alliance with prayer.

- During prayer we are asking for the
 - fulfilment and confirmation of the truth

- confirmation of blessing
- punishment for all lies
- The oath is the corroborator of God's truth – therefore prayer and swearing the oath are inseparable with each other.

3. This has to be done to the glory of the Lord.

Everything we do and exist for is aimed at the honour and glorification of the Triune God.

We were created to praise and worship His Name.

After we fell in sin, God wanted to redeem us, and did so – and He confirmed it by swearing an oath.

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:(Hebrews 6:17-18)

We thus have received two things from God:

- The first is the hope of salvation – this happens to all praising, glorifying and worshipping His Name.
- The second is the oath sworn to by Him as confirmation that this redemption on which we hope is true.

The glory of the Lord is attested to by us living in His truth – and also, when necessary, us taking an oath in that holy name. Together with this, keep the following passages of the Bible in mind:

**Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.
(Deuteronomy 6:13)**

**I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.
(Isaiah 45:23)**

**That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.
(Isaiah 65:16)**

We have an example of somebody (Saul) who falsely took an oath in the name of the Lord – and we all know what happened to him!

**And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain.
(1 Samuel 19:6)**

For us, our Lord Jesus did propitiation so that we, through repentance and rebirth, may be devotees of the truth.

- He made us people knowing salvation and having to bring it to the foreground in our lives.
- Because of that our lives under the leadership of His Holy Spirit has to be so holy and righteous that we have no need to take the oath.

When in specific circumstances it is demanded from us, we have to swear by the Name of the Lord.

- Then, like the Lord Jesus, we must fully, to God and whoever may be involved, testify to the truth and the truth alone.

Let us read together from the Heidelberg Catechism, Sunday 37, what we profess about taking the oath:

Q. 101.

May we then swear religiously by the name of God?

A.

Yes:

either when the magistrates demand it of the subjects; or when necessity requires us thereby to confirm a fidelity and truth to the glory of God, and the safety of our neighbour: for such an oath is founded on God's word, (a)

and therefore was justly used by the saints, both in the Old and New Testament. (b)

(a)

Deut.6:13 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

Deut.10:20 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

Isa.48:1 Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness.

Heb.6:16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

(b)

Gen.21:24 And Abraham said, I will swear.

Gen.31:53 The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac.

Gen.31:54 Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.

Jos.9:15 And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.

Jos.9:19 But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them.

1 Sam.24:22 And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

2 Sam.3:35 And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down.

1 Kin.1:28 Then king David answered and said, Call me Bathsheba. And she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king.

1 Kin.1:29 And the king sware, and said, As the LORD liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress,

1 Kin.1:30 Even as I sware unto thee by the LORD God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day.

Rom.1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

2 Cor.1:23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.

Q. 102.

May we also swear by saints or any other creatures?

A.

No; for a lawful oath is calling upon God, as the only one who knows the heart, that he will bear witness to the truth, and punish me if I swear falsely; (a) which honour is due to no creature. (b)

(a)

2 Cor.1:23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.

Rom.9:1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, (b)

Matt.5:34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

Matt.5:35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

Matt.5:36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

James 5:12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

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 you peace.

Amen

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Scripture Modern King James Version

Summary:

The glory of the Lord is reflected by us living in His truth – but also when it is necessary, to swear by that holy Name.