

## REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2014 EVENING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 122:2

*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: Scripture Versification 10-1:1

**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 119:44

**Scripture reading:** Luke 11

**Scripture text:** Luke 11:9-13: Catechism Sunday 45

**9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**

**10 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

**11 "If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?**

**12 "Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?**

**13 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"**

(Luke 11:9-13)

The Lord does not need our puny words of prayer for Him to be God – but we need His grace in order to be His children and to be able to live!

In this sermon we consider two important aspects of our life of prayer:

1. **God demands of us that we pray.**
2. **For Christians prayer is essential.**

1. **God demands of us that we pray.**

These words of the Lord Jesus are important. Listen again to what exactly He says:

**Ask (pray) ... seek ... knock ... and the door will be opened. For:**

- *everyone who asks, receives;*
- *he who seeks, finds;*
- *and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*

These words are not a repetition of the same matter.

The Lord tells us how the life of a true believer functions in practice.

The basis of our life is prayer.

- We pray for the answering of our prayers.
- We pray for mercy when we are in need.
- Our prayers praise the glory of God,
- But in our prayers we also pray for the guidance of God the Holy Spirit.

The Lord will not reject prayers that we offer in true faith and sincerity.

- He answers our prayers because He loves us and because we are his children.
- But this does not mean that we do not have a duty to fulfil.

That is why the next step is to **seek**.

The Lord did not say that we shall seek Him in vain.

- Seeking means the zeal with which every true believer prayerfully examines the Word of God in order to find knowledge.
- Seeking means to examine and test the life around us against the yardstick of God's Word.

The next word is **knock**:

- With this image the Lord explains to His audience that a time will come in one's life when one shall know that one wants to be part of the Kingdom of God.
- This does not mean that one has a choice whether to enter or not.
- It means that will understand one's calling and will join in where the Lord wants one to be.

In Acts 10 we find a practical example of this. Cornelius prayed. An angel then appeared to him who told him to send for Simon Peter. He then sent two of his servants and a soldier to look for Peter. When Peter arrived at Cornelius' house the process of seeking and knocking continues:

**29 ...“May I ask why you sent for me?**

**30 So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,**

**31 "and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God.**

**32 'Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.'**

**33 "So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."**

(Acts 10:29-33)

The answer comes when Peter says that he now realizes that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear Him. He then preaches the gospel of salvation to them.

The event that was initiated by a prayer is then completed:

- These Gentiles also belong with the Lord.
- They too receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- They too are baptized and taken up into the church of the Lord.

And now? Now these people too could thank God for His mercy. Prayer is the most important part of our gratitude.

The narrative of Cornelius and his household emphasizes one aspect of our prayer very strongly:

- Our prayer may never be only words.
- It must be a surrender of my heart and a moving of it towards God.

## **2. For Christians prayer is essential.**

We only need to look at what the Bible reveals to us about the life of prayer of people who lived close to God.

- Each time Abraham came to a place, the first thing he did was to build an altar. A place of prayer.
- Daniel knew that by doing so he put his life at stake, nevertheless he prayed! He would rather die than sacrifice his personal communion with God in prayer.

Every true believer knows that we are dependent on God for everything we are and have.

- That includes both our physical and spiritual life;
  - there can be no blessing of our physical life
  - and no spiritual God-fearing life.

God the Holy Spirit causes a Christian to know that his entire life is created by his redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ.

**For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.**

(Colossians 3:3)

Furthermore our daily need requires us to pray and supplicate – sometimes persevering for years about something the Lord has put in our way.

What kind of needs do we have?

- We must pray for mercy so that God may forgive us all our terrible sins,
- In these modern times we live in we have an immeasurable need that God the Holy Spirit may help us to believe! So many things make our faith in God ridiculous – supported by all kinds of evidence!
- We have the need to continue hoping for the Second Coming and the re-creation and our entry into the everlasting life – and that this entry will be with our entire re-created being.
- We have the need to be freed from anxiety and fear. Our whole life is threatened:
  - Our safety is threatened
  - Our position at work is threatened.
  - Drugs, liquor and much more threaten our children and us.
- We have a great need for enduring peace.

We, who all are the elect, have a deep need for the dwelling in us of God the Holy Spirit.

- We have that need because we know our need for holiness.
- We know how unworthy and imperfect we are!
- In our spiritual life we are in trouble because we often do not know how to distinguish the things that matter to God.

In our world people are proud and egoistic – into this world the Lord sends us to be humble and servants. Our faith clamours against this world.

That is why we must exploit this gift of grace – to be allowed to and to be compelled to pray.

- Because of the propitiating merit of our Lord Jesus Christ we have direct access to God and His throne.
- The proof thereof is the curtain that was torn as a symbolic and public guarantee of this freedom.

Prayer is our complete communion with the Lord.

- We must pray at all times. We must be in conversation with God at every moment we have.
- Remember what the prophet Jeremiah prayed:
- **Pour out Your fury on the Gentiles, who do not know You, And on the families who do not call on Your name;**  
(Jeremiah 10:25)

Let us read what the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's day 45) tells us about prayer.

Sunday 45

116. Q. Why is prayer necessary for Christians?

A. Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness which God requires of us.[1] Moreover, God will give His grace and the Holy Spirit only to those who constantly and with heartfelt longing ask Him for these gifts and thank Him for them.[2]

[1] Ps. 50:14, 15; 116:12-19; I Thess. 5:16-18. [2] Matt. 7:7, 8; Luke 11:9-13.

117. Q. What belongs to a prayer which pleases God and is heard by Him?

A. First, we must from the heart call upon the one true God only, who has revealed Himself in His Word, for all that He has commanded us to pray.[1] Second, we must thoroughly know our need and misery, so that we may humble ourselves before God.[2] Third, we must rest on this firm foundation that, although we do not deserve it, God will certainly hear our prayer for the sake of Christ our Lord, as He has promised us in His Word.[3]

[1] Ps. 145:18-20; John 4:22-24; Rom. 8:26, 27; James 1:5; I John 5:14, 15; Rev. 19:10. [2] II Chron. 7:14; 20:12; Ps. 2:11; 34:18; 62:8; Is. 66:2; Rev. 4. [3] Dan. 9:17-19; Matt. 7:8; John 14:13, 14; 16:23; Rom. 10:13; James 1:6.

118. Q. What has God commanded us to ask of Him?

A. All the things we need for body and soul,[1] as included in the prayer which Christ our Lord Himself taught us.

[1] Matt. 6:33; James 1:17.

119. Q. What is the Lord's prayer? – This will be our closing prayer for the day.

[1] Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Scripture Versification 14-3:4

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  
 16 February 2014  
 Scripture Modern King James Version