

Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth¹. Beloved, grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ². By the powerful operation of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Psalm of praise 116:1, 8.

-1-

*I love the LORD, the fount of life and grace;
He heard my voice, my cry and supplication,
Inclined His ear, gave strength and consolation;
In life, in death, my heart will seek His face.*

-8-

*In all His people's presence I will pay
My vows to Him, the LORD so good and gracious.
To God the death of all His saints is precious;
In times of grief He is their help and stay.ⁱ*

Prayer

- **Doxology:**
- **Worship:**
- **Confession:**

Supplication (for pardon of sins):

- **Thanksgiving:**
- **Intercession (for the need of the congregation, the church, authorities, sinful world and appeal to the promises of God)**
- **General supplication:**
- **Illumination of the Holy Spirit (necessary for the ministry of the Word):**

Amen.

Psalm 25:1, 5

-1-

*Unto Thee, O LORD, my Savior,
I lift up my waiting soul.
O my God, in Thee I trusted;
Let no shame now o'er me roll.
On my enemies be shame,
Oft without a cause transgressing;
But all those who trust Thy Name
Honor with abundant blessing.*

-5-

*All the paths the LORD has chosen
Speak of truth and mercies pure
Unto such as keep His covenant
And His testimony sure.
For the glory of Thy Name,
Pardon, LORD, my evildoing;
Grievous though my sin and shame,
Hear my cry, Thy love renewing.ⁱⁱ*

Scripture reading: Matthew 24³

Text: Matthew 24:13: **¹³But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.**

It is probably fitting that we reflect on the condition of our world history and our place within it at the end of the year.

¹ Psalm 124:8

² 1 Corinthians 1:3

³ <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+24&version=KJV>

- We want reassurance that we will survive the terrible things of the last days, because the Lord Himself says that in those days violence and evil will be carried to the extreme.
- We will survive the violence and destruction of the End of Times, only if we know that God is with us then, and if we know how He wants us to act during that time.

We must also view this in terms of the fact that in Jesus Christ, we already have a covenant of faith with God, and furthermore that we vowed to God that we would celebrate 16 December as a Sabbath, to remember that He saved our lives and gave us victory during the battle of Blood River.

Generally, our view is that the the Lord will (and must!) bless us because we are believing Christians.

- And if one then looks at the history of one's own people and also at the history of one's world, then it is as if our faith seems to have become very thin.
- Of salvation in Jesus Christ, less and less is seen, and more and more is seen of the devil's violence!

And then it is as if the Bible increases our fear, because reading this passage together, we see that in the end, the Lord lets famines, disasters, oppressions, diseases, murders (sons delivering their fathers and fathers their sons, to death) and many more afflictions. This is our time!

But now; we must view and approach our own time with that same disposition that our ancestors viewed and approached their time.

- We must realise that God determines history.
- We must also realise that He preserves us.
- But then we have to also remember how and to what end the Lord preserves us!

The Lord does not only preserve us for this world, because this world passes.

- He preserves us to be with Him in His kingdom in the Hereafter.
- Thus, He preserves us in such a manner here on earth that our faith may be maintained so that when the earth's time has run out, we may then be taken up into the Hereafter with Him.
- Which is the how and where we must remember each day that history proceeds.

Against the back drop of all that we have mentioned, let us now look at the last days to know what all we can expect in accordance with the Lord's revelation.

- The first important fact is that we do not have to lack faith or become ridden with doubt, because God will keep us erect.
- The Bible says that we will be saved.
- The source of salvation will be from above our own strength.
- As always God will again provide.

The consequences hereof are that we have no need to rely on our own strengths which can withstand no more than a little pressure.

- God will give strength to the true believers to continue in faith in spite of the severest pressures and most terrifying tortures.
- Which is surely grace in the plainest language that the Lord can possible put it.
- Now already He encourages us to persevere in the face of the battle to come.
- He motivates us to expect and conquer these things with heavenly strength and insight.

The second thing to expect is that false religions will seduce the believers.

- The Lord warned the disciples: Take heed that you not be deceived (Luke 21:8)!^[iii]
- There will even be those who teach that they are the Christ, or who will claim that they possess the ideology of true salvation.

- These people will claim to come to us in the Name of the Lord Jesus, but being people who are themselves false their aim is to seduce the believers.

Perhaps it is not a very outlined rendering of the matter, but practically it means that the church will be attacked and as a result many false churches will be established.

- One of the attacks of our time is the theology of revolution.
- The forces fighting against us and which threaten the future, use the same Bible we do.

They say that there they read that the Lord Jesus lead an insurrection.

- He used violence twice when He cleansed the temple.
- In the Bible they read that he came for those who are oppressed by political systems – as were the Jews of His time.

Which is their reason for believing that they honour God when in our case, they launch attacks on us by using the church.

- In this line of destroyers who come from within the church, is amongst others also the world council of churches and many within our own midst who have started to read things in the Bible which have always been foreign to us up till now.

Thus from the start, the Lord clarifies the things which we experience today: in the miseries which will come to pass at the end of time, the false church occupies the central position.

