

# REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 27 JANUARY 2013 EVENING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 25:3

*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 103:1, 2

**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**

Scripture Versification 10-2:1

**Scripture reading:** Ephesians 6

**Scripture text:** Ephesians 6:18 and Catechism Sunday 46

**Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...**  
(Ephesians 6:18)

Here the Lord touches upon a very sensitive matter: our life of prayer.

- As it is written here it is clear that the Lord supposes that praying must be the part of your faith-life that practically should be exercised the most.
- Our prayers are the most important part of our life of thankfulness. Thereby we thank and praise our Almighty God continually for His grace, love and care over us. Pray in the Spirit. Pray at every occasion.
- Therefore it is written in 1 Thessalonians 5:17: Pray without ceasing.

In this sermon we consider two matters.

1. **THE DISPOSITION OF PARTAKERS TO A PUBLIC PRAYER.**
2. **MY DISPOSITION WHEN I PRAY ALONE OR IN AN INNER CIRCLE OF PEOPLE.**

We mainly have two kinds of prayers.

- The one is the prayer in our bedroom. This is where we, whilst alone, bring our worries and needs to God.
- The other prayer is the public prayer. That is to pray in public for a specific event.

## 1. THE DISPOSITION OF PARTAKERS TO A PUBLIC PRAYER.

Matthew 7:7, 8; Luke 11:9 teaches us by the following words:

- **Ask, and it will be given to you;**
- **seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**
- **For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

To seek and knock indeed depicts the movement there is with us to eventually reach the right address: We belong in the house of God, therefore we must enquire after the road thereto – seek – and when we arrive there, knock, because we belong in the eternal dwelling of the Father. Jesus left here with the promise that that is the place He would be readying for us.

Thus it has to be that this part of our worship, namely to pray, in practice is exercised the most. And still it is true that this part of our life of faith is neglected the most of all. There are people who very seldom pray.

There are various reasons for people not praying.

- One reason is as children their parents never taught them to pray. They did not learn that it is part of their lives and they also do not know what for or how you should pray. Therefor they also do not pray as adults.
- Another reason is lack of faith. Some people, because they do not believe in the Lord, do not pray.
- Other people often because they are just too lazy to worship and together with that are too lazy to pray.
- The result is that such people get too little exercise in faith and due to that often lack trust in the Lord!

Now you must note how sinful we are. We all hesitate when having to pray in public.

- When we pray in public we are often more worried about that criticism the public might have on our prayers than about our **relationship with the Lord.**
- Our first reason for hesitation when we pray should be the fact that we are entering into conversation with the Lord, not our fear about the comments of others on my prayer.
- The fact is that none of us can pray a perfect prayer because we all are sinners.

Have you reflected on what the purpose of a public prayer is, as I do in the name of everybody at the start and end of every service?

- The purpose is that the specific group gathered together gets one person to, in their name, enter into conversation with the Lord.

- In their minds they follow the person praying word by word. They concur – although silently – to each word spoken to God: the praise, thanks and supplications.

When somebody thus leads others in prayer the entire group must realize in the first place that, through the person praying, they are in communication to God.

- Then they must immediately focus their attention and thoughts onto God.
- And should there be somebody present listening with the purpose of criticizing, then there is something amiss with his disposition and even possibly with his faith.

Of course any true believer would hesitate when praying, because he realizes that he is facing the eternal God.

- It is one thing telling another what we think and feel, but it is a completely different matter telling it to God.
- The Lord indeed told Moses that nobody could see Him and remain living.
- And when we pray we stand in the spirit in His throne-hall facing His throne. Therefore the command in the verse of text: Pray in the Spirit!

It is not impossible praying in the spirit. You attain this ability as one of the grants of grace the Lord Jesus lets us have due to His redemption on the cross. After the crucifixion the Holy Spirit was sent back to lead and console us. He also guides our minds when we pray.

- **But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.**  
(James 1:6)

After Jesus overcame death He departed to heaven. And because He no longer is here with His body to lead and protect His church He made provision in another way. He had His Holy Spirit descend over the church.

In a certain sense the Holy Spirit rounds off the work of the Lord Jesus. On earth the Holy Spirit guides us in prayer and at the same time Jesus also prays at the right-hand of the Father. Jesus is now our Intercessor and mediator to the Father.

Brothers and sisters, pray at every occasion. Pray through the Spirit. Remember that every prayer is a direct conversation and connection between God and us. Our prayers bring us very close to God.

## **2. MY DISPOSITION WHEN I PRAY ALONE OR IN AN INNER CIRCLE OF PEOPLE.**

Every prayer is a moment of truth. Nobody can lie to the face of the Lord. Therefore in our prayers we must be honest and also truly confess our sins. The Lord Jesus Christ said this very straight and certain:

**22 "You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.**

**23 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.**

**24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."**

(John 4:22-24)

That also was not such a new idea. In the Old Testament the people of the church already sang:

**The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.**  
(Psalm 145:18)

On this point the prayer we pray in our bedroom is more difficult than praying in public,

- Because in a bedroom-prayer we must personally confess by the name our wrong deeds to God.
- We cannot plea for mercy without first, with sorrow, confessing to God what we did wrong.

