

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 21 JULY 2013 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: 16:1

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: 31:1, 3

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 27:4

Scripture reading: Galatians 4

Scripture text: Galatians 4:4, 5; Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 14

**4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,
5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.**

(Galatians 4:4,5)

When the apostle Paul preached the gospel to the Galatians that we are granted righteousness out of mere grace – only for the sake of Christ's merits – and that the Lord Jesus paid in full for all our sins, The Jewish preachers were very annoyed.

- They could not accept the fact that one can be saved only through faith in the Lord Jesus.
- They believed that the law was more important than the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- They tried their very best to persuade the newly converted Christians to become slaves to the law again.

Paul used a parable to explain to the people how foolish it is to be slaves to the law. He referred to the church of the Old Testament as being a minor.

- This child had a teacher (disciplinarian).
- In the previous chapter Paul already wrote this.

24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

(Galatians 3:24-25)

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.

(Galatians 4:3)

The teacher has to teach the child the basic principles of the world – like a child learns the basic principles of his scientific education at school.

- But when the church reaches maturity, this kind of education comes to an end.
- Then a most glorious time (period) starts. The child's education has been completed and now he enters adult life.
- During its adult life the church is free, but to become free God sent his Son. He fulfilled the law for his church.

Let's focus on three things that resulted from this deed:

- 1. The work of God**
- 2. Christ's unspeakable humiliation**
- 3. The salvation and adoption of the people of his church**

1. The work of God

God, who determines all times, sent his Son when the right time came.

- In his wisdom He decided how long the period of the law would last.
- When that period was over, the era of God's kingdom commenced:
 - God sent his only begotten Son to earth.
 - This Son is and will be for eternity the eternal God himself.

See how the Lord acts: We would want to punish those who violate the law immediately – and in the case of a serious violation the punishment should be most severe.

- But this is not the way God acts!
- He does not send an angel from hell to punish the sinners for all their sins against his holiness!
- He sent his Son to save the sinners from eternal punishment and reconcile Him with them.

- Why did the Lord do it? Because He had promised it since the beginning of time.

The fact that God chose to rather make propitiation for us instead of punishing us is proof of the magnificence and incomprehensibility of his love.

- This is the result of God's infinite omnipotence and love that we surely do not deserve.
- He reveals Himself in the second Person of his Trinity as the Son who becomes man – the Almighty God is born from a woman and lives among us.
- Although He became a human being, He has been there from everlasting to everlasting, because He was not created.

God sent his eternal Holy Spirit to reveal all this to us so that we would believe it all.

NB: He does not explain it so we can understand it – He reveals it so that we can believe it.

2. Christ's unspeakable humiliation

The Son of God is born from a woman – Mary.

- And so took upon Himself true human nature.
- Of course we cannot understand this: The Holy God becomes the son of a woman on earth.
 - From a human point of view the Son of God has a record of sinful ancestors – He was also a descendant of king David.
 - These ancestors were all known for their sinful lives!

Certainly the Son of God could have come to earth in a different way: He could simply have appeared as the almighty God, but this is not how God wanted it to be.

- He wanted to be equal to us in all respects – yet without sin

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

(Hebrews 2:17)

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

(Hebrews 4:15)

Compared to Him:

- We are weak earthlings who get ourselves deeper and deeper into trouble with the Lord every day, because we are subject to the law of the Lord and we cannot conform.
- We are slaves to the law and therefore totally lost.

Then the Son of God came and was, like us, subject to the Lord's law:

**4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,
5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.**

(Galatians 4:4-5)

Again something we cannot understand – but something we just have to believe.

- God reveals that the One who made the law had to be born under the law.
- He does it so that He could fulfil the law completely to acquire perfect righteousness for a certain group of people.
 - These are his chosen people.
 - But they are all people who have not been able to conform to his law.

3. The salvation and adoption of the people of his church

Yet, this is only part of what is true about the Son of God. There are many more truths about Him:

- As the almighty God, the Son of God was superior to the law – in other words the curse of the law did not apply to Him.
- Hence He wanted to be born under the law so that the curse of the law would apply to Him.

And so the Son of God became a man to bear the God's wrath against the sins of his people. Hence God punishes Him in their stead.

- This punishment reached its peak when the Lord Jesus laid down his life on the cross, and He destroyed the power of death over us when He rose from the dead.
- But through his entire life on earth he bore this punishment in that He was obedient to all the suffering his Father meant Him to undergo – obedient to God's instruction to reconcile God with us through his redemptive sacrifice on the cross.
 - Thus the curse of the law was avenged through all his suffering.
 - We deserved eternal death under the law, but Christ fulfilled the law and conquered death when He rose from the dead. Hence we receive eternal life.

The result: We are no longer slaves of sin. Now we are children of God.

- This is amazing grace – far beyond our understanding.
- God grants us his complete love together with eternal physical life with Him.

Let's listen to what Catechism Lord's Day 14 says about all this:

35. Q. What do you confess when you say: He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary?

A. The eternal Son of God, who is and remains true and eternal God,[1] took upon Himself true human nature from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary,[2] through the working of the Holy Spirit.[3] Thus He is also the true seed of David,[4] and like His brothers in every respect,[5] yet without sin.[6]

[1] John 1:1; 10:30-36; Rom. 1:3; 9:5; Col. 1:15-17; I John 5:20. [2] Matt. 1:18-23; John 1:14; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14. [3] Luke 1:35. [4] II Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 132:11; Matt. 1:1; Luke 1:32; Rom. 1:3. [5] Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:17. [6] Heb. 4:15; 7:26, 27.

36. Q. What benefit do you receive from the holy conception and birth of Christ?

A. He is our Mediator,[1] and with His innocence and perfect holiness covers, in the sight of God, my sin, in which I was conceived and born.[2]

[1] I Tim. 2:5, 6; Heb. 9:13-15. [2] Rom. 8:3, 4; II Cor. 5:21; Gal. 4:4, 5; I Pet. 1:18, 19.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 36:2, 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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