

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 7 APRIL 2013 MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 18:20

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 8:1, 4

Confession of faith: Apostolic

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hell, the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, a holy universal Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting

Amen.

After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 31:12

Law

Psalm: 31:12

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 33:1

Scripture reading: Ephesians 4

Scripture text: Ephesians 4:1-3

- 1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,**
2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,
3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
 (Ephesians 4:1-3)

The congregation of Ephesians contained heathens and Jews that became Christians. Due to an event the heathen-Christians started wondering whether they truly shared in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- They could just not rid themselves of their past.
- They did not stem from the long tradition with the covenant like the Jews and their families were mostly still convinced heathens.
- Where now do they exactly fit into the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Paul sends the sermon – the entire letter to the Ephesians – to them.

- In the first three chapters he writes about all the good deeds of the Lord Jesus – the salvation and the eternal life.
- From chapter 4 he writes to the heathens that they share in these matters.
- He writes that the congregation is the place of residence of God – and then the backdrop is that this congregation is made up out of heathens and Jews.

As text for the matters Paul writes about in chapter 4 he takes the history of the ark.

- David fetched the ark from Kirjath-jearim. The history is recorded in 2 Samuel 6.
- At that occasion David penned Psalm 68 wherein he sings about the almight and victory of God.
- Paul takes these portions of scripture and bases the portion we have read thereon. He also quotes verses from Psalm 68 and 2 Samuel 6.

The content of this part of his sermon is that the congregation of the Ephesians shares in the wealth of God's grace.

- But exactly therefore they have to be brought to the way of life that coincides with the grace they receive from God.
- This way of life now means their conduct in all the relationships they have and move in.
- We can rightly say that in this part there is a heavenly calling.

In verse 1 Paul calls himself a prisoner of the Lord.

- At the stage of writing this letter he is incarcerated in jail.
- He considers himself to be a prisoner because he fully exercises his communion with the Lord and lives out his faith in service to the Lord.

This is the meaning of “I, the prisoner”

- Here he uses his prisonership as an example to his readers.
- He has the right to chastise and reprimand because he knows what it is all about.
- All the things he writes about he has done because that is the reason why he is in jail.

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ...

It is such a great privilege to be known by God, especially as His property – as a person saved in Christ – that our lives must radiate it. Paul calls it: being worthy of...

Now consider the matter: we must lead a life worthy of the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- A life worthy of the highness of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- A life worthy of His glory and the glory He showers in us.
- A life that proves us rejoicing because God deemed us worthy to be called in His grace.

We must live in such a way that it is clear that we are already resurrected from the death of our sins.

- How do I now live such a life?
- It is not even easy to properly understand what grace we receive, how must we then also live worthy of it all?

Therefore the Holy Spirit, through the pen of Paul teaches us further:

- Live with every possible kind of humbleness.
- Be humble in your thoughts.

We live self raisingly.

- We do not want to be the least
- We also do not want to be humbled by others.
- We are painfully aware of all sorts of disgraces that can happen to man and we will brutally try avoiding it.

Now the Lord teaches that that is a life unworthy of His grace.

- He asks humility, appreciation and meekness. An exact appreciation of my own person.
- I must see myself in my weakness and flawedness.
- I must be aware of my mental shortcomings, the impurity of wishes and often of my sinful unworthiness to God.

Further the Bible names meekness and being slow to anger.

- Meekness is the ability of under all circumstances willingly obeying the guidance of the Lord.
- It also is, when people purposefully bother you, remaining calm and controlled.

Then you focus upon lovingness and friendliness and you avoid every form of rudeness and brutality.

- It is not just a matter of your natural disposition to be lovingly.
- It also is the grace working of the Holy Spirit.
- It matters how many times you listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and suppress your own will in obedience to the command of love and meekness by the Holy Spirit.

Here it thus deals with the soul-attributes present with Christians and what they must exercise.

- It is very easy for any person to be impatient.
- It is very easy giving up your steadfastness when under pressure.
- But here perseverance is especially asked from you – then you are worthy to what Christ gives you.

What would have happened should the Lord Jesus not have been meek, especially the evening prior to His death?

- Would he have entered death with such grace or would He have thereby become unworthy and tainted?
- Or what would have happened should the perseverance of the Lord Jesus have broken?

We do not even want to consider it.

- But therefore the calling to you and me is so much stronger:
- The lord Jesus Christ did all these things and we must live in such a way that we are worthy thereto.

We are now sanctified and we must bear this sanctification with the fitting worthiness.

- This is exactly why the last words of verse 2 says that we must bear each other with love
- There is no one without sin. Everybody have sin. Therefore we should know to have patience with a fellow Christian lacking somewhat.

Verse 3 calls for unity in the congregation.

- The congregation is the house of God. The temple where the arc has to stand – as David called it. And the arc is the symbol of the presence of God. The congregation together is the body of Christ and they must mirror it as such!

Unity in the congregation definitely does not mean that everybody is similar.

- Verse 7 puts it very clear that to all of us different grace and gifts are given.
- We must clearly distinguish where everyone fits in the congregation. Our gifts will determine it.
- We also obtain grace according to our gifts. As such it is written here.

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Each one of us is called to his own service.

- And everyone freely receives gifts without us earning it.
- Therefore again the calling of verse 1 on verse 7:

walk worthy of the calling with which you were called!

Verse 8 is a quotation from Psalm 68:19:

"When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."

This also refers to what David did the day he fetched the ark

- He then also gave gifts to the people in demonstrating his joy and the mercy of God.

Here the gifts from the Lord Jesus Christ are given to the congregation.

- But the congregation is qualified: they are prisoners taken prisoner.
- Now we are back at verse 1 where Paul already refers to himself as a prisoner.
- His argument has not developed so far that he proves to the congregation that they also are prisoners of God.

That brings us to the Christ-preaching of this part.

- We are caught up into sin. But when Christ dies He tears us from the ties with satan.
- The Lord Jesus now takes us as His prisoners. He makes us inhabitants of His kingdom.
- He hands us gifts to live worthy of Him in this life – partially for now, but some day to the fullest.

But now we must not misunderstand these matters.

- Here we are not dealing with a "Loving, tender and soft" dear Lord" cult
- It is the almighty God who destroyed the satan that now ascends to the heights.
- It is Him that is taking us prisoner.

In our prisonhood He equips us with gifts to His glory.

- Now we no longer confess a "loving Lord Jesus".
- The Lord Jesus is God who by force breaks open the hell over us – and by His almighty seals His grace over us.

He has already ascended to the Father from where He will come to judge.

- He is not coming again to render grace.
- This He has completed when He clothed us by His grace and glory.

He now comes in judgement.

- He would want to know what you and me have done with the grace he bestowed upon us.
- Have we lived worthy to His death?
- Have we lived out the unity with Him and His church gracefully?

- Have we considered ourselves more important than Him and the gifts, which He commanded us to live with?

I beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 138:1

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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