

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2008: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 31:1,2

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 9:1, 10

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 catholic* 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 16:5

Law

Psalm: 16:5

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

Psalm 18:1

Scripture reading: 2 Kings 6

Scripture text: 2 Kings 6:27

And he said, "If the Lord does not help you, where can I find help for you? From the threshing floor or from the winepress?" (2 Kings 6:27)

The lesson of this passage lies in the revelation that the Lord, notwithstanding their sins, kept his hand of protection over the children of Israel.

- In our earthly existence our salvation does not lie with an army
- or with the ability or disability of our leaders.
- It is standing steadfast in the mercy of God towards the believers.

In this sermon we will be considering the following matters:

1 The military background

2 The distress of the people of Samaria

3 The mercy of the Lord

4 The Lord saves sinners

1 The military background

Ben-hadad, king of Syria, was waging total war against Samaria.

- Samaria was the heart of Israel.
- Samaria was a well-defended city and storming it would have been useless.
- Therefore they besieged the city.

The Syrians must have laid siege to the city for a long time because as a result of the war a great distress and famine developed in the city.

- The distress amongst the people rose to very high levels.
- The famine was so severe that the people bought dove droppings – this they then used as salt.

The cost of dove droppings was quite high:

- They paid thirty-six and a half gram of silver for half a litre of dove droppings.
- In today's monetary value it amounts to R116.19.

Donkey's meat was impure and under no circumstances may it be eaten.

- Still the head of an ass was sold at 1310 gram silver.
- In our monetary value it amounts to R4170.10.

In remaining alive the people were thus pressed to the utmost.

2 The distress of the people of Samaria

Not only were the people militarily brought down, their morals were also at ground level.

- In an effort to keep the people going the king displayed himself to the people and soldiers.
- He strode around dressed in his kingly clothes – the symbol of power.

The predicament under which the people were living was not inline with the clothing and glamour of the king.

- A distress much worse than physical distress exists.
- It is their spiritual distress.

When committing sin you do not hide behind somebody else as if he was to blame, but the king mainly caused this situation.

- The king walking on the wall is Jehoram – and the history the Lord caused to be recorded about Jehoram was not very favourable.
- He did things that, in the eyes of the Lord, were wrong.
 - He had the pillar of stone, where Baal was worshipped, broken down – but this was only because Elisha forced him to do it. For the rest he continued dabbling in idolatry.
 - As an example he continued with calf-worship.
- He thus did not lead the people to the worship of the Lord.
- And he did not really help in exterminating idolatry.

Is this not possibly prophetic that the woman approached the king with the words: Help, my lord, O king!

- Like everybody else, she knew that he could do nothing about the matter!
- The king himself confesses: If the Lord does not help you, where can I find help for you?
- Very sarcastically he added that she has to tell him whether he has to do it either from the winepress or the threshing floor – in other words, must he give her bread or wine? This against the background of the fact that there is no more food!

Then the shocking situation into which the people have sunk unfolds to the king: they already are eating each other's children.

- The woman telling that she and another woman agreed to cook their children.
- They indeed have already eaten one of the children when the other decided not to keep to the agreement.
- Now, in order to obtain judgement from the king, the woman is complaining about this scandalous matter.

The trepidation cuts through the king. In his shock he tears his clothes. Immediately he must have realised that the curse of the Lord became true and has struck them.

This curse we find in Leviticus 26:27 – 29. Here the Lord is threatening the people with this matter should they abandon Him.

'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.

(Leviticus 26:27 – 29)

Here this cure of the Lord already goes into fulfilment.

- Note the reaction of the king!
- He takes an oath of killing Elisha because this matter arose from the Lord!
- It is a direct reproach against the Lord – the Lord is to blame for these things happening to them.

3 The mercy of the Lord

When the distress of the king was at its maximum the moment arrived for the reversal of the situation.

- Elisha preaches the mercy of the Lord to the king and his adjutant.
- The next day there would be plentiful food at dirt-cheap prices.

Seemingly the adjutant was a non-believer because he mockingly said that even should the Lord make windows in heaven, it would not be possible.

- Elisha predicted that the adjutant would die the following day without having any benefit of this abundance.

