

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 20 JANUARY 2013 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 34:6

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

Scripture Versification 2-4:1

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 4:1

Scripture reading: Romans 7

Scripture text: Romans 7:7; 1 Kings 3:10-11; Catechism Sunday 44

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."

Romans 7:7

10 The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.

11 Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice,

(1 Kings 3:10-11)

Desires! Who of us really know our own heart?! Seeing that sometimes we cannot even understand and control our own desires, how can we understand the desires of somebody else?

With the prohibition on desiring we are dealing with the root of all sin – the starting point of all sin is the desire to commit it!

In this letter to the Romans, Paul, who is a lawyer, is having the word. Gamaliel taught him the Ten Commandments.

- Still he understood so little of the law that in verse 7 he stated that he was without the law!
- Some confession from somebody supposed to know better!

When looking into my heart, what is the Lord searching for?

- He is searching for truth and purity.
- What does He find? – sin!

Because of that the Lord end His commandments with the last commandment:

'You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.'

(Deuteronomy 5:21)

We may not desire!

Many times our human thoughts and values are very shallow.

- We do not realize that in the eyes of the Lord all commandments carry the same weight and that He is equally stern about all of them.
- We, as an example, think that somebody who has not committed a murder and who is not pugnacious and does not go around cursing and being abusive, is a good person!

Often we do not judge sin, lying in a more spiritual level, on the same level of fierceness.

- Some of the ways in how we think are wrong.
- Certain matters just pass us by, but the Lord regards matters differently than we do.

Somebody who does not love (or not having the capability of receiving or rendering love) and somebody desiring things not belonging to him, or what he may not do, are in the eyes of the Lord equally guilty as a murderer.

In the beginning Paul also misunderstood these matters. Until something dramatic happened to him. The Lord brought him to conversion. God the Holy Spirit brought about a change in his heart and mind:

- He led him to understand that it is very wrong should somebody desire and do what is not allowed!
- Desire is a terrible thing that does not form part of the spiritual image of the Lord that we carry!

Therefore he wrote:

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

(Romans 7:14)

It is quite a frightening matter to realize that your desires and all sorts of lusts, we have for forbidden things, are sin in the eyes of the Lord.

Desire is of course something always weighed against something else. Mostly it is something you want, but not given to you by the Lord.

Examples from the Bible are:

- Absalom wanting the throne of his father;
- David, having six wives already – but wanting the wife of Uriah as well;
- Ahab wanting the vineyard of Naboth;
- Also Simon the magician, after his conversion, in a wrong way, desired the powers of the Holy Spirit:

And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

(Acts 8:18-19)

Of course, desires are also good and right should we direct our desires on the Lord!

We must desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

We must desire the Lord's protection in all instances.

But it is not those kinds of desire the Lord is referring to in the tenth commandment.

- The kinds of desire He prohibits are those desires going against the honour and glory of the Lord.
- It is a lust after things not granted to you by the Lord.

From us, this commandment thus demands a specific reorientation of our sinful way of thinking and doing.

- The complete law – but specifically this commandment – demands a life of conversion.
- Should you not seriously heed this commandment, you will be entangled in sin.

There is no such thing in existence as a holy and redeemed person not committing any sin.

Consider what is revealed about all the holy people:

- Isaiah called himself impure.
- Noah drank himself into intoxication.
- David went around with a penance garment
- Lot committed incest.
- Jacob became despondent and grabbed the blessing of the Lord before due time.
- Moses lost his temper when he had to remain benign.
- Peter denied the Lord Jesus

We would be able to extend this list.

The point is that we all remain sinners until death. We have to confess with shame that until the last day we are imperfect.

Should the Lord not heed us we would sink deeper into the wrong things we desire.

- The Lord's law is thus His perfect demand – even though our adherence to it is always imperfect.
- Therefore the Lord uses His law as a mirror in which we may see ourselves as we are.

Why do I have to see myself in my sin?

- Because this image brings me to a point where I am able to confess my sin to the Lord.
- The law also teaches me how I would like to be – how I thus want to look like if I am a converted human serving the Lord in obedience.
- This broken image I see of myself brings me to praying, seeking redemption by the Lord.

A person reaching this point discovers a thirst for redemption in him.

A desire develops in me causing me to try and strive towards perfection.

- On it's own this drives me towards the Lord Jesus.
- Through His virtue the Holy Spirit brings the understanding and will to do good into me.
- His Spirit causes the desire to serve the Lord, as He wants it.
- His Spirit consoles me when, through wrong desires, I am led astray from the Lord –
 - on the one hand with conversion and return to the goodness,
 - but also with the deep realization of the mercy of the Lord, forgiving me my sins.

Let us read together in the Heidelberg Catechism, Sunday 44, what we confess about this:

Q. 113.

What does the tenth commandment require of us?

A.

That even the smallest inclination or thought, contrary to any of God's commandments, never rise in our hearts; but that at all times we hate all sin with our whole heart, and delight in all righteousness. (a)

(a)

Rom.7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

Q. 114.

But can those who are converted to God perfectly keep these commandments?

A.

No: but even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience;(a)

yet so, that with a sincere resolution they begin to live, not only according to some, but all the commandments of God. (b)

(a)

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Rom.7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Rom.7:15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

Eccl.7:20 For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

1 Cor.13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

(b)

Rom.7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

Ps.1:2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

James 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

Q. 115.

Why will God then have the ten commandments so strictly preached, since no man in this life can keep them?

A.

First, that all our lifetime we may learn more and more to know (a)

our sinful nature, and thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sin, and righteousness in Christ; (b)

likewise, that we constantly endeavour and pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may become more and more conformable to the image of God, till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us, in a life to come. (c)

(a)

Rom.3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Ps.32:5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

(b)

Matt.5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Rom.7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Rom.7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

(c)

1 Cor.9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

Philip.3:11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Philip.3:12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Philip.3:13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

Philip.3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Closing prayer

Closing hymn: Psalm 73:10, 12

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen.

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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Scripture Modern King James Version