

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2010: EVENING SERVICE

### **Sing before:**

Psalm 68:9

*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: Hymn 5-4:1+2+5+6.

### **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 3:1

**Scripture reading:** Ephesians 6.

**Scripture text:** Ephesians 6: 12-18 and Heidelberg Catechism Lord's day 52.

**For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.**

The early Christians were of the view that by their confession they had sworn allegiance to the banner of the cross – and with it to the Lord Jesus Christ.

- They believed that as from that moment they were the soldiers of the Lord Jesus.
- That is why they also believed that the Lord Jesus had given them a complete arsenal of arms with which to fight the devil – because he was fighting against the banner of the cross and not prepared to submit to it.

This arsenal of arms consists of both spiritual and physical arms for the Holy Spirit makes it plain in verse 12 that the war to be waged by the faithful is against both people and spirits.

This is a most important aspect of life.

- We must always be aware thereof that if we truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we shall not be exempt from the troubles of life.
- The dark side of life will trouble us – especially when and where we least expect it.

That is why in verse 12 are listed the number of powerful enemies who will try to extinguish our candle:

**...but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**

The armament the Lord gives us therefore is vitally necessary!

But we should remember that these weapons alone are not sufficient. A very important element must be added. We read of it in verse 18:

**And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests**

We may summarize the position we find ourselves in as follows:

- We must be aware of all the dangers around us – dangers that aim to estrange us from God and to destroy us.
- We must realize our own impotence against these powers.
- We must therefore be familiar with the arms with which the Lord equips us - and train ourselves in their use.
- We must in faith hold on to the hope the Lord Jesus gave us that He will save us from these dangers for ever.

The Lord Jesus reveals in the prayer He teaches us that we must be fully aware of the satanic harm that threatens us. That is why we pray:

**...do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil One...**

We are also subjected to other trials, such as when the Lord tests us so that the sincerity and steadfastness of our faith might be revealed – but this prayer is not about that.

There is only one way in which we can remain standing against all these powers that want to destroy us. That is by the Lord Himself.

That is precisely what we pray for,

**...be pleased to preserve and to strengthen us by the power of your Holy Spirit, that we may make firm stand against them, and not sink in this spiritual war..**

To be able to overcome these powers, we must pray that we may remain humble so that we do not become like them.

- We must pray that we do not exalt ourselves.
- We find an example of such a prayer where Paul prays about a matter that troubles him and frustrates him:

**To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me: “My grace is**

**sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. (2Corinthians 12:7-9)**

We must furthermore pray that the Lord always give us from heaven the strength to believe – and to persevere in the correct faith.

Consider what is written about this in Ephesians 3:

**For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of His glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.(Eph 3:14-17)**

Whether we like it or not, these powers do affect us. We must therefore pray for daily conversion. The Bible gives us examples thereof in the epistle to the Romans.

**Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. (Romans 6:12)**

And where Paul prays to be saved from his human wretchedness:

**What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7:24-25)**

The effect of this is simple. God the Almighty will through the ministry of His Holy Spirit enable us to withstand all that is wrong.

- It means that we shall be able to withstand the devil’s temptations.
- It also means that, where we have succumbed to it or have become accustomed to it, we shall be able to break away from it.

This assistance that the Holy Spirit gives to protect us and to keep us – which means that He makes us victorious over the evils in the air – is given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ.

- He sent His Spirit back to us to be our Guide and Comforter.
- At our baptism He accorded to us all the Holy Spirit and His ministry.

All the armaments of which we have read were prepared and given to us by the Lord Jesus. He also gave us the hope of the life hereafter when we shall live as kings and victors in His Kingdom!

**In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. (John 14:2)**

In the Book of Revelation the Lord lifts the veil over our victory and final address:

**Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Rev.20:6)**

We therefore do not really have a choice. We must take these weapons of attack and defence that the Lord Jesus gives us, put them on and use them.

In this way God gives us strength.

This power is not slight or weak. We do not need to add .the slightest to it. God gives all of it out of the allmight of His grace. To Him belong all glory, authority and power.

Have you noticed what our confession says about all these matters?  
Let us read the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's day 52, together.

## 52. Lord's Day

Q. 127.

Which is the sixth petition?

A.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,' that is, since we are so weak in ourselves, that we cannot stand a moment; (a)and besides this, since our mortal enemies, the devil, (b)the world, (c)and our own flesh, (d)cease not to assault us, do thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of thy Holy Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, (e)but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes, till at last we obtain a complete victory. (f)

(a)

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Ps.103:14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

(b)

1 Pet.5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Eph.6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

(c)

John 15:19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

(d)

Rom.7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Gal.5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

(e)

Matt.26:41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Mark 13:33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

(f)

1 Thess.3:13 To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

1 Thess.5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Q. 128.

How dost thou conclude thy prayer?

A.

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever"; that is, all these we ask of thee, because thou, being our King and almighty, art willing and able to give us all good; (a) and all this we pray for, that thereby not we, but thy holy name, may be glorified for ever. (b)

(a)

Rom.10:11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Rom.10:12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

2 Pet.2:9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

(b)

John 14:13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Jer.33:8 And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.

Jer.33:9 And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.

Ps.115:1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.

Q. 129.

What does the word "Amen" signify?

A.

"Amen" signifies, it shall truly and certainly be: for my prayer is more assuredly heard of God, than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of him. (a)

(a)

2 Cor.1:20 For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

2 Tim.2:13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Hymn: 2-7:1.

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**

**7 February 2010**

**Scripture: New International Version**