

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2009: MORNING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 103:9

*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: Psalm 18:1

**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 138:4*

Law

Psalm: 138:4

**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**

Scripture Versification 14-3:1 [Ephesians 6: 10 –20]

Scripture reading: Joshua 1

Scripture text: Joshua 1:5 – 8

**"No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. "Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Joshua 1:5 – 8)**

In order to comply faithfully with the commandments of the Lord, much more courage and consistency in faith is required than when bravely doing battle.

The Lord shaped these people over a period of about 400 years of them living as slaves in Egypt. Thereafter they travelled for 40 years before they could enter the Promised Land. How long and under what circumstances will the Lord permit His church (=church people) to exist?

*Of course these matters concern our church association, today celebrating our 150<sup>th</sup> year of existence!*

In this short passage the Lord reveals various matters having a bearing on us.

- The Lord reveals that He chooses a man (people/church) for a specific calling or task.
- Furthermore the Lord reveals that often before the time, He shows people what calling He intends for them.
- Hand in hand with this goes the very important matter of the Lord, time and time again, reconfirming His mercy towards men – especially to those receiving very difficult tasks to fulfil.

It was already previously told to Joshua that he would have to lead the people into Canaan.

- Firstly the Lord told Moses that He had called Joshua. He then instructed Moses to train Joshua.
  - This was after the Lord became angry with Moses and told him that he would not enter the Promised Land. Of this we read about in Deuteronomy 1:38:
 

**'Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall go in there. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it. (Deuteronomy 1:38)**

**'But command Joshua, and encourage him and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which you will see.'** (Deuteronomy 3:28)

The Lord chose Joshua to defeat all the nations living in Canaan and to distribute the land amongst the tribes. Thus the Lord had him living to destroy the nations and to establish the people of the church in their place.

This is recorded in Numbers 34:17:

**These are the names of the men who shall divide the land among you as an inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun. (Numbers 34:17)**

In Deuteronomy 31:7 – 23 we read that Moses recorded the complete law.

- Thereafter Joshua was called to face the people and was virtually told word for word what the Lord said, and now repeated to him, by the Lord, in Joshua 1.

- Moses probably repeated the command that Joshua had to lead the people into the land as well as the accompanying promise that the Lord will be with him twice again.
- The last time was shortly prior to the death of Moses. (Deuteronomy 31:23 and 34:9)

In this passage we have read the Lord Himself appeared to Joshua repeating all the previous promises and commands.

- The circle of his responsibilities was tightened around him.
  - Firstly Moses spoke to him about these matters – this was whilst Moses was still the leader of the people.
  - Thus the responsibilities came closer to Joshua, but not personally involving him yet.
- Now Moses was dead and there was no other way out – the hour for him to fully shoulder the burden of his calling had arrived.

The Lord divides the revelation into different parts.

- **In the first part** the Lord spelled out the calling to Joshua: He is the new leader of the chosen people. (V. 1 – 3).
- **In the second part** the Lord defines the boundaries of the land (v.4).
  - The way in which the Lord defines the borders reminds one of the time when the Lord, on the mount Pisgah, showed the whole land to Moses pointing out where every tribe will be resident.
  - It would be interesting knowing exactly where Joshua was when he received the vision. (comp. V. 4 onwards with Deuteronomy 34:1 – 4).
- **In the third part** the Lord reveals that Joshua will go to war and that he will be victorious in all his battles. (v.5,6).
  - This also is not a new promise. This promise we find in Deuteronomy 11:25. This promise of Deuteronomy 11:25 reads:  
**No man shall be able to stand against you; the Lord your God will put the dread of you and the fear of you upon all the land where you tread, just as He has said to you.** (Deuteronomy 11:25)

There is a difference in that this promise originally was made to the people of Israel. Now this promise is repeated solely to Joshua.

It will be a difficult task beating so many nations.

- It cannot be pleasant hearing the Lord calling you to a life of war and resistance.
- At least the consolation was there: All resistance against Joshua will be fruitless, because all his life, he will be victorious.
- Joshua will never lose – and he never did.

Thereby the Lord made his promise come true. **The power of Joshua's victory did not lie with himself but with the Lord.**

- The lord never forsakes His servants – consider Moses as an example. He had a very difficult task of, man alone, controlling such a large and rebellious nation, but with the help of the Lord, he was able to do so.

Joshua was witness to all these events.

- Consider the history of Sihon and Og, which is recorded in Deuteronomy 3 & 4.

- And then especially the words recorded in Deuteronomy 3:21 onwards:  
**"And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, 'Your eyes have seen all that the Lord your God has done to these two kings; so will the Lord do to all the kingdoms through which you pass. 'You must not fear them, for the Lord your God Himself fights for you.' "Then I pleaded with the Lord at that time, saying: 'O Lord God, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your mighty hand, for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do anything like Your works and Your mighty deeds? (Deuteronomy 3:21-24)**

Just as Moses, Joshua could rely on assistance from God.

- The Lord will never forsake him nor deny him any help.
- This is why Deuteronomy 31:23 is closely repeated in Joshua 1:6.

**The fourth part** of the Lord's revelation to Joshua is found in verse 6. Joshua must be steadfast in his faith.

- It is not as if the Lord commanded only Joshua in the Old Testament to be steadfast in faith.
- In 1 Corinthians 16:13 the Lord commanded us:  
**Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.** (1Corinthians 16:13)

The Lord defined Joshua's calling explicitly: his duty to do battle and his obligation to believe (physical and spiritual calling).

