

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2013 MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 104:20

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 of praise: Psalm 31:4, 15

Confession of faith: Nicene

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

And we believe one holy universal and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

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

Law

Psalm: 32:1

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 66:7

Scripture reading: Galatians 3**Scripture text:** Galatians 3:3

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

(Galatians 3:3)

A person can easily become caught up in exterior matters – in such a measure that you, without even knowing it, become an unbeliever.

- We easily develop values of life not really on the par with the values important to the Lord and cannot then make an adaptation back.
- Firstly because we do not want to and secondly because we are unable to any longer see that we are wrong.
- Once you have become convinced about something it is virtually impossible to give it up again.

The Galatians had such a problem.

- They started believing through the work of the Holy Spirit, but later lost the track.
- On a good day false teachers arrived and started twisting the gospel (1:7)

The contents of the false teachings were that we must accept the Lord Jesus as Saviour.

- But that there are also certain exterior or visible matters must be added for your salvation.
- Amongst other things it was demanded that the Galatians had to be circumcised.

It is noteworthy that of all the Old Testamental laws and sermons only the circumcision was clung to!

- In chapter 6:13 we read that these people proclaiming the false doctrine themselves did not obey one of the other laws.
- They thus clung only to something that was part of an external show.

The mistake was that something was pulled out of balance – and it is in all instances of false doctrine so that it does contain something about the truth, but that the matter was distorted out of its true context.

In the case of the Galatians they denied accepting that the baptism was also a circumcision of the heart.

- In fact they were not driven herein by love of the Old Testamental law.
- They were driven by falsehoods, because should they be circumcised they, during times of persecution, could claim not to be Christians but Jews.

This shocking fact is recorded in chapter 6:12:

As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

(Galatians 6:12)

The cross of the Lord Jesus flattened all these external matters the Jews always boasted in.

- Therefore the cross of the Lord became offensive to them
- It stripped them from everything they always bragged about.

This is how it came to that their external values of life misguided them to false doctrine and thus also to non-belief.

Against this background chapter 3 starts with the exclamation:

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth?

(Galatians 3:1)

This exclamation is very sharp but it is meant to awaken the congregation!

- To spiritually awaken them they had to be severely disillusioned.
- This is why it was then put sounding as if the congregation has lost the ability of seeing the truth and then every time come to a clear decision in matters pertaining to faith.

The only event capable of moving the Galatians to quickly forget Jesus is the devil and the sin he uses for his work.

- The congregation is thus now laden with the false spirit of the satan that can tempt them to false hope and life values.

Take note of the sharp contrast we are dealing with here.

- Firstly Paul asks whether they are bewitched and then he tells how alive Jesus Christ the crucified was proclaimed to them.
- The logical deduction the congregation made was that it was held that they were bewitched by the devil not to see and do the truth.

We of course must also keep seeing the entire Bible in its context and therefore we must naturally use the closing words of chapter 2 here:

"I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."

(Galatians 2:21)

The meaning of these words is very clear:

- External and wrong lives and faith-values try showing up the work of Christ as useless.
- Your worship loses its depth when you attach it to the wrong things.
- Then you are walking in the faith-world on ice because you are playing with the grace of Christ.

This is also where our text of scripture fits in: You had the Holy Spirit, because that is how you started believing. What has now happened that you are without the Holy Spirit?

- This moment of true consciousness and of personal experience in the lives of the Galatians should have withheld them from listening to the false teachers.
- As they have already lost the way, this should immediately bring them back!

It is asked: Are you so foolish that you, after starting with the Holy Spirit, you are ending with the worldly wrong things? Can any believer be so foolish to exchange his faith or twist his religion for mistakes?

You cannot be so stupid as to think that the Lord will not see your insides – even though you keep matters to the eye on a good exterior image.

Now you must not think that we do not have double standards in our life of faith. Let me name a few examples:

- We easily stay away from church when our beloved relatives visit. (They are at least also believers and should know to prepare to worship the Lord together with you.
 - Would something much better not come from our relatives having the real need at such times to accompany us in kneeling to God in worship?
- How often do we not cancel home worshipping or our own times of silent worship just because we are tired or in a hurry?

Is that not virtually the same thing?

The cross-death of our Lord is indeed so that we may see these things in our responsibilities for what it should be and then to be able to properly understand.

- It is one of the gifts of goodwill we obtained by the crucifixion and also by the working of the Holy Spirit.
- We should contemplate every day of our lives about what God asks and teaches us.
- We should also consider how the deeds of goodwill by Christ become our own so that we do not later give up the faith and workings of the Holy Spirit for other things that are only meant for this temporary existence on earth.

Consider the grace of God and make use of it – even should we have to give up many things that are of exterior importance to this world.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 146:2

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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22 September 2013
Scripture: Modern King James Version