- Read verse 11 again: many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.
- They seem to be believers, are members of and leaders within the church.
- But the consequences of their work within the church are deadly!
- Which is why we must very carefully listen to what people say when they speak of religion and service to God.
- Especially in our time where many churches are unable to distinguish between religion and politics.

What takes one's breath away, is that the Lord says that these things are not yet the end.

- Its but the beginning of the end.
- We have reason to suppose that things will only get worse closer to the end.

For exactly this reason the claim of this passage is so extremely serious.

- We must not become gullible, God controls history.
- But also for this reason we must take care to not loose our way with the dark forces by using the Bible and the church to the dishonour of God and the ruin of the world.
- You will therefore have to know your Bible like never before and you will have to test what you hear and you will have to test who each person is with whom you live.

These things will happen and are also busy happening, because we already hear of the wars and the rumours of wars of which the Lord speaks – and we are involved therein.

- But, what is our place in all of this? Where do we fit in? That is the important matter.
- How do we get through all these occurrences?

This we must know: there will be loads of tension. The Lords own words:

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. Matthew 24:9

Lets think carefully about what it is that the Lord predicts concerning the end:

- All the powers of hell join forces and the power of man and nature are joined: famines, earthquakes and wars and hate.
- Worse than that it cannot get.

We must therefore get our house in order and get our priorities straight, because this entire process of violence and misery is at the same time a process by which the church is purified.

- It is written in verse 10 that many people will stumble during this process and will hate and betray each other.
- Some of the so-called believers fall in with the people and forces who do wrong things.
- Which simply means that they cannot endure the pressure and strain that they meet with because they confess the Name of Jesus.
- Thus they betray their God and their faith.

Look again at what happens – very practically.

- People will plainly come to a decision regarding what they need to do so that their lives will become more comfortable for themselves.
- They thereby seek an escape, a way out whereby they do not have to suffer.

That is how simple it will seem from man's perspective.

- But from God's view of the matter it will be a matter of these people renouncing eternal life.
- In this manner the people who are blind in their faith are exposed, because this crisis sifts them out.
- This is why the Lord so urgently warns us to open our eyes and look at how God executes His grace in history.

The Lord also supplies the reason why people will so easily transgress against each other: their love for each other cools down. It is written down in verse 12^{viii}.

- Let us look how we fit in here: wars and earthquakes come from without, but love comes from within – out of man.
- Which makes the misery so much worse, because once man has become so bad from within, that he can no longer love, then it can be expected that he will turn his history and the whole earth into one big chunk of chaos.

But amidst all of this, the Lord still has mercy.

- Those who persevere to the end will be saved.
- Perseverance is thus possible:
 - Perseverance in love and faith.
 - Perseverance in true worship.

In these things the future breaks through. Because these things open up a future which is bigger and has much broader horizons than the earth's future.

- The earth's future runs out and is eventually cut off with the Second Coming and then eternity starts.
- It is the future which is limitless and eternal, because it is with God and in perfection.

Now we look toward our responsibility.

- These things are not spiritual child's play.
- It is the narrow and hard path in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- But grace is that by His death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus broke this path open for us.

And more, the Holy Spirit opens up our mind to know what to decide and what to do, if we are but serious enough to think about it and listen to what God's will is.

- There is not a single answer which is not within our reach.
- The important thing is however that in the Lord Jesus we have the strength and power to do what we must do.
- We can therefore persevere until the Lord comes.

Then all at once, our worry regarding our country's future lessens, because then we see the omnipotent power of God which encompasses also our history.

- Then we realise that we cannot dictate history,
- But then we must pay more attention to our relationship with God,
- So that we, because we persevere, may be saved when the Lord comes.

When we realise these things, then at once we realise how important it is that our relationship with God must be irreproachable.

- Our country will not survive eternity, because God makes a new heaven and a new earth for the Here After.
- But we will survive eternity – if we persevere in faith and correctly live that faith.

Let us therefore persevere in faith, because one of the parts of our faith is a firm confidence in the power and decrees of our Triune God. In this faithfulness and decree of God the best possible is provided for us, notwithstanding the most difficult of circumstances.

Amen.

Prayer.

Closing psalm 146:3

-3-

*Blest is he who has as helper
Him who listens to his pleas,
Jacob's God, the LORD so faithful;
He made heav'n and earth, the seas,
And all creatures of the deep;
He forever faith shall keep.^v*

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.⁴

Amen.

Dr. M.J. du Plessis
Reformed Church Bellville
Date: 16 December 2010.
Day of the vow 16 Desember 2010

⁴ 2 Corinthians 13:14

ⁱ http://www.genevanpsalter.com/attachments/GenPs116_Kuipers.HTM

ⁱⁱ http://www.genevanpsalter.com/attachments/GenPs025_Bronsema.HTM

ⁱⁱⁱ ⁸ And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. Luke 21:8

^{iv} ¹² And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

^v http://www.genevanpsalter.com/attachments/GenPs146_vanderKamp.HTM