- Joshua was to advance fearlessly without ever having any doubt in his mind.
- Joshua was the instrument through which the Lord was going to fulfil the promises He made under oath to Abraham. Compare Genesis 15:18 (also Genesis 24:7) and Exodus 32:13:  
**"Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.' "** (Exodus 32:13)

Joshua was the instrument used by the Lord to fulfil this covenant because he had to do the physical battle.

- He had to lead the Israelites and do battle – but the Lord of the Covenant granted the victory and as such gave the land.
- Joshua could thus so much more rely on the Lord because the Lord stood by His Own promises made in His calling of Joshua.

**The fifth part** of the revelation contains the Lord's good council to Joshua to keep his faith pure and steadfast. (verse 7, 8).

- Joshua 1: 3-6 has an encouraging character but in verses 7 and 8 it acquires an admonishing character.
- Here Joshua is warned to stay steadfast and unyielding in the maintaining and execution of the Lords' law.

Twice Joshua is cautioned to live scrupulously according to the Lords' law.

- He may not deviate either to the left or right.
- He must meditate on the contents of the law by day and night in order that it may reflect in what he does or says.

These words strongly remind of Deuteronomy 17:19, 20.

- The Lord predicted that when the people would enter Canaan, they would have to appoint a king.
- The principle is that a leader over the children of the Lord will come to be and therefore the Lord stipulated rigid guidelines on how this leader (king) must act.
- Consider the exact words and you will find that they have a strong similarity with what Joshua was told:  
**"Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. "And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, "that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.**  
 (Deuteronomy 17:18-20)

Still you must not come under the impression that the Lord expected this kind of conduct only from the leaders in the Old Testament and that it has nothing to do with us.

- In 1 Corinthians 15:58 this commandment is repeated in the language of the New Testament to all believers.

**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.**  
 (1 Corinthians 15:58)

- The Lord thus expects from everybody saved in Christ to live according to this style – whether we are leaders or not!

Joshua had to be an example of somebody carefully considering the commandments of the Lord before taking any action.

- As leader he had to be twice as much on the lookout for any deviations.
- For the people it is of cardinal importance that their leaders should bow to the law of the Lord.

True leaders must always comply “in flesh and blood” with the Lords’ law.

- In other words the leader has to go his way in such a manner that in his style of life, in his conversations and in his judgement, his awareness of the closeness of the Lord clearly shows.
- The only way a leader can manage this is by doing what the Lord told Joshua to do: he has to meditate on the word of the Lord by day and night.

We, as believers, have to penetrate into the spiritual depths of the word of the Lord.

- We must meticulously consider every portion thereof and concentrate lest nothing thereof is neglected in our lives.
- The Lord repeated that Joshua would provide good leadership and be successful in the war and will lead his people to their destination, should he stay with the Lords’ law.

**The sixth and final part** of the Lords’ revelation is again one of encouragement (v.9).

- Everybody always needs encouragement – without it nobody can survive properly.

- Have you ever considered what it took of the Lord Jesus to comply with the tiniest detail of every commandment of the Lord when He, as a human, lived on earth?
  - As it was part of His ministry of salvation, which He came to do, He managed not to make a single mistake anywhere.
  - At the end of His life there were no mistakes for which He had to face the throne of the Lord or had to be punished.

Still He was punished – for our sins, amongst others for our inability of truly staying with the matters put by the Lord as conditions mandatory for His protection.

- But we must never take it that His punishment means that we now have proceeded past the sins committed by us – as if the punishment for our sins has been borne already and that we now may continue committing sin.
- The redemption on the cross is not a license granting us leave to sin seeing that the sin has already been punished.
- The Lord Jesus carried our punishment in order that we now possess the ability to come to conversion.

Should we, as a church community, want to carry on existing at all, then all these principles set by the Lord for his people/church will have to be considered very carefully.

The matter is very simple:

- Should the church of the Lord servingly obey Him and fulfil their calling, then the Lord protects.
- Otherwise He exterminates.

His Holy Spirit is in fact working transformingly in us so that our faith and knowledge of Gods' Word and His mercy towards us may grow.

- In fact He is granting us the ability of considering all the demands of the Lord and making it become true.
- These are matters such as what our calling to the Lord is and how He expects us to execute it.
- Also the ability of constantly considering the principles of Gods' Word and making it ours.

*Carefully consider all the matters revealed by the Lord during those times of the history!*

- *Did the children of the Lord and their kings of those times stay with all these principles? The answer is: No!*
- *Through the years they dwindled – then the Lord exterminated them with two exiles. At a later stage the Israelites/Jews completely disappeared from the world map!*
- *The same will be true about us!*

Over many years the word of the Lord had the refrain that Joshua must be strong and brave.

- The ability to honestly believe and to associate with the Lord is harder than bravely fighting in the war.
- The redemption we have through the cross of our Lord Jesus is in fact aimed at us possessing the ability of fully living together with the Lord.
- We also have the guidance of the Holy Spirit granting us the ability of distinguishing between what is, in the eyes of the Lord, good or bad.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 96:1, 8

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 Modern King James Version**