

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2013 DAY OF THE COVENANT SERVICE

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: 146:1, 8

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 38:1, 17

Scripture reading: Deuteronomy 6

Scripture text: Deuteronomy 6:6,7 and 20,21

6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

7 "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

20 "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God has commanded you?'

21 "then you shall say to your son: 'We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand;

(Deuteronomy 6:6,7 and 20,21)

Time is running out The arrival of the Lord is near. Our entire world is political and also chaotic and filled with miseries. What should we do and how must we proceed forward?

- Let us be ready to believe under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to testify for the Lord against all resistance – even against the hatred of the world.
- Come let us submit with patience and joy into a full life into Christ.
- And we also teach our children this faith and conviction of life.

There are this morning two very important issues in this passage we attend to:

1. **The Lord binds the adult believer to absolute obedience.**
2. **The Lord extends this command through the parents towards our children.**

1. **The Lord binds the adult believer to absolute obedience.**

This chapter starts by gathering all the Lord's commands together in one unit and then to determine the relationship between the believers and this total law.

- The purpose of the law of the Lord is to teach all His children.
- From this teaching process two matters must emerge.
 - The first is that they must be able to live this law their entire lives.
 - The second is they must fear the Lord.

What is very important about this learning and also about the following of the law is that the parents must see to it that their children and grandchildren follow and learn the law of the Lord.

- From the start the Lord thus makes it very clear that all generations are bound to Him by the covenant and that parents from generation to generation remain bound to this covenant.
- This same principle of parents remaining responsible for the education of their descendants we also find in Exodus 20:5 and 34:7.
- In both passages the punishment by the Lord is ensured over three to four generations should the parents transgress against the Lord by all sorts of sins.

Consider the very sharp command written for every believer in Deuteronomy 6:3:

"Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it..."

The words **be careful to observe it** cause a bit of uncertainty. Is it not something we so easily forget or even not give enough attention to? The Jews well understood the Lord's severity about this matter and tried devising a practical plan how to remember and follow the law.

They did it as follows: They joined Deuteronomy 6:4 and chapter 11:13-31 and Numbers 15:41 into one passage.

- Every morning every adult Jewish male had to recite this passage from memory.
- They considered this as a confession very important to them.

The content of this confession is that the Lord is God of Israel.

- With them there may not have been the slightest doubt that only the Lord, and Him alone, must be honored and served.
- There is no other God than Him in existence.

The personal closeness of the Lord also comes to the foreground by the fact that in verse 4 He is called **our God** and in verse 5 **your God**. This goes together with the demand to every person:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

(Matthew 22:37)

The meaning of this passage is that there is no way of the Lord tolerating you sharing your love for Him with anybody or anything else.

- He alone is the God of Israel, the God of the Church.
- The love by the believer for Him must come out in the fact that the commands given by the Lord are in the hearts of every person.
- This means that there must be zeal in every person giving effect to these commands of the Lord.

It must be revealed on every tier of the life of everybody that you do everything the Lord expects from you. It is very important to make sure that here faith is not an individual matter, but a matter of total life submission.

After the Lord made it very clear that He expects total submission of life from every adult believer, the Lord goes further and issues a command that every believer must see to it that exactly this faith orientation occurs with all his children.

"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Here the Lord places a large responsibility onto every parent because he must see to it that his children are brought up literary in every way into the fear of the Lord. Listen again to the terrain of education as described by the Lord:

When you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

You must thus always and everywhere teach them obedience to the Lord. The question arises: Do we do it?

We read at more than one place in the Bible about this training in faith the parents are to give to their children. Another place where it is recorded in the Bible is in Exodus 12:23.

- In that passage it deals with the meaning of the sacraments. The parents must teach their children the grace and judgement of the Lord regarding the Passover, and
- Especially that the children bowed in worship to the Lord when He did not kill their eldest children like the children of the Egyptians were killed.

In Deuteronomy 6:8 and 9 it is written that they should tie it as a token of remembrance to their hands and that it should be a mark on their foreheads.

- They also had to write it on their doorposts and on their city gates.
- It is also written on Deuteronomy 11:19, 21.

The people took it up literary.

- They tied pieces of parchment containing a specific text to their hands.

- They also tied bands to their heads with a specific text right in the center. They called it a prayer band.
- Further they nailed a holder like a quiver to the doorposts and city gates and placed an entire roll of parchment containing a Book of the Bible therein.

This was to always remind them that they can do nothing in life without the Lord being present with them and then these prayer bands and rolls of parchment should remind them at all times to remain obedient to the Lord.

- This shows how important the people regarded this command of the Lord.
- For us it is important to know that they regarded it as such because they, when these commandments were given, were closer to the Lord than we are today.

Even more important because in our times it has come to pass that there are many people no longer serving the Lord.

- Therefore their children also know nothing about the Lord except the fact that they hear the name of the Lord from others and learn a little bit of the Bible in Bible classes.
- Even in the churches there are members whose faith-life and especially the teaching of faith to their children is poorly complied with.

