

## REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 23 MARCH 2014 MORNING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 72:11

*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 104:1, 21

**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 Scripture Versification 9-1:11*

Law

Scripture Versification 9-1:11

**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 8:3, 4

**Scripture reading:** John 17

**Scripture text:** John 17:24

**Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am ...**  
(John 17:24)

The fear of the true believer that he would go to hell when he dies is completely unfounded. The reason therefore is so clear and simple: The Lord Jesus Himself prays to God the Father that you would be where He is: in the kingdom of God the Father.

1. **The width of the Lord Jesus' prayer**
2. **The means to conversion**
3. **The tension between the world and the believers.**

#### 1. **The width of Jesus' prayer**

The preceding passage dealt in particular with the eleven apostles who were there together with Jesus Christ.

- Now the Lord Jesus shows that His prayer reaches wider than only for the apostles.
- He does pray for them only. He also prays for those who would come to conversion through their ministering of the gospel.
- In verse 9 the Lord Jesus already referred to the people He now is praying for when He said that it is they who will guard His Word. (compare verse 9)

When the Lord Jesus prayed that day all the people He referred to in this prayer were not yet born.

- By example none of us were already born and we are all included in this prayer.
- Here the Lord thus knowingly also prays for the future (or still unborn) church.

It is thus very important to realize what the Lord Jesus is revealing to us here:

- The Lord Jesus is thus God the Saviour who is so powerful that He works unrestrictedly through the time.
- His salvation is relevant to the present and the future.
- In Greek the form of the verb (the use of the present time) means that the prayer is timelessly relevant to all believers.

Let us stand still for a while at this matter and consider the meaning it has for you and me.

- We know that the Lord teaches that He chose people for himself from all the living people.
- But the problem to many of us is that it is an undefined theory and we then do not personally experience it as something concerning ourselves.

The words of the Lord Jesus Christ in this prayer reveal that all believers (those already deceased, as well as those living at this moment and those who still have to be born) exist really and truly for God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- We are not to God people just existing in theory.
- To Him we are there – we are real.
- Therefore we are concretely dedicated to God by this prayer.

## 2. The means to conversion

How will the salvation the Lord Jesus works for us and the salvation and going to heaven He now prays for become reality for us?

- We would properly immediately think: through the Holy Spirit.
- It is also true but what does the Holy Spirit use to reach me? Of course the Bible. It is **...through their word...**

**...through their word** ... does not only see on the verbal ministering of the gospel, but certainly also through the written recording of the New Testament.

- Consider that the entire New Testament, excluding Mark, Luke and Acts came to be by the apostles – but in the coming to be of these three books the apostles at any rate had a big hand.
- It is clearly revealed here that those who will come to the faith will be appointed for this faith and conversion in the apostolic ministering and written recording of the Word. (compare to this Romans 10:17)

What does the Lord Jesus pray for these believers?

- He prays for them to be bound together in the unity of their faith.
- The purpose of this prayer was certainly also directed towards the unity of the eleven.

Like the Apostles had to be bound together by the unity of their faith, as such must the churches brought into existence by them, also be bound in the unity of faith and of the execution of faith.

- Their unity grounds into the care by the Father: He protects them as a unit.

These words are heavily laden with a futuristic view of the church.

- The unity and binding of the believers on earth points forward to their unity and together binding with each other, as like the believers in heaven will be bound together as the one body of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Thereby they also have community with God who then in His glory will be with and stay over them.

This part puts the organic unity of the church (believers) very strongly and clearly: together they form one body of Christ.

- This unity must not come to being in heaven for the first time.
- It must already be visible on earth.

## 3. The tension between the world and the believers

Brothers and sisters, note that this part of the prayer has three legs:

- I pray for them (the believers) to be one.

- I pray that they may also be in Us (as You are in Me and I am in You)
- I pray that the world can believe that You sent Me.

This third part creates a sharp contrast:

- On the one side are all the believers
  - They form a solid unity.
  - They must be undivided a unit in Christ.
- On the other side stands the world. The non-believers.
  - They also form a solid unity in their rejection of Christ.

But there is a specific movement:

- The unity of the church must convince the world that God sent the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Even should the world hate the church there must be acknowledgement of the purity of the Lord Jesus' mission.

NB. The believing of the world is here not of sanctification. It is merely an acknowledgement that what the believers believe is correct.

