

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2014 FAREWELL SERVICE REV. DU PLESSIS

Sing before: Psalm 146:1, 8

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: 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 90:8, 9

Scripture reading: Ephesians 5

Scripture text: Ephesians 5:18, 19

18 And do not take overmuch wine by which one may be overcome, but be full of the Spirit;

19 Joining with one another in holy songs of praise and of the Spirit, using your voice in songs and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

(Ephesians 5:18-19)

Why do we gather in public worship and why do we sing when we worship? What do we sing of? The Bible commences this issue with what we were before the Lord Jesus saved us.

- Then we did not have the proper knowledge of God, we did not know His Holiness and of the salvation in Christ we knew nothing and therefore we were not part of it.

A person who does not share in the bliss of Christ lives in sin and lacks not only the eternal beatitude but also the expectation thereof.

1. **Relationship with the Lord in your life.**
2. **Relationship with the Lord in public worship.**

1. Relationship with the Lord in your life

The Bible calls these things the earlier period in the life of the faithful. The Bible also calls it the dark period.

Then there is the contrast.

Something happened to us! Here it is called the "now" and the "light". The "now" is something different. It is the time of "light". Very special. It is the light of the Lord that shines upon us.

In Greek it is written: "**You must now walk as children of light.**"

- It does not say in so many words that it is the Lord's light but it is clear from the whole text that the darkness comes from hell and that the light is in direct contrast to it.
- Accordingly the meaning can only be that the light comes from the Lord.

In the modern translation the word "walk" is translated with "live".

- At first glance it appears to be a big difference, but this is not so because the Greek word means "**to walk about within fixed limits**".
- That is to show in your life the things you do when you are within the light of the Lord that shines on you. We call that "living".

The question is: What does it mean that the light of the Lord shines on me?

- It means that you are freed from your sin.
 - In other words: it means that you are freed from the curse and the wrath of the Lord over all the wrongdoing in your life.
- It means that the Lord has made you new in your entire existence, because now you are clean.
 - The dirt of sin that clung to you has been washed away by the blood of Christ and now the light of the Lord shines on you.

The shining of the light of the Lord has a particular effect on you.

- You have now been enriched with the true and certain hope that the Lord will take you into His eternal Kingdom.
- There the perfect and eternal bliss of God will shine on us like the sun.

As from verse 9 the Lord tells us how we must conduct ourselves if we wish to show the Lord as well as people that we now live in His light.

- This verse in Greek says the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth.
- In some translations it is said that it is the fruit of the "Spirit" instead of "light" – that is so because in a number of manuscripts the word Spirit is used instead of light.

It does not really make any difference, which is correct, because both say the same, both say that a true believer conducts himself in a certain manner.

- Where the word "light" is used the meaning is that the true believers will live in the light of the salvation which God has brought to us in Christ.
- Where the word "Spirit" is used it means that the Holy Spirit causes these fruits in the life of the true believer.
- When we remember that Jesus Christ as well as the Holy Spirit are God both readings tell us that we shall under the light and guidance of the Lord be obedient to Him.

An important issue is stated here. With this passage in the Bible the Lord draws the true believer's attention to how he must live.

- One often talks of principles and then forgets how these principles are to be put in practise. That is what this passage is about.
- It is written here that one should always ask oneself whether what one is doing is pleasing to the Lord.
 - This is not a flippant consideration, to be taken lightly. **"Find out what pleases God"**. (Ephesians 5:10)

This means that the true believer must carefully consider what pleases the Lord and what not.

- The meaning of this verse is that one must have some yardstick, namely the Word of God, with which to test each situation.
- You cannot ask the world what pleases the Lord. This you must ask the Lord.
- Hence you must go to the Bible and see there what the Lord reveals and then act accordingly.

This is not difficult because in the Bible the Lord describes many occurrences and how He expects us to act in them.

Verse 11 tells us that we may not have anything to do with the fruitless deeds of the people of darkness.

- Clearly Paul refers to the sinful deeds done by the unbelievers.
- Two matters are important:
 - One is that the Lord tells us not to live in that way.
 - The other is that the Lord tells us that the deeds of these people bear no fruit.
- They are fruitless – which means they lead to death.
- There is not eternal life afterwards.

Note the reference to the devil – he is the lord of darkness.

- Those with the fruitless deeds are children of darkness.
- Hence verse 11 ends with the words that the faithful should expose such deeds.

One would think that it is unfriendly to deal so harshly with sinful people. But that is not the case. In verse 14 a song sung in the early days of the New Testament is recorded:

**"Wake up O sleeper
rise from the dead
and Christ will shine on you"**

The Christians experienced so much happiness in their life with Christ that they sang of it.

