

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 2 DECEMBER 2012 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 66:1

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 103:9

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 144:1

Scripture reading: Galatians 6

Scripture text: Galatians 6:3; Catechism Lord's Day 39

For if a man has an idea that he is something when he is nothing, he is tricked by himself.

(Galatians 6:3)

We must submit to the authority of the Lord, because He is not only

- Eternal God and the only Almighty.
- He is also the Lord of love who saved us from eternal damnation in hell.

In this sermon we have a closer look at the following two issues:

- 1. Authority and the purpose of our creation?**
- 2. The authority of God and love**

1. Authority and the purpose of our creation?

The Bible teaches that all things were created by God and for God.

- We were also created to glorify and serve the Lord.
- This is also what Jesus meant when He said that we must love the Lord our God with all our heart and with our entire mind and with all our strength. This is the first and the most important purpose for which we were created.
- This means that in our service to the Lord we must fully submit to Him, and that we may under no circumstances resist his authority.

In other words we were created to exist under the authority of God.

- We cannot escape from the authority from our Creator.
- After all, from what Satan did and the way he was punished it's clear that we may not resist the authority of God.

How do we gain knowledge about the authority of God?

- In the first place, of course, from the Bible. The Lord reveals his authority in the Ten Commandments, and in various declarations in the Bible.
- Also the historic events described in the Bible reveal how God plans and executes the history of all nations. This is authority.
- The Lord also reveals his authority in nature.
 - The seasons come and go at God's command.
 - As the Omnipotent God He is in command of rain and wind.
 - Plants grow and flower at his command.
 - From this it should be clear to us that we are, same as the rest of the creation, under the authority of God.

The Lord also reveals his authority through the laws of the land.

- The Lord uses the government to enact laws according to the way He wants the country to be governed.
- Even if we do not agree with the government we still have to keep the laws – consider the time when the Romans ruled over the Jews. Jesus told the people to give to God what belongs to Him and give to Caesar what belongs to him.

In Romans 13 the Lord tells us to obey the government, because God willed them to rule over us and, if we refuse to obey the laws, we will be punished.

- For example, when the court passes death sentence on a murderer, it is the Lord who wants the culprit to be punished as such.
- The Lord speaks through the legislator.

The Lord also reveals his authority in other forms of authority that are put over us.

- As an example the authority parents and superiors should exercise over children and people who are their subordinates.
- The Lord regards the family as the basis of his church.
 - In the family the Lord concludes his covenant with the parents and children.
 - God's instruction to parents is that they must bring up their children in his honour according to his covenant.
 - He also instructs children to obey their parents.

We can now ask ourselves:

- Why do we so often resist the various forms of authority the Lord has established?
- What is the reason for this problem?

When it comes to resistance against authority we have to admit that there's only one reason why man wants to reject the authority of God and that is when he becomes arrogant.

On the subject of arrogance there is no better example to refer to than Satan himself.

- He is also one of God's creatures, like us, but he was created of a higher order than we.
- However, he caused all sin and he was also the leader of the first Fall that happened in heaven.

The problem was resistance against authority.

- Satan did not want to submit to God's authority and he rebelled against God.
- He wanted to be God.
- This is what happened: The subordinate regarded himself as higher than his Superior – this is exactly what we understand under arrogance.

Then the second Fall took place – when Satan led man into temptation in Paradise.

- It was a repeat of what happened during the first Fall: Man, similar to the devil, became arrogant and resisted the fact that he had to submit to God's authority.

We cannot talk about authority and obedience without mentioning the fifth commandment, because this is the commandment that deals with authority and obedience. Let's read together Catechism Lord's Day 39 to see what we believe in respect of this commandment (the authority commandment).

104. Q. What does God require in the fifth commandment?

A. That I show all honour, love, and faithfulness to my father and mother and to all those in authority over me, submit myself with due obedience to their good instruction and discipline,[1] and also have patience with their weaknesses and shortcomings,[2] since it is God's will to govern us by their hand.[3]

[1] Ex. 21:17; Prov. 1:8; 4:1; Rom. 13:1, 2; Eph. 5:21, 22; 6:1-9; Col. 3:18-4:1. [2] Prov. 20:20; 23:22; I Pet.2:18. [3] Matt. 22:21, Rom. 13:1-8; Eph. 6:1-9; Col. 3:18-21.

In summary:

- The Lord has established all forms of authority over us.
- Hence we should submit to such authority.
- In principle we submit to the Lord when we submit to authority.

2. The authority of God and the love

The authority of God is spiritual. Hence the authority of the Lord is not structured like that of the world.

God alone has supreme authority.

- The Lord's authority can be preached to you by anyone God wills
- Anyone who speaks the truth, and impresses on you the justice of the Lord, can reveal the authority of the Lord to you.

Hence it is so important not to separate the fifth commandment from the love commandment.

- Love gives you the right perspective: the way you exercise it and also the way how you submit yourself to it
- It makes you accept the Lord's admonition when you've done wrong.
- And it also keeps us from judging our neighbour because of a sin. We would rather go and, through the love of the Lord, persuade him/her to turn away from the sin.

This is the reason why the Lord begins with the words, "**Honour your father and your mother.**"

- He could just as well have said: "**Obey your government.**"
- But the Lord doesn't do it; He uses the image of the family – the place where we would expect mutual love and submission to authority in great measure.

. Let's look at how all these will affect each of us in practice: What does man do when he resists the authority of the Lord?

- Exactly what Satan did in heaven when he sinned, and also what man did in Paradise. They became arrogant.
- An arrogant creature becomes his own god who wants everyone to submit to him.
- Man can accept authority only if he loves God, and when he regards authority as having been established over him by God.

By example we experience the glory of God's authority at the table of Holy Communion when He assures us that He Himself has destroyed the powers of hell over us.

- And also, especially, because He assured us that his authority and omnipotence gave us eternal life.
- Therefore we must submit ourselves to His call of always serving and submitting to Him in obedience.

Anybody stands in danger of turning arrogant. Then he/she will think he is important and will resist the Lord.

- The devil thought just that
- Adam and Eve also yielded to this temptation – with the result that all people have been conceived and born in sin.
- Hence we should show a lot of self-denial when we are faced by authority.

This is why our Scripture text says that if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

- This is the road the devil goes – and that road ends in hell.

- We may not follow that road because the Lord Jesus Christ sanctified us by dying on the cross.

His death on the cross puts us in perspective before God.

- The Lord Jesus Christ had to die on the cross to bear the wrath of God for all our sins.
- This speaks volumes! It means that when we are at our best we are still so bad that we deserve punishment when measured against the authority of God.

Now we must, through the authority of Christ, rule over sins.

- This is one of the reasons why the Lord has once again brought us together at His table of Holy Communion. Because He ensured us that we have received the victory from his Son so that we can indeed rule over sin.

The Lord had the Fall of both Satan and Adam recorded in the Bible to show the nature of the people who resist the authority of God.

- God also reveals what happened to them so that we would not follow suit.
- Hence, as God's reconciled and sanctified children, we must apply God's authority and we must submit to the authority God has established over us.
- This requires the gift of discernment and prudence.
- It requires kind tolerance towards other believers who do not always practice God's authority correctly.
- It requires soul-searching.

Because if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm 31:19

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

Dr MJ Du Plessis
 Helping Reverend
 Reformed Church Clanwilliam
 2 December 2012
 Scripture Modern King James Version