In many instances it happens because people (families) lost their deep connection to the Lord.

- They cannot understand that the entire life of man must start and end with the Lord.
- Many people experience religion as something extra instead of something of utmost necessity.
- Religion must be the departing point of your entire life: in your home, when you are on the road, when you go to bed and when you arise – the Lord says so.

2. The Lord extends this command through the parents towards our children.

Is it not so that we as parents often misjudge the faith training of our children, or consider it of not such great importance? Observe the words of the Lord to Abraham in Genesis 18:19:

"For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

(Genesis 18:19)

The following matters stand out: Abraham was chosen by the Lord to render covenant training. Do you realise that this is the way in which the Lord works?

- He also chose you as parents to the specific children He granted you.
- The predestination is thus not just a matter whether you are going to heaven or hell.
- It also deals with it that as chosen you receive specific tasks which are part of your predestination – and you must see this calling very well and sharp and diligently comply to it.

What is of further importance in the words to Abraham is that his predestination has relevance that he must keep his children onto the road of the Lord.

- In our times there are so many parents not knowing the road of the Lord any longer, what chance do they have to command their children (as the Lord commanded Abraham) to serve the Lord.
- There are at least two examples in the Bible where the Lord heavily punished poor upbringing of the children.
- Both times it also included the faith upbringing of the children.

In 2Kings 2:24 we read about one instance:

- A group of children (from the people of the covenant) followed Elisha and mocked him about the ascension of Elijah: "Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!"
- Elisha looked around at the children and cured them in the Name of the Lord.
- And two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths.

Everybody realized that it was the punishment of the Lord over the children and their mocking of the Lord.

In Nehemiah 13:24, 25 we read about the second event where the poor faith knowledge of children resulted in big problems.

- Nehemiah spoke to the children in the street.
- Then he realized that half of them spoke the language of Ashdod or another alien language.

Nehemiah immediately realized the consequences thereof. If these children could not speak Jewish then they also did not know the Bible. Therefore he attacked their parents.

In the Bible it is written:

24 And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people.

25 So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves.

(Nehemiah 13:24, 25)

- The Lord is very serious about the parents and children leaving the road of faith and then land into unbelief or even just poor worship.
- In the instances we read about the Lord did not hesitate to administer corporal or death punishment to such people.
- Where do the parents of our community stand?

It is the Day of the Covenant. That is why we are gathered here.

- Our predecessors entered into a covenant with the living God. They trusted Him and He honored the agreement.

- Those of us gathered here – and still understand the Covenant and know the God of the Covenant – will truly by our total lives have to bear and carry witness to our descendants so that they at least, in the hereafter, can share the kingdom of God with the other true believers.

The book Revelation 11 teaches us that there will be less and less people knowing and serving the Lord – so badly that eventually all will work together with the anti-Christ to destroy the entire church of the Lord. It even seems like they will manage it:

7 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

9 Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.

10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

(Revelation 11: 7 – 10)

Note that it is also our descendants that the Lord is talking about here! Our education must try and distance our descendants from this!

The Lord Jesus Himself once made a statement about the religious children.

- He said that anybody who causes a child to stumble must be punished by death.
- The exact words of the Lord were:
"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.
 (Mark 9:42)

These are very sharp words. How many of our parents bring their children to stumble by raising them without a past or a future?

- When somebody does not know from where he/she came and where he/she is going to they lose all what they are and have because they do not know what belongs to them and what reason they live for.
- I put this question in all sincerity because I have seen through the window some Sunday mornings children moving outside after being dropped off for catechization by their parents – this whilst they and their parents were not present during the worship service. Do such parents have a case with the Lord? Even more, do those children have a future on earth or in heaven – because they have seen nothing about it from their parents!

We should also perhaps consider our preparedness to offer up. What do our children learn about our relationship with the Lord – the matters we convey to them without us saying a word about it?

- When the children partake in athletics or rugby we would cancel and re-organize all our appointments to be able to sit for an entire day in the warm sun and be a spectator.
- We will stay awake till late at night if our children partake in a choir somewhere.
- That is all in order. We must do so. But then we must be prepared to offer it and much more up towards the schooling in faith of my child because he/she will be for a much longer time with the Lord than they would be on earth.
- Can everybody in our vicinity daily see that we live for the God with whom we have entered into this Covenant?

Should you now consider where we have started off with this sermon you would realize the severity of this entire matter.

- The God with whom our predecessors entered into this covenant of worship asks from us as believers absolute obedience.
- He asks for our entire lives. He does not only ask for Sundays, He asks for our lives when we sit at home and when we are on the road and when we go to bed and when we arise.
- Together therewith He says that we must transfer the same life and faith qualities upon our children.

The time is running out. The arrival of the Lord is imminent.

- Let us be ready to, under guidance of the Holy Spirit, believe and testify for the Lord against all resistance – even against the hatred of the world.
- Come let us give ourselves with patience and with joy over in a total life to the Lord.
- And also teach our children this faith and this conviction of life.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 145:1, 3

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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