Look at the first differences between the public and the bedroom prayer:

- In the public we pray about a matter it deals with and then in general for forgiveness and mercy.
- In my bedroom I do not pray in general-
  - I implore God for mercy to help me in specific levels to overcome sin.
  - And I beg for specific matters I have done wrong: Lord, forgive me!

What coincides with both types of prayers is that the Lord couples His hearing of such a prayer to the fact that the contents of our prayer must be within the rules of his revelation:

- Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, **that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.** (1John 5:14)
- We must thus pray what the Lord wants to be done. His interest leads the matters I ask from Him.

The part we preach from furthermore bears the command that we must pray continually. This means that we must live praying.

- We must pray every moment: where I prepare food, while you drive the car and where we work at our desks.
- Then added to that we also have fixed times of prayer like at the table prior to and after eating, and before going to bed as well as when we arise.

We must live every moment together with God.

- The true prayer is a person realizing that he every moment has with him the God of heaven and earth and that he must and can go with this God every moment.
- An example of such a man in the Bible is Enoch (Genesis 5) The Bible teaches that he walked with God. He, as it is written in our verse of text, lived praying.

The prayer of course has traffic to two directions.

- To the one side we tune ourselves into the working of the Holy Spirit.
- But to the other side we open ourselves for dictation of God into our hearts by the Holy Spirit living in us.

This is why Paul writes that the requirement for a true prayer is that we have to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

- Every prayer we pray is indeed the Spirit of God guiding and telling us what to say!
- Therefore the true prayer is honest and the repent confessed therein becomes true and is the supplication stripped of haughtiness.

Here in Ephesians 6: 17 and 18 the prayer is tied to the Word of God. The prayer is not only a means to thank, it also goes together with the sword of God which we use to fight our enemies. And to be able to do that, this the Bible teaches here, we must have a decent knowledge of the Word of God. That means personal and solid relationship with God the Almighty.

It thus does not deal with whether our prayer is long or short. It does not deal with whether we can pray beautifully. It deals with it that our prayer must be holy and true. When we pray through the Holy Spirit then our prayer is pleasing to the Father.

Romans 8:26, 27 read as follows:

**Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.**

The consolation we have in our prayers is that intercessors work of the Lord Jesus has resulted that He now through His Spirit lives in us. The Bible also teaches us that the Lord Jesus died for our sins. But that is not all: He also died for our prayers.

Come, let us together read Catechism Sunday 45.

#### **Q. 116.**

**Why is prayer necessary for Christians?**

**A.**

Because it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us: (a) and also, because God will give his grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of him, and are thankful for them. (b)

(a)

Ps.50:14 Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:

Ps.50:15 And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

(b)

Matt.7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

Matt.7:8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Luke 11:9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

Luke 11:10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Luke 11:13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

1 Thess.5:17 Pray without ceasing.

**Q. 117.**

**What are the requisites of that prayer, which is acceptable to God, and which he will hear?**

**A.**

First, that we from the heart pray (a)  
to the one true God only, who has manifested himself in his word, (b)  
for all things, he has commanded us to ask of him; (c)  
secondly, that we rightly and thoroughly know our need and misery, (d)  
that so we may deeply humble ourselves in the presence of his divine majesty; (e)  
thirdly, that we be fully persuaded that he, notwithstanding that we are unworthy of it,  
will, for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly hear our prayer, (f)  
as he has promised us in his word. (g)

(a)

John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Ps.145:18 The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

(b)

Rev.19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me , See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

John 4:22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

John 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

(c)

Rom.8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

1 John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

(d)

2 Chron.20:12 O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.

(e)

Ps.2:11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Ps.34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD

delivereth him out of them all. Isa.66:2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

(f)

Rom.10:14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

James 1:6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

(g)

John 14:13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

John 14:14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

John 16:23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

Dan.9:17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.

Dan.9:18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

(h)

Matt.7:8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Ps.27:8 When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

### **Q. 118.**

**What has God commanded us to ask of him?**

**A.**

All things necessary for soul and body; (a)

which Christ our Lord has comprised in that prayer he himself has taught us.

(a)

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Matt.6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

### **Q. 119.**

**What are the words of that prayer? (a)**

**A.**

Our Father which art in heaven,

1 Hallowed be thy name.

2 Thy kingdom come.

3 Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

4 Give us this day our daily bread.

5 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

6 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.

Amen.

(a)

Matt.6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Matt.6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Matt.6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

Matt.6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Matt.6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Luke 11:2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

Luke 11:3 Give us day by day our daily bread.

Luke 11:4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm 61:1, 4, 12

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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