- It is namely that the Lord Jesus Christ is God and that He rules the history.
- It is historical faith, in other words merely an acknowledgement of the facts.
- This is the same kind of faith that the satan has!

In His prayer the Lord Jesus says that He will be giving us His glory.

- The glory referred to by verse 22 is not the eternal glory that God has from eternity to eternity.
- Only the Lord Jesus Christ has part to this godly glory.
- The believers never gain part thereof.

The believers receive the glory granted to them by the Intercessor: this glory becomes part of them in all the fruits of the grace. (2Corinthians 3:18)

- These gifts the Lord Jesus Christ grants us through the Holy Spirit.
- The Lord Jesus Christ received this glory as the fruit of His work in His elevation (Philemon 2:9) – even though it was already visible to His disciples during His earthly life (John 1:14)

Thereafter the Lord Jesus Christ again prayed for the unity of the congregation.

- A unity that is so solid as the unity between Him and His Father.
- This unity must also convince the enemies of the church about the Love of God for His Church.
- This love is based upon the love the Father has for the Son.

#### **4. The vision of the church**

Up to now the prayer dealt with the struggling church through the passage of history.

- Now the prayer deals with the vision of the church in the kingdom of God.

- The Lord Jesus still prays for his: that what the Father has given Him.
- The church in its unity must enter to the holiness of God's holiness – very simply put: He prays for our arrival in heaven.

With royal sovereignty the Lord Jesus states: **I desire that...**

- The absoluteness of His sovereignty and power comes out in the present tense: **they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am.**
- By this entrance of the holy another piece of revelation takes place: There we see the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory.
- Therein God is also glorified - Philemon 2:9 – 11.

This preview is still guaranteed by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- In future His power also remains unchanged – as it was at that stage.
- The glory and power was given to the Lord Jesus Christ because God loves Him.
- He again grants it to those who belong to Him because He loves them.

Verse 25, 26 form the closing argument for the hearing of the prayer.

- The Lord Jesus calls onto the justness of God.
- In the justness of God He remains faithful to all that belong to Him.
- Therefore He also fulfils His promises.

There are two legs in the closing argument.

- The one is a negative: The world do not know You
  - Thus they also are not aware of Your faithfulness.
  - Therefore they never reach the kingdom of God.
- The second is positive: Those who belong to Christ know that God sent the Lord Jesus.
  - They know God and thus also His council.
  - This knowledge was granted to them by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The prayer is closed by a reference to all the work of the Lord Jesus.

- This includes the training of the disciples so that they can be able to start the New Testamental church in the world.
- Also so that they could record in writing the New Testament so that it could be handed down till today to us.

This of course includes mainly the death and victory of the Lord Jesus:

- On the one side the deed whereby He saved us from the rule of sin and death.
- But on the other side He changes us into children of God – those are the people referred to in this prayer for safekeeping and entrance into the heavenly kingdom.

*The crux of this sermon is the fact that the Lord Jesus prays to the Father that we would also be where He is. As we say: He asks that we must, together with Him, be in heaven.*

Seen from our side this matter also goes about surety in faith.

- How many times do we wonder if it is really so that we who believe in the Lord Jesus will be in heaven.
- How many times do we doubt our salvation – especially when we consider our own sins.

We must take note of one matter mentioned by the Lord Jesus Christ in this chapter

- This is the fact that He refers to it that we will come to conversion and faith through the ministering of the apostles.

When the Lord Jesus prayed this prayer not one word of the New Testament was yet in writing.

- But the apostles went forth – as the Lord prayed – and wrote the New Testament as a legacy to the church.
- It is our New Testament of the Bible as we have it still up to now.
- It is the Word of God (ministering of the apostles) bearing all of us in faith and conversion.

That part of the prayer of the Lord has thus already gone into full fulfillment.

You must also regard that part of the prayer where the Lord prays for all of us to be with Him where He is in that light.

- Our entrance into heaven becomes just as true as the ministering of the apostles by the Lord and our conversion and faith made true thereby.

Brothers and sisters, the redemption of our sins and the eternal life granted through it to us – by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus is not just a powerful working of God.

- It is almighty – irreversible, cannot be turned around, unchangeable.
- By His death the Lord Jesus Christ opened the doors of heaven for us.
- Live in this redemption without doubting.
- Live thereby into the eternal kingdom of God.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 138:3

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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 Scripture Modern King James Version