

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2011: EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 119:10.

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 71:13+14

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: 4:1

Scripture reading: Psalm 73.

Scripture text: Psalm 73 and Heidelberg Catechism Lord's day 1.

Surely, there cannot be a more lonely moment in the life of any person than that moment when he stands with his sins alone before God.

- There in God's eternal council chamber.
- Before His face to be judged.
- Where God alone will judge the truth.

Our fear of death is caused by this moment.

- We do not know how we shall deal with that moment of fear and truth but we know full well that our life and our sin will then be a great terror.
- We also fear death because we know that nobody will in that moment of judgment be absolved on the strength of his own merit.

Viewed against this background each of us has a great need for the comfort of knowing that we shall survive that moment.

- It is this precisely that we find in Lord's Day 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism.
- This part of our confession of faith is simply a summary of the truths in the Bible that assure us that, in all trials and tribulations in life and in death, we are kept, cared for and supported by the Tri-une God – and also in this moment of judgment.

God's grace is always with us – because He has chosen us. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ never leaves us – Christ died for the people His Father had elected. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit is always with us – God always guides us to do good works and to abstain from evil while assuring us that we belong to God.

We find a brief summary of this truth in Ephesians 1:7-9:

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,

In this passage we discern an important matter:

- God is merciful to us!
- We, who are Christians, have the assurance that the Lord will take away from us all the pain and humiliation and brokenness we suffered on earth because of sin.
- We receive the comfort that the punishment we should receive because of our sins and unrighteousness will pass us by.
- We are taught that the Lord will care for us not only in the Hereafter, but in this life already He is gracious to us in all we do wrong when we pray to Him for it.

On earth we live subject to much stress.

- We are subject to the stresses of labour.
- We have stress at home because of various reasons.
- There are social stresses, economic and political tensions.
- The devil uses every facet of life possible to put us under stress in our faith to make us sink – should the Lord not stop him he would succeed.
- We must therefore have something to cling to in order to keep our faith – something the Lord gives us.

In this modern day the Lord still comes to us and teaches us that we need not be afraid at all.

- He gives our life a fresh purpose.
- In all circumstances we belong to Him!
- We need never fear that, without the will of the Lord, evil can ever harm us.

We belong to the Lord in a particular fashion. In John 10:14-16 Jesus Christ says:

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not sheep of this pen. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”

Or, if you prefer to hear it from the Old Testament, (it is written in a number of places in the Old Testament):

Isaiah 43:1: **But now, this is what the LORD says – he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel; “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name, you are mine.”**

I personally belong to the Lord because He even knows my name!

- Hence no crisis can harm me.

- The Lord Jesus Christ knows me and died for me so that no pressure or stress can break me.
- And, most important: nothing can take my salvation away from me – through death I go to God.

That is why God the Holy Spirit is with me.

- Because God knows me he lets his Holy Spirit guide me and also comfort me.
- He gives me the insight to know how to live righteously and also the insight to know that I must not succumb to my fears because I must know that I belong to God.
- God's comfort is that He cares for me in all things: financial matters, stress at work, old age, illness and death.
- Everywhere I receive the good as a gift by the grace of Jesus Christ.

Each of us should have the desire to share in this comfort.

- We truly need it.
- If the stress of the moment of judgment could be taken away from us it would help to reduce the fears we have in our daily life.

Hence the Lord proclaims this grace and comfort to us.

- It is in our interest to know we are chosen and really share in this comfort of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- We can only appreciate the grace if we are told of it because by nature we do not know this comfort – as Job confesses: wisdom and understanding is with God alone!

Nobody can with his own intellect reach this comfort because it is written in Romans 3.23 that all people have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

- If God does not reveal this comfort to us, we would like Paul have to cry out: **"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (Romans 7:24)**

Someone who believes that he is worth something, or that he can live without this comfort from the Lord, truly is the most wretched of all men.

- That was the case with the church in Laodicea.
- They said: **"I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing."**
- The Lord then said: **"But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. (Revelation 3:17)**

That brings us back to the beginning of the sermon.

- The struggle in our life concerns life and death.
- Our greatest worry is about the moment when we shall stand before God – what will happen then?

Death is for us the road to God's judgment.

- That is true up to a point because death was initially given as the punishment for sin.
- We have the same comfort that David had in Psalm 40:17: **Yet I am poor and needy; may the LORD think of me. You are my help and deliverer; O my God, do not delay.**

Or Romans 3.24:

And are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Death is for us in reality the path to God's eternal kingdom and the life everlasting.

That brings us finally to the question: How do I know that I share in this comfort?

- The fact that we must believe it. That is all.
- The faith will give birth to our persevering in the good.

We are the elect but that means nothing unless our responsible daily conduct proves this fact.

Your daily conduct will be determined by what you know about yourself.

- What is the extent of your sin and wretchedness?
- You must first realise how much you need God's comfort.
- When you realise the depth of your wretchedness then you will know that you share in God's grace.

A headstrong and arrogant person does not believe that he has any defects. He also lives in such manner that it is clear that he is not convinced that he needs God's help.

How great is our sin? That could require a long discussion and still not reach finality on the greatness.

- But we can be saved from it.
- And there lies the point, not only can we be saved – we **are truly saved!**

We are now obliged to demonstrate publicly that we share in this salvation.

We must live in such a way that everyone can see that the Holy Spirit governs us.

- Therefore our whole life must be a life of gratitude.
- With this comfort we stand in God's council chamber.
- For with this comfort we are already judged and absolved in the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Note well:** *Not found not guilty – we remain sinners, but we have a new life in Christ and for that reason God can absolve us in His Name.*

Let us read what our confession says of this in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 1:

1. Lord's Day

Question 1.

What is thy only comfort in life and death?

Answer.

That I with body and soul, both in life and death, (a) am not my own, (b) but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ; (c) who, with his precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins, (d) and delivered me from all the power of the devil; (e) and so preserves me (f) that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; (g) yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, (h) and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, (i) and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him. (j)

(a)

Rom.14:7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

Rom.14:8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

(b)

1 Cor.6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

(c)

1 Cor.3:23 And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

Tit.2:14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

(d)

1 Pet.1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

1 Pet.1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

1 John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 John 2:12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

(e)

Heb.2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

1 John 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

John 8:35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

John 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

(f)

John 6:39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

John 10:28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

2 Thess.3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil.

1 Pet.1:5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

(g)

Matt.10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

Matt.10:30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Matt.10:31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Luke 21:18 But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

(h)

Rom.8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

(i)

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 Cor.1:21 Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

2 Cor.1:22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

2 Cor.5:5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

Eph.1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Eph.1:14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Rom.8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

(j)

Rom.8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

1 John 3:3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Q. 2.

How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou, enjoying this comfort, mayest live and die happily?

A.

Three; (a)

the first, how great my sins and miseries are; (b)

the second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries; (c)

the third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance. (d)

(a)

Matt.11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Matt.11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Matt.11:30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Luke 24:46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

Luke 24:47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Luke 24:48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

1 Cor.6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Tit.3:3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

Tit.3:4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

Tit.3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Tit.3:6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

Tit.3:7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

(b)

John 9:41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

John 15:22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.

(c)

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Acts 10:43 To him (Jesus) give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

(d)

Eph.5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

Eph.5:9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

Eph.5:10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

Eph.5:11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

1 Pet.2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

1 Pet.2:10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Rom.6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

Rom.6:2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Rom.6:12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

Rom.6:13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 145:1+10.

Investment of office bearers.

Psalm 134:4

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