

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2009: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 34:7

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: Scripture Versification 5-4:1-2 [Romans 8 : 33-39]

Confession of faith: Nicene

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

And we believe one holy catholic* and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 19:5

Law

Psalm: 19:5

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 96:6

Scripture reading: 2 Timothy 3

Scripture text: 2 Timothy 3:5

...having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!
(2 Timothy 3:5)

The Lord loves us. But He also let us live in times where, in our world, we often have wicked governments and many people with leadership positions in His church who do not want to live and lead the people according to His will.

This Bible passage reveals what the predilection and principles of these people, living immediately prior to the Second Coming, look like.

- The Lord wants to warn us about these people – whilst we still are living in a time where His Word is still in use.
- Because the Lord loves us He reveals these people to us. He wants us to recognise them and not to be like them.
- His mercy will lead us to be different.

In this sermon we will pay attention to the following matter: **The character of the people at the end of times.**

The Lord Himself describes these times as a time of decay and distortion/repudiation of faith.

- To the unbelievers it will be paradisiacal.
- but to the believers it will be frightful:
 - The unbelievers will totally break away from the decree of love (or distort it) and
 - They will totally break away from the Word of God.

In this sense, compare the following passages:

from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

(1Timothy 1:6-7)

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. (1Timothy 4:1-3)

It is a fact that amongst the people, living during the end of times, all sorts of horrible sins will start to emerge.

- It is especially the second table of the Ten Commandments that will be transgressed by these people.
- The Lord reveals that a general lawlessness will prevail amongst these people – they will reject all demands of the Lord and all morals, as we know it today from the Word of God, will be abolished.

And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

(Matthew 24:12)

For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

(Matthew 24:38-39)

He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time. (Daniel 7:25)

Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

(2 Thessalonians 2:8)

Because the true believers will always be different from these people falling in general abhorrence of faith, exceptions will always exist. Therefore the Lord reveals His care and leadership to the believers.

- That is why this passage starts with a command: **But know this...**
- This command amplifies the atmosphere as well as the gravity of the end of times.
- This command prepares the believers, who will experience these times, to fully realise what is taking place.

On purpose the general characteristics of the people from the end of times are revealed to us:

- To be able to understand the actual decay of the spiritual lives of these people we have to revert to the time of creation and see how the people were when the Lord made them.
- Firstly the Lord said: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;"
- Indeed, the Lord then did so. Adam and Eve were perfect – true bearers of the image of God.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

(Genesis 1:26)

But Adam and Eve tarnished this image of God in them, when they fell in sin.

- Then, because Adam was disobedient, the Lord punished them and accursed the earth.

- After this incident Adam and his wife, and especially their descendants, changed more and more.
- Because sin continued to damage the image of God in them, they became worse.

This passage of 2 Timothy 3 is one of the passages revealing to us how and where the final development of the Fall is taking mankind.

- The people from the end of times are so transformed by sin that they rather display the image of Satan than the image of the Lord.
- Adam and Eve were created perfect, but due to the influence of sin through the ages, the end product is man living in full ethical degeneration.

Moral decay will no longer occur only here and there, it will be the general trend.

- One must keep in mind that the times in which these people live, the beast/antichrist will be the ruler on earth.
- Should we keep this in mind, we will realise that Revelation 13:8 is referring to the same people as in our text passage.
- There the angle of view is only slightly different: There the Lord reveals that everyone on earth whose name is not recorded in the Book of Life, is worshipping the beast.

In 2 Timothy 3 the extent of this decay is depicted by a long description.

- The primary matters are mentioned first, namely the caricature of love that will develop amongst mankind.
- Eventually it will only be applicable to themselves (Romans 13:10). Love for God and the neighbour will disappear completely.

The precipitation of such a love has a few inevitabilities, namely selfishness and greed:

- Avarice. A wrong love of yourself results in love for material and physical things that you can cling to.
- In our times we have a different name for it : We call it materialism – but this is the matter which Paul warns about.

The wrong love, in its putrefaction, reveals itself further.

- Such people brag.
- Amongst them there is prancing and haughtiness.
- They misuse the spiritual gifts of God.

Where there is no true love, hatred towards other people is prevalent.

- Therefore, because they disrespect and scorn each other, slander occurs between the people.
- Even natural ties of love, such as family love, are abandoned because children will be rebellious towards their parents.

In general people will be ungrateful towards God and people for any benefit conferred on them.

- The consequence thereof is that the people of the end of times will consider anything they want, as their right.
- They will demand it as if they must have it.
- They will believe that they, themselves, have reached/acquired the gain.

Because these are daily occurrences in our society, we can understand it very well.

This warning from the Lord, because He reveals how lack of love eventually decays people completely, is very serious.

- All love that they should have will be extinguished – this is why they will be unreconcilable.
- Is it not true that the people of our times are more dissatisfied?
- The Devil's image is coming stronger to the foreground: quarrelling, badmouthing and slandering of people eventually depicts the definite power of the devil over mankind.

There are still more attributes amongst the people of the end of times. Together with what has been mentioned already, they will also be unrestrained. "Without self control (unrestrained)" has many meanings:

- These people will bear a lack of will and direction in themselves – because the devil rules them.
- It also means that they will be unable to rule their own mind and temperament.
- They have become totally enslaved to the forces of hell.
- Consider, in our times, the power the trade unions have over their members and the immense grip peer pressure has on our children.

Therewith comes cruelty:

- The word actually means to be untamed, without refinement and ruthless – something that takes us back to the nature of a predator.
- These are matters the Lord warns us about, because people who have reached this point have already ejected all love from their systems.

The Lord asks loyalty and trustworthiness from us. This does not exist with these people of the end of times.

- The Lord reveals to us that the moment the bestial and ferociousness appear, all ties will be broken.
- Therefore it is not surprising that the people are traitors and become reckless because they calculatingly land themselves into evil – and eventually ending in hell.

All consideration and good sense have been ejected. Of course the cause is their arrogance and self-love intoxicating them.

not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. (1 Timothy 3:6)

he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, (1 Timothy 6:4)

Note the difference between us and the liars the Lord is referring to:

...having a form of godliness but denying its power...(2 Timothy 3:5)

We do not have an appearance of godliness.

- These people referred to by the Lord are thus devils who are in church, but they camouflage themselves like a chameleon would do it.
- They have no godliness – they only pretend having it!

We are not imitators. We have godliness, the Lord Jesus gave it to us.

Therefore He says that we must turn away from such people:

And from such people turn away! (2 Timothy 3:5)

The Lord does not want that they should rub off on us, nor that we must learn from them to be likewise.

Where do we stand? For somebody knowing the Lord Jesus Christ the answer is easy. At the Holy Communion He has in fact assured us that He has fully redeemed us with God!

- This means that He has internally changed us.
- His Holy Spirit continually brings this change to us.

There are no false people in the Hereafter.

- There are also no pretending people or angels.
- They were already, together with the devil, sorted out by the judgement of God.
- In the Hereafter the people face the throne of God and rejoice – people who in their being are all godly.

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:9-10)

We are those people!

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 144:1,6

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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Reformed Church Bellville
20 September 2009
Scripture Modern King James Version

[The passage we have read is in a way comparable to 1 Timothy 4:1 onwards, because it teaches about the matters happening in the march of time, whilst this passage refers to the last days. (Compare Isaiah 22; Acts 2:17; 2 Peter 33). It is thus two different times of history revealed by the Lord)