What transpired during that night leads you to the realisation that no political leader (in this case the king) nor a powerful army can save you.

- It is only the mercy and power of the Lord that can save us from any form of distress.

During that night the Syrians heard the rumble of a massive army of chariots.

- Remarkably the Israelites close by heard nothing.
- The result of the rumble heard by the Syrians caused them to take fright and flee.
- Not just a common flight, they discarded everything, even their clothing, as far as they ran – up till across the Jordan.

In the meanwhile the Lord determined that the Syrians had a large supply of food in their camp.

- This food supply now became available to the inhabitants of Samaria
- With this the Lord not only brings the state of war to an end
- He also supplies food to the emaciated people.

4 The Lord saves sinners

The Lord saves sinners – already in this life, and not only in eternity.

- It is very important that in this situation, we recognise the mercy of God.

The people are everything but religious and pure.

- They display signs of unbelief and great spiritual decay.
- Still the Lord saves them outside of the normal ways.

The king is unable to do so and is not used for this purpose by the Lord.

- The army is caught up in a besieged situation.
- They also are not freed from this powerless situation so that they may act towards the saving of the people.

What in fact happens is that God Himself frightens and confuses the enemy causing them to flee with great haste.

This is exactly the same principle of deliverance applicable throughout God's predetermined purpose. The Lord Jesus Christ saves us on exactly the same basis.

- In our state of belief we display many traits comparable to those of Israel.
- Amongst them there were, just as is the case with us, believers and unbelievers.
- The total picture that we retain from the children of Israel is that they know the Name of the Lord and use it everywhere but that they do not know the Lord Himself.

Jehoram himself is a clear example of this:

- He is a worshipper of calf-idolatry,
- but he snarls at the woman saying that should the Lord not help her, he cannot.
- A true confession, but from an empty heart!

But it is exactly in this circumstance that the Lord takes over. He delivers and heals people confessing His Name who do not necessarily realise the consequences thereof – us!

- Without us giving any contribution out of our own ability, the Lord Jesus died towards our salvation.
- He reconciles us with the Father so that we may share in all the promises of Christ as well as in life everlasting.

His protection over us reaches so far that not only are we saved by Him from the big and black force of hell,

- The Spirit of God also, in our total life, guides us.
- Therefore we have no need, like Jehoram, to display a virtual image.

His exterior was one of kingly power and rule – on the city wall the *king* is walking amongst this people.

- But when he tore his clothes the people saw that he was wearing sackcloth on his body.
- It was a torn up person who was amongst them.
 - In his exterior he was the king.
 - But beneath his clothing he was deeply distressed and realised that matters have gone very wrong.

He lacked the honesty in showing to the people how he felt and to take them with him on the road of repentance – back to the Lord.

God the Holy Spirit leads us on this road.

- A lot earlier the Lord enquired from Cain why his head was hanging, at least he knows that forgiveness is possible when you have remorse – because he had no living relationship with God, he could not reach that point. The same happens in Samaria.
- In contrast of the happenings to Cain and those in Samaria the Holy Spirit leads us to remorse and conversion.
- The Holy Spirit leads us to beg for salvation from the Only One that can really save or punish: the Almighty.

With that it is surely very clear that the Lord is spiritually caring for us.

- Our broken faith and faltering attempt to distinguish between right and wrong is, through the virtues and effects of Christ's redemptive sacrifice on the cross, reconciled with the justice of God and is led by the Holy Spirit towards developing and healing.

But the protection of the Lord goes even further:

- It also addresses our physical and daily life, and even the existence of our country.
- It is true that the Lord is making means available to us, but earthly matters are definitely not the future.
- Therefore these types of forces, all of which were present at Samaria – also could not do it.

Our salvation in our earthly existence does not lie with an army or with the ability or inability of our leaders, but with the mercy of God towards the believers. The death of Jesus Christ has the power that we, in this life also, may be delivered from all our tensions and worries.

Although Jehoram was not a believer, his words remain prophetic: If the Lord does not help you, where can I find help for you?

- As long as, together with that, we remember that in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have the full revelation of God!
- He helps us overcoming all barriers limiting us: past death, past the judgement of God, and even in our earthly existence, past physical limitations and threats.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 68:1,2

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 MKJV**