

CHRIST COVENANT REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

But ye are come unto mount Zion... And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 12.22, 24)



SCRIPTURE ALONE—GRACE ALONE—FAITH ALONE—BY
CHRIST ALONE—TO GOD ALONE BE GLORY!
REFORMED, AND ALWAYS REFORMING

Wednesday Prayer Meeting, 03/25/2020

Opening Prayer

Psalm: 6.1-10 Page 9

First Exhortation: The Chastisement of the Lord: Acts 14.19-23; Hebrews 12.1-14; Lamentations 3.37-57

Seeing that there is no prayer meeting in our building this week, it is my intention here to give a few bullet points for your meditations and prayers. Please do make use of this for your prayers this week, although we are not meeting formally, with 2 members of Session being out of town.

So, as we think on the Lord's chastisements presently upon us, and events "in the city" let us remember a few things.

From Acts 14.19-23:

We must not get caught in the trap of modern "decisionalism", but remember that it is not through "praying a prayer" or any other thing but true, living, and persevering faith in Christ that we enter into the kingdom of God. The Apostle told the Christians in Lystra, after having himself been dragged out of the city, stoned, and left for dead, that it is through much tribulation that we enter into the Kingdom of God. We ought to understand that this trial of the Apostle's faith, being stoned, (and the trial that this must have been to these new Christians) and his subsequent faithfulness and persistence in His Christian Service is exactly the kind of tribulation and perseverance he is talking about, which confirms and directs believers to their final reward in Christ. Do not lose heart therefore, many Christians over the centuries have been tried, and these trials have issued in that same kind of persevering faith, that enters "within the veil".

From Hebrews 12.1-14:

We first have the example of Christ Himself, who persevered through the cross, keeping His eyes on the joy that was set before Him—His victory over sin and death, and bringing many sons to glory. It is true that the closing of Churches is a trial, and a chastisement from the Lord. The lion has indeed roared!

- Let us not seek mere deliverance from this trial only, but we ought to seek the "peaceable fruits of righteousness" that the Lord holds out under this trial.
- Remember that the Lord's chastisement is a token of His love for His people, and therefore it is a part of our birthright, being born again by the Spirit of God.
- Hear the Word of the Apostle, that chastisement from the Lord means that we are being fitted for eternity, as we, even in these days, learn to walk in His ways, and partake of His holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord.
- Remember that the holiness wrought by the Lord's chastisement, and our subsequent perseverance in faith and obedience, has, according to the Apostle, an eschatological dimension, speaking as it does of our final estate before the Lord, in glory.
- So, because of this way of the Lord's ordering, we should rather mix that grief with joy, as we have recently learned from our study of 1 Peter 1.6-9.

The Lord has not cast off His people. Chastisement is a mark of adoption and care from the Lord.

From Lamentations 3.37-57:

We note here, as we did from Amos 3 yesterday, that it is the Lord that sends these afflictions and chastisements. Let us not lose sight of what is going on:

- Churches are closed, and folks are contenting themselves with electronic "services" which are not the ordinance.
- Magistrates are mandating the closure of churches
- Business are closing, unable to recover from their loss of revenue and commerce, also mandated by the magistrate.
- Breadwinners are losing their jobs, putting a strain on families and support systems
- People are getting sick, and a few gravely so, with the possibility of others also being infected.
- Others are afraid, and a fearful populace can at times become a dangerous populace.

With all that the Lord is bringing upon us, we must “search and try our ways, and turn again unto the LORD,” Jeremiah prescribes soul-searching, self-examination, sending up our cries and lifting up our hands to the Lord in repentance, and that without complaint or murmuring. The Prophet prescribes humility, confession of sin, acknowledging that it is the Lord who sends these things upon His people as His loving chastisement, for their refinement. But let us also understand that there is work to be done, and changes to be made. Chastisements must have their lasting fruit, and they must not, when relief comes, allow for a return to the status quo, our former sins and faults.

