

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: EVENING SERVICE SUNDAY 18 APRIL 2010

**Sing before (standing) :** Hymn 20-1:1

*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 18:11

**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 62:4

**Scripture reading:** PSALM 147

**Scripture text:** PSALM 147: 7-11 and Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 10.

**Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make music to our God on the harp. He covers the sky with clouds; He supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills. He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call. His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of a man; the LORD delights in those who fear Him, who put their hope in His unfailing love.**

This theme, that we and the whole of creation (must) proclaim the glory of the LORD, runs right through the Bible. Consider, for example, Psalm 19:

**For the director of music. A psalm of David.**

**“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands.**

**Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.”**

The whole of creation sings a long harmonious song about the miracle of God's providence that upholds everything and everybody.

- Should we summarize all that the Bible lists, we could say that at evening the stars take over from the lilies of the field the song of praise to the glory of God

- The stars in turn pass the song of praise on to the birds who in their song announce the break of day:
- **...when men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint; (Ecclesiastes 12:4)**

All these things proclaim the glory of the LORD because He provides that His Counsel – which is His omnipresent power - governs the merciful progress of everything.

- In this continuous and everlasting song to the omnipresent power of God we, people, must be the precentors!
- Sometimes people complain too much about life and its miseries and doubt whether the providence of the Lord for all things really exists – especially in their own lives!

It is therefore important that we place ourselves in the whole of creation – in between all the creatures God created – and observe who does what.

- We notice that the devil and his angels never sing!
- Why do they not sing or show any sign of happiness?

To understand this we must delve in to their history.

- They, too, were creatures which sang joyfully to the glory of God!
- They, too, were creatures who knew the joy of heaven and the presence of God! God created all His angels perfect.

But then they were misled by the devil because he wished to put himself in God's place.

- He was able to deceive one third of the angels and persuade them to follow him in a revolt against God.
- The result was that God expelled them from heaven and His presence and they realised the truth and the full extent of their situation.

Now they live in bitterness, anxiety and self-reproach. It was different before they were cast out of their dwelling!

*The question is: Do we want to be like that? Do we also want to sink into the darkness of hell in total rebellion and embittered towards God?*

Other believers are an example to us – the Lord let it be recorded in the Bible:

**“By day the LORD directs His love, at night His song is with me – a prayer to the God of my life.”** (Psalm 42:8)

This unknown son of Korah sang a song to God at night even in his deepest sorrow! It was a song in which he sang that he believed that by the providence of God he would once again be able to appear before the LORD in the temple.

Remember also the narrative of Job, where he confesses the providence of God and where the Lord by His providence changes everything:

**“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth.”**  
(Job 19:25)

**“After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.”** (Job 42:10)

**“The LORD blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys.” (Job 42:12)**

The Bible teaches clearly that the Lord governs everything according to His will.

- The Bible also makes it plain that in the execution of His Plan the Lord sometimes provides adversity and at other prosperity.
- Whether we experience it as adversity or prosperity, everything that the Lord provides for His true believers, He provides to their advantage and to His greater glory.

Let us review what Psalm 147 reveals to us:

- In verses 1, 7 and 12 Israel is called upon to praise the LORD for His merciful care (providence).
  - He builds up Jerusalem;
  - He gathers the exiles
- In verses 3-5 the Lord reveals His almight:
  - He upholds everything
  - With His almighty everywhere present power that surpasses all human power He is not only a spectator of everything that happens – He is the Provider.

We read of this in more places in the Bible:

**“Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.” (1 Chronicles 29:12)**

**“I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. [You asked,] ‘Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?’ Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.” (Job 42:2-3)**

Wherever the Lord is, there we find His almight and His providence. And He is present everywhere – hence His grace and His providence is present everywhere.

**God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being, as some of your own poets have said, “we are his offspring.” (Acts 17:27-28)**

**By Me kings reign and rulers make laws that are just; (Proverbs 8:15)**

Psalm 147 teaches that, with His immeasurable power, the LORD governs all things: clouds and rain, snow and frost - the cold of each winter, the grass that must grow.

**Great is our LORD and mighty in power; His understanding has no limit. (Psalm 147:5)**

**He covers the sky with clouds; he supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills. (Psalm 147:8)**

**He spreads the snow like wool and scatters the frost like ashes.**

**He hurls down His hail like pebbles. Who can withstand His icy blast? (Ps 147:16-17)**

Likewise He provides and governs the history of every nation. He determines who shall be the rulers and what they shall do - or not do.

**He grants peace to your borders and satisfies you with the finest of wheat.** (Psalm 147:14)

These matters which the LORD reveals to us in His Word concerning His providence are also contained in our creeds.

Let us read what we confess about this in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 10:

## 10. Lord's Day

Q. 27.

What dost thou mean by the providence of God?

A.

The almighty and everywhere present power of God; (a) whereby, as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs (b) heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, (c) fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, (d) riches and poverty, (e) yea, and all things come, not by chance, but be his fatherly hand. (f)

(a)

Acts 17:25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

Acts 17:26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

Acts 17:27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

Acts 17:28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

Jer.23:23 Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?

Jer.23:24 Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.

Isa.29:15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? And who knoweth us?

Isa.29:16 Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?

Ezek.8:12 Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.

(b)

Heb.1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

(c)

Jer.5:24 Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

Acts 14:17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

(d)

John 9:3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

(e)

Prov.22:2 The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.

(f)

Matt.10:20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

Prov.16:33 The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

Q. 28.

What advantage is it to us to know that God has created, and by his providence does still uphold all things?

A.

That we may be patient in adversity; (a) thankful in prosperity; (b) and that in all things, which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, (c) that nothing shall separate us from his love; (d) since all creatures are so in his hand, that without his will they cannot so much as move. (e)

(a)

Rom.5:3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

James 1:3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

Ps.39:9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.

Job 1:21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

Job 1:22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

(b)

Deut.8:10 When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.

1 Thess.5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

(c)

Ps.55:22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

Rom.5:4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

(d)

Rom.8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Rom.8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(e)

Job 1:12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

Job 2:6 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.

Acts 17:28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

Acts 17:25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

Prov.21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 65:7

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**

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**Scripture: New International Version**