

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 20 JANUARY 2013

MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 68:10

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 119:11

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 79:5, 9

Law

Psalm: 79:5, 9

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 33:11

Scripture reading: Revelation 3

Scripture text: Revelation 3:9

"Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie-indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

(Revelation 3:9)

Only a congregation living in the Lord and having the ability of remaining with true doctrine can successfully minister the gospel to people not knowing the Lord.

- A congregation lost in faith has nothing to give to those outside the redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ because they are no better off than those who do not know God.

Let us, to the building up of our faith, consider the following matters about the congregation of Philadelphia:

1. **The God of the church distinguishes the members of Philadelphia.**
2. **The command to Philadelphia.**
3. **Are Philadelphia and we in the same church denomination?**

1. **The God of the church distinguishes the members of Philadelphia.**

At the start of His letter the Lord introduces Himself very meaningfully.

- The author of the letter is the Holy and Truly.
- The Holy and True God Himself is addressing the congregation.
- In this introductory greeting is the assurance that the congregation can trust the Lord addressing them because He executes everything in a holy and proper way.

In this capacity He also has a key He can use to open or close up in such a powerful way that nobody can unlock what He locked up and neither can anybody lock up what He unlocked.

- They must also know that He is the One having the final judgement over all matters: He locks and unlocks without anybody being able to stop him or change anything He does.

Therewith the lord shows His supreme power.

- He as God and Lord has the highest possible position.
- At the same time the Lord reveals herewith the Messianic authority of Jesus Christ – because you must keep in mind it is Jesus having the word.

By this revelation the Lord shows that He specifically works grace over every congregation.

- He disposes good things staying rock-solid over them.
- By His unlimited power of disposal He forces grace over His congregation.

To the small congregation of Philadelphia it was very important to hear it again because during the earliest years the little congregation of Philadelphia suffered a bitter battle and persecution.

- Polukarpus who was during the earlier years a minister of Smyrna writes in his books that at one stage eleven of the congregation of Philadelphia were killed as martyrs.
- The congregation had to minister the word and keep it pure under heavy persecution.
- From this letter it is clear that matters were not of the easiest for this congregation in looking after the Word.

Some of the members of the congregation were so-called Jews.

- The Jews caused all the misery in this small congregation. Verse 9 refers to them: **Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie...**

The name "Jews" had the meaning that these were people in the congregation extolling on their background.

- They still were from the tradition of the circumcision.
- They still knew the laws of the Lord.
- For many years they knew the interior of the church – the other members had to listen when they spoke, because they were those who were in the know about the faith.

Remarkable, the Lord did not have the same opinion about them.

- He regarded them as a synagogue of the Satan existing inside the church.
- It is about these members that the Lord writes to them that they pretended to be Jews, but in the meanwhile they were lying.
- They were fake members in their church. They only wanted to enter the church in aid of persecuting the Christians.

2. The command to Philadelphia.

We as congregation are a unit. We must display this to the outside because, as church, we have a collective responsibility to the face of the Lord.

- Therefore you must take note about yourself: Are you part of the church because you are a believer?
- Or are you here like those people in Philadelphia pretending to be Jews, but only making the faith of others more difficult?

The lord introduces Himself to them as the One that unlocks and locks again.

- He knows their congregation. He also knows their works.
- He knows that their powers are limited.
- No matter how worthless this congregation was to the eyes of the world, it did not mean that this congregation was spiritually weak and worthless because they possessed the ability to remain true to the Lord.
- God enabled them to look after His Word and not deny His Name.

So proud was the Lord about this performance of the congregation that He wrote to them to hold onto what they have.

The Lord Jesus promised them the following:

- To make the victors into pillars of the temple of God.
- They would not be able to ever again exit the temple of God.
- He would also write the name of God onto them;
- He would also write the name of the city of God, the New Jerusalem, on them!
- The Lord Jesus also promises that He will write His own new Name on them.

These words of the Lord are to our congregation just as important a consolation as it was to the congregation of Philadelphia.

- Got lets us know that we are safe.
- Nothing can harm us because the Lord, in His grace, included us into His unstoppable justice and glory.

This in fact is a very remarkable achievement by this congregation of Philadelphia should you consider that the Lord had complaints about five of the seven congregations, but with this little congregation the Lord was satisfied.

- Large and strong congregations like the Ephesians abandoned their first love,
- Whilst this congregation was able to look after the Word of Christ's meekness.

The honor does not go to them as if it would be their achievement. Through His council the Lord made it possible.

