

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 25 OCTOBER 2009: EVENING SERVICE

Adoration ...

Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tent over them.

Sing before: Psalm 19:3

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 45:1+9

Prayer:

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation for 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

Hymn:7-2:2

Scripture reading: 2 Chronicles 20:1 - 23.

Scripture text: 2 Chronicles 20: 5-6.

Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard and said: "O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. ..."

The nub of this sermon is that any relationship – especially our marriage - can overcome every adversity provided we have a living bond with the Lord.

In this narrative we deal with more than simple history,

- We must bear in mind that the people acting here are the LORD's people (church).
- They are the church of those days.
- The LORD calls the church His bride and His body.

We therefore find here a revelation of how the Lord protects those who belong to Him in ways that are far above their own abilities.

Let us consider together Jehoshaphat and his people's predicament and their victory.

Almost imperceptibly the Bible tells something of great importance:

Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to enquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek Him. Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard and said: “ O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. ...” (2 Chronicles 20:3-6)

A day of fasting is proclaimed. The reason? Two reasons:

- The first is that the people must humble themselves before the LORD.
- The second is that in their distress they may pray to the LORD for help.

The people were under attack.

Of course this attack would come from the heathendom - but this is a remarkable part of heathendom.

- They are all people whose ancestors were part of the body of believers.
- In modern terms we would say that they are churchgoers who have lost the way and are now opposing God.

These people are:

- The Ammonites – who are the descendants of Lot by one of his daughters.
- The Moabites who are the descendants of Lot by his other daughter.
- The Meunites who are a splinter group of the Edomites – descendants of the brother of Jacob who was rejected.

Note the power and the suddenness of the kind of threats that gather against the church of the Lord:

- This large army is already at Engedi!
- It is already on the way to Jerusalem!

What does a true believer do in such times? He immediately goes to the LORD.

- Jehoshaphat himself has a large army.
- But he does not rely on those heroic soldiers.
- He seeks the LORD and proclaims a day of fasting.

That is not what we would have expected a king to do.

- Any right-minded king would immediately have summoned his commanders and held a council of war!
- But this king does not do so – he wants to consult God before doing anything!

The reaction from the people is overwhelming.

- From all the towns of Judah people gathered – women and children included!
- In the courtyard in front of the temple they gather.

There the king prays.

- He calls the LORD the God of his fathers and the ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations.
- He founds his prayer on the Covenant that the LORD made with them.
- He puts the distress of his people before the LORD.

Then amazing events occur.

- The Spirit of the LORD comes upon a Levite named Jahaziel.
- He gives the LORD's answer to Jehoshaphat's prayer.

The God of the Covenant answers that Jehoshaphat need not worry.

- This matter is not Jehoshaphat's – it is the LORD's matter.
- God upholds the Covenant on which Jehoshaphat pleaded.

The LORD makes it known that Jehoshaphat and the tribe of Judah do not need to fight. They will see the deliverance the LORD will give them!

- Gratefully the king and the people bowed before God,
- while the Levites praised the LORD in singing Psalms.

The LORD God immediately worked their deliverance.

- The LORD caused the three nations who had attacked Jehoshaphat to fall out among themselves that night.
- They fought so fiercely among themselves that they all died in the fighting – not one survived.
- For three days Jehoshaphat and his men carried away plunder – so great was God's grace over them.

They immediately held a service to thank the LORD – and named the place the valley of praise.

Do you see how in this narrative of grace clear guidelines for our marriages are also given?

When we read in our confession all that the Lord says about marriage, we find there only negative words. Unfortunately all of them true - but this only emphasises the ugly sins committed by spouses.

When do our marital troubles start? They start when a distance develops between us and the Lord. That is the start.

- This narrative tells us what we must do at the beginning – so that those sins do not enter our lives!
- The devil will always come with all sorts of queer things to a marriage to attack spouses.
- He must because every marriage is to him a symbol of the bond of love that exists between God and His church.

In the attack by these three nations on Judah we see a sign of this.

What must we do when our marriage is under threat?

- We must drop everything and together we must go to God to seek help.
- Do we do so? The answer is: No! Very seldom do we do so.

We do what Jehoshaphat did not do!

- We plan for war.
- We quarrel and build up hate and go to court and divorce and are alienated from one another.

We do not trust in the Lord because forgiving of sin and repentance means to us that we lose our grip on the situation and on the other person.

This is the way:

- Go both together and pray for God's help.
- Rely on the Lord's covenant of mercy that He has raised with you both.
- Beseech the Lord's mercy.
- Then the Lord will repair what is broken.

The important principle is clear:

- Humble yourself before the Lord – as did Jehoshaphat and the people!
- Leave the battle and the victory to the Lord.
- He informed Jehoshaphat that all these matters are in His department.

When He helps us and heals us from inside we are like Jehoshaphat who gathered plunder for three days without having had to fight for it.

Let us read what the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's day 41) says about the Seventh Commandment.
We do so to realise once again what sins lie in wait for us if we fail to walk this path of humbling and worship.

41. Lord's Day

Q. 108.

What does the seventh commandment teach us?

A.

That all uncleanness is accursed of God: (a) and that therefore we must with all our hearts detest the same, (b) and live chastely and temperately, © whether in holy wedlock, or in single life. (d)

(a)

Lev.18:27 (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;)

Lev.18:28 That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you.

(b)

Jude 1:23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

(c)

1 Thess.4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

1 Thess.4:4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

1 Thess.4:5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

(d)

Heb.13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

1 Cor.7:7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

1 Cor.7:8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

1 Cor.7:9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

1 Cor.7:27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

Q. 109.

Does God forbid in this commandment, only adultery, and such like gross sins?

A.

Since both our body and soul are temples of the holy Ghost, he commands us to preserve them pure and holy: therefore he forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, (a) thoughts, desires, (b) and whatever can entice men thereto. (c)

(a)

Eph.5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

Eph.5:4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

1 Cor.6:18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

1 Cor.6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

1 Cor.6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

(b)

Matt.5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

Matt.5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

(c)

Eph.5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

1 Cor.15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Hymn: 15-2:3.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen

Dr MJ Du Plessis
Reformed Church Bellville
25 October 2009

Scripture: New International Version