- They sang to the unbelievers to wake up from their sleep of death in sin and to rise to the light of eternal joy that Jesus Christ gives.
- It is a positive approach.
 - Not a stressful atmosphere in which you tell the sinner that you leave him because he is so bad.
 - You run over with joy and are relaxed because you are with the Lord and you sing to him to repent so that he may have what you have!

2. Relationship with the Lord in public worship

Verse 18 begins with the order that true believers should not get drunk on wine.

- Here there is a practical rule because the pagans abused liquor during their pagan rituals so that they could be in a delirious mood.
- The believer's passion differs from the drunkard's passion because it originates elsewhere.

The difference between the two is written here.

- The drunkard's passion is part of sinful debauchery.
- The believer's passion comes from and through God the Holy Spirit.
 - The Holy Spirit fills each moment of your human existence.
 - There are also times when the believers gather and then the Lord is particularly with them in His holiness. This is during public worship. Verses 18 and 19 refer to this.

In this passage and also in Colossians 3:16 the words "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" are used. Let us see what these words mean in other passages in the Bible."

- What strikes us immediately is that these words are used in Colossians 3:16 together with "teach" and "admonish".
- The songs must teach us of the Lord but also admonish us against sin.
- It concerns the building of the congregation.
 - In Greek a reciprocal action is described - speak and sing to each other.
 - The congregation must edify itself as the Body of Christ.

Two actions take place simultaneously when we sing in public worship – we glorify the Lord and we edify one another.

Three kinds of songs are mentioned which the congregation should sing to one another to the glory of God.

- The first are Psalms.
 - Meant are the Psalms of the Old Testament.
 - In Hebrew they are all poems set to music and were they all sung during public worship.
- The second group of hymns are not necessarily different from Psalms:
 - The word used means a song which expresses praise and thanksgiving to the Lord.

- With it part of the nature of public worship is indicated. It is an occasion when we come to praise and thank the Lord.

Happiness and joy should therefore shine from you – especially when together with your fellow believers you are in public worship to glorify and thank the Lord. The question is whether when we sing it shows that we are exulting before the Lord in praise and thanks for all the blessings He bestows on us.

Two elements should show in such a song.

- The first is to glorify – a song of praise.
 - This to exult in the glorious joy of God's praise.
- The second is to thank – a song of gratitude.
 - You pray as you sing and thank the Lord for all the blessings bestowed on you.
- Then there is a third kind not mentioned here and that is confession of guilt, a song of contrition. We sing a psalm of this kind after having heard the Law.

Let us examine ourselves. Do we truly have the wish to thank the Lord?

- We should reflect on this because we tend to become blasé and to accept everything the Lord gives as a matter of course.
- The issue here is that:
 - we are gathered joyfully to the glory of the Lord and this must show amongst others in our singing.
 - there must be fulfilment with the Holy Spirit through spiritual song directed at the Tri-Unity.

Then there are the spiritual songs.

- Such songs could mean war songs, feast songs or harvest songs.
 - The pagans sang such songs and therefore the Bible distinguishes here between the songs sung by them and the songs meant by the Lord.
 - The songs sung during public worship must be religious songs.
- Hence it is said that it must be a spiritual song.
- Its starting point is the Holy Spirit.

The church wages war on the powers of darkness.

- Obviously the victory is assured because the Leader is the Lord through His Word and Spirit. That is what this passage is about.
- Accordingly there are the fruits of the harvest. Fruits of faith produced by the repentant in their daily lives.

This word for song is also used in Revelation (5:9; 14:3; 15:3)

- Each time it speaks of joy
- Each time it is coupled with prayer
- And more importantly each time it deals with the Lamb - Jesus Christ.
 - And the people singing the songs are all people sharing in the victory of the Lamb – they are the Church of the Centuries.

- Their personal experience of the salvation is demonstrated in these songs. Hence these songs in Revelation are sung in the presence of the Almighty God.

Is something lacking in our congregation?

- If nothing is lacking we should joyfully gather in public worship and we must in praying and singing praise and thank the Lord.
- The singing of the congregation points to the Lord's last judgement – not to the Lord's wrath but to the victory of the church.

You are victors. You are the people for whom Christ died and to whom He gave new life. Think of the song, which is written in the passage we have read:

Are we awake in Christ, or are we sleeping in our sins. Remember together with Christ you have arisen from the death. And Christ lights your life.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who arose from the dead and is the eternal Victor, calls on us to make ourselves ready to celebrate Holy Communion with Him.

- When He instituted Holy Communion He did so with prayer and song. At the beginning He thanked God and like us He sang amongst others Psalms 116 and 118.
- The Lord Jesus Christ enlightens our lives by reassuring us of the forgiveness of sin and life eternal.

The truth of our relationship with Him will be revealed in our church attendance and our singing.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 118:1

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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