

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2014 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 4:1; Psalm 8:2, 16:2

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 84:1

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 34:6

Scripture reading: Galatians 5

Scripture text: Galatians 5:16; Catechism Sunday 44 (Tenth Commandment)

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.
(Galatians 5:16)

This is all about the word **desire**. And about all the sins that are linked to this word. In essence this word surely has a positive meaning: man desires to know God, and we desire true faith and we desire eternal life.

- But the devil instilled this attribute, namely desire, in us in such a way that much more emphasis is placed on the negative side of life than on the positive side of it.
- Desire in itself became sin in many respects. Therefore our Scripture text says that physical desires are the direct opposite of a life in the Holy Spirit.

Paul's reasoning, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is in fact very logical and easy to understand, because one cannot transgress any commandment without first desiring to do so.

- Man will only break the Sabbath once he has desired not to keep the day of the Lord.
- Similarly, one will first revolt against authority before openly rebelling against it.

- Each commandment fits into this scheme Negative desires accompany sins.

These two poles are clear, exactly according to the Scriptures in the passage we are discussing:

- On the one hand we have things that are right - those driven and supported by the work of the Holy Spirit.
- On the other hand there are things that are evil (sins) - also known as things of the flesh - which are driven by our desires.

Look at the passage we've read - from verse 19:

- Here we find a lengthy list of sins - all driven by desires of the flesh.
- These sins in verse 19 are all related to passion - lust, to put it strongly.
 - These sins all relate to physical love driven by evil desires.

Verse 20 mentions two things reflecting evil desires in worship, namely:

- idolatry and
- sorcery

These are followed by a long list of sins driven by a desire against other people:

- hostility,
- quarrelling and
- even murder.

But at the end of the list we also find drunkenness and carousing.

- Apart from drinking too much, carousing also suggests overeating
- There are, in other words, also evil desires regarding our own bodies.
- The desire to abuse the good we receive.

It is not generally accepted among us that this list of sins all relate to the sin of desire.

- This is however what the introduction to this passage of the Scriptures says.
- The Bible itself links these sins to the tenth commandment.

So far this matter has been clear and understandable. We should let the Holy Spirit guide us so that He can teach us not to desire evil things but rather desire what is right and good.

There are certain things we should desire.

Verse 22:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness
(Galatians 5:22)

Note the contrast. The last part of verse 21:

...of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Lord puts it very strongly because, on the one hand, He wants us to turn away from evil desires and, on the other hand, He also wants to frighten us not to nurture these desires.

Also read Galatians 6:7, 8.

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

(Galatians 6:7-8)

We cannot expect anybody to repent entirely, or to live without ever committing sins, because not even the holiest among us can ever achieve it. In essence it means that we should be eager to live according to all the commandments of the Lord.

In connection with this let's read 1 John 1:8 that says the following:

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

(1John 1:8)

- Consider the entire passage in Romans 7 which is about Paul who says that he really wants to keep the Lord's commandments, and this is how he has come to know about the struggle within him between his own desires and those of the Holy Spirit.
- In the same passage he also tells why the Lord does not take away the Ten Commandments.
 - They have to stay:
 - to teach us about our own sinful nature,
 - but, at the same time, to teach us to seek our salvation through Christ.

Just remember:

- Through his death Jesus Christ saved us from hell, and therefore also from the power of evil desires.
- And then He also sent us his Holy Spirit to govern us and guide us with Divine wisdom, thereby enabling us not only to fight against the evil desires within us but also to triumph over them.

Let's look at Catechism Lord's Day 44 for a summary of this sermon.

Sunday 44

113. Q. What does the tenth commandment require of us?

A. That not even the slightest thought or desire contrary to any of God's commandments should ever arise in our heart. Rather, we should always hate all sin with all our heart, and delight in all righteousness.[1]

[1] Ps. 19:7-14; 139:23, 24; Rom. 7:7, 8.

114. Q. But can those converted to God keep these commandments perfectly?

A. No. In this life even the holiest have only a small beginning of this obedience.[1] Nevertheless, with earnest purpose they do begin to live not only according to some but to all the commandments of God.[2]

[1] Eccles. 7:20; Rom. 7:14, 15; I Cor. 13:9; I John 1:8. [2] Ps. 1:1, 2; Rom. 7:22-25; Phil. 3:12-16.

115. Q. If in this life no one can keep the ten commandments perfectly, why does God have them preached so strictly?

A. First, that throughout our life we may more and more become aware of our sinful nature, and therefore seek more eagerly the forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ.[1] Second, that we may be zealous for good deeds and constantly pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that He may more and more renew us after God's image, until after this life we reach the goal of perfection.[2]

[1] Ps. 32:5; Rom. 3:19-26; 7:7, 24, 25; I John 1:9. [2] I Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:12-14; I John 3:1-3.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: Psalm 73:11

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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