- But exactly for this reason the Lord had this small congregation shoulder greater responsibility.
- They had to minister the Name of God, it is His justness and holiness, to the people who did not yet know and accepted it.
- This is what the Lord means by the words in verse 8:
See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it...

This expression is found more times in the New Testament. Come let us examine three places where it is written:

- One such a place is 1 Corinthians 16:9:
For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.
- Another place is 2 Corinthians 2:12
Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit...
- At another time Paul wrote to the congregation of Colossians: (4:3):
meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ...

In all these quotations there is something common, namely all refer to an opportunity of ministering the gospel to people not believing in the Lord.

Then it is in fact logical that it should also be the door opened for the congregation of Philadelphia.

- Therefore it is written in the verse of text that the Lord unlocked a door for them because they were found trustworthy in the care of His Word and because they did not deny His Name.
- It enabled them to powerfully minister the gospel to those who opposed it.

The Lord reveals that the confession that went from this congregation will be so powerful that even these hardened Jews, whom in fact were a synagogue of the Satan, will come to conversion and will confess the love of the Lord.

3. Are Philadelphia and we in the same church denomination?

What should a church do should it land in problems?

- We must preach and minister – and we must see too it that we do not give up our principles for the sakes of other people.
- The Bible puts it that we must not deny the Lord.
- The evil people in the church will fall to the feet of the people loving God and acknowledge the Lord loving them. (Verse 9)

We have a great responsibility: especially us living in the last days.

- We do not really experience persecution yet, but according to the prophecy in the Bible it is possible that we could land into serious danger and possibly even be killed for our faith.
- We already experience the starters thereof because there are all the more areas in our lives where our Christian principles are coming under serious pressure because the policy in our country dictates that the Name of the Lord has no preference to any religion or form of (heathen) worship.

We must just remember that even in mortal danger we must care for the "Word of my meekness" as the Lord calls His gospel here.

- The pressure will increase for us to give up our principles and our faith.
- The moment we give up our principles we deny the Name of God and then we fall into the sin the congregation of Philadelphia was able to withstand.

In the last times there will also be people in our congregations like those described here by the Lord that they are "the synagogue of the Satan". They will be ruled by the lie. (Compare Revelation 2:9)

During the final days these people will be the tools in the hand of the Satan devilishly planing to make the days unbearable to the believers.

- They will, with the Bible in the hand, eventually change the church so that later it will no longer be the church of the Lord.

- They will easily catch us because we will be used to them and we will be under the impression that they are “our kind” of people.

These intruders will cause the true believers a difficult time because Matthew 24:22 describes that the Lord, in aid of us surviving it, will shorten the days

"And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened."

Congregation, you must never lose heart because in Revelation 3:10 the Lord promises that He Himself will take care of us during those days. **"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."**

- What more could we ask. God opens the doors for us so that we can believe and testify.
- All He asks is the responsibility that we will do so.
- Even during the battle He looks after us to do it.

In God's concern about our wellbeing He uses all the powers of the heaven to protect and help us on.

- As an example consider the work of the angels!
- But above all the sent His Son Jesus Christ to come and die, so that God's wrath about our trespasses could be punished onto Him.
- In this way the protection of Revelation 3 becomes true.

It is the same Lord Jesus who had this letter to the congregation of Philadelphia written who died for us.

- It is Him who writes that He looks after us and that He unlocked the door.
- Nobody needs doubting His ability to do that.
- He has already shown that He was victorious over death and rules life.

Therefore also be warned that He can lock up – eternally! Indeed He eternally locks the doors of hell over the non-believers.

The fact now is that God has finished punishing for our trespasses. It is no longer necessary to eradicate us.

- Now He covers us in His Love.
- This we must always remember! Therefore we must now also use it because the love of God is so valuable to let it pass unused.
- Everything that was possible for the congregation of Philadelphia is also possible for us!
- Therefore we must strive to it to, like the congregation of Philadelphia, please the favour of God.

Our congregation has many good attributes.

- We can work hard. In many instances we are reliable.

- But we also have weaknesses hampering us. One of them is some of our congregation's half-heartedness' accompaniment to the congregation.

You must decide for yourself whether a member who half-heartedly believes and also in his faith live out all sorts of half-heartedness really looks after the Word of God. The Word of the Lord teaches that the Lord asks everything from us, and that we must have everything for each other.

We must be a church really living with God Himself!

- Here the Lord says that we must care for the Word of Christ' meekness.
- That means that we must have the following attributes:
 - To believe
 - To love
 - To persevere to the end

To know that in the heaviest attacks coming over earth, we are still safely cared for by the Lord.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 98:1

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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