Finally here, we must note the covenantal nature of chastisements. The Lord may afflict entire regions, affecting many people, for the sins of some in that locality, nation, church, etc. Yet, there is always use to be made among all. Let us, like Daniel, and like Ezra, send up cries of repentance, and for repentance, regarding the declension of churches from our Reformation Standards, regarding Sabbath desecration, will-worship, carnal doctrines, and prosperous ease that have infected our churches—these are sins committed, to some degree, by us all, and by those who, like us, name the Name of Christ.

Pray regarding chastisement and tribulation, from the Lord:

1. Pray that the people of God would not murmur, but find things even in today’s events that are kindness from the Lord for which we might give thanks. (Philippians 4.6-9)
1. Pray that the people of God would learn to embrace the rod of chastisement, as the Sons and Daughters of the Most High, and receive His help toward holiness through chastisement, thankfully. (Psalm 119.71-75; Micah 6.9)
2. Pray for those who have contracted COVID-19, that the Lord would heal them, according to His will, and pray for those who are caring for the sick, that they would remain careful, take proper precaution, and that the Lord would keep them safe, and able to serve. (Luke 9.2)
3. Pray for those who are afflicted with loss of jobs, business, health, that they might receive proper teaching and counsel from the Scripture, to know rightly how to receive their afflictions, and to prosper from them. Pray for many helpers to rise up faithfully to be of service to those in need. (Psalm 94.12; 107.20)
4. Pray that the people of God would search and try their ways, each spending time apart, asking the Lord for understanding, that He might convict our consciences of those sins for which we are being chastened, that we might confess and forsake them, along with their occasions and temptations. (Proverbs 20.27; Jeremiah 31.18-19)
5. Pray for humility when facing our afflictions and sins, that we might be free from stoicism, carelessness, and a determination to go on in our sins, that these afflictions would have their proper work. (Amos 4.6-13)
6. Pray that we would run clear of the temptation to trust in earthly means and remedies for the afflictions that have come upon us from on high, from the Lord. (Isaiah 31.1-5)
7. Pray that the Church would hear the Lord roaring from Zion—that is, from the place of His established worship, such that there would be repentance concerning the will-worship and idolatry that has crept into even our Reformed Churches. (Amos 1.1-2; Colossians 2.16-23)
8. Pray that the people of God, through these deprivations, would love the public worship of God, that the lightest and slightest things would not keep them from it, that they would spend, and stretch to have it, and would mourn when they cannot. (Psalm 42.1-11; Zephaniah 3.18)
9. Pray that the leaders of the Church would be committed to leadership according to the Scripture, that the Lord would grant strength and courage unto obedience, for Church leaders, and all her members. (Deuteronomy 31.1-8)
10. Pray that the Lord would, through these chastisements, purify His Church, that she would be sifted and made finer, winnowed, that her dross would be removed by the fires of affliction, for His Name’s sake. (Isaiah 48.9-13)
11. Pray for our civil leaders, that they may know themselves to be mere men, and not God, and that with this knowledge they would call upon those Christians in their realms to pray for the nation, and other localities, and to pray for them, that they might know how to proceed in these difficult times. (Psalm 9.19-20; Exodus 12.30-32; 1 Timothy 2.14)
12. Pray that the chastisements the Lord sends would have their good and salutary work, that His people would not return to the status-quo, but would repent and put away the idols of their hearts, confessing their ill-use of the means of grace, and seek the Lord with their whole hearts. (Psalm 80.1-19)
13. Pray for a longing among the people of God for God Himself, to appear before Him, to commune with Him, and with this longing, good preparation week by week for the public worship, godly anticipation, focused observation, and deep reflection and use of those ways the Lord changes His people, conforming them to Himself. (Psalm 63.1; 1 Samuel 7.3; 1 Chronicles 29.18)
14. Pray in this time of loss, that people would seek the Lord, turning to Him from their idols of affluence, convenience, leisure, carnality, and trusting in means, that the preaching of the pure Gospel would not be curtailed, but widespread. (1 Thessalonians 2.13-16)

Closing Psalm: 30.7b-12, Page 56

Closing prayer