

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 5 APRIL 2009: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 23-2:2

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 107:1

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 119:63

Law

Psalm: 119:63

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 73:11, 12

Scripture reading: Psalm 8

Scripture text: Psalm 8:5 (Comp. The Belgic Confession. Art 13)

(8:5) What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?

(8:6) For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honour. (Psalm 8:4-5)

Sometimes life really demands a lot from us.

- Those are the times we have to remain very sober – times when strain, and especially despair and tension, gets hold of us, wanting to defeat us.
- We of course must realise that to test our faith the Lord in His disposition brings many things over us.
 - Physical weakness, sickness and even adversity like being laid off at work.
 - Some of us run private businesses, struggling to make ends meet because finances are poor.
 - All these matters eventually try to suffocate us, causing us to think that the sun has disappeared from our lives.

The Word of the Lord teaches that during those times we should be very patient as He, in every moment, is with us.

- He does not cast us into life leaving us trying to swim until, somewhere, land comes into sight.
- He plans and controls every moment of everything happening to us.
- Should we, in acceptance therein, bow to the Lord, he grants us eternal life.
- At any rate, nobody deserves any blessing whatsoever – all blessings are received purely out of mercy.

Do you still remember the words of the apostle Paul?

- In 2 Corinthians 4:2 he wrote: “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.”
- Even my battle is part of the grace of God.
 - The Bible teaches that, with the greatest tenderness, the Lord is caring for us.
 - Therefore nothing, either good or bad, can happen to us by chance.
 - The Lord disposes everything.

You must realise that, when you devote your whole life to the service of God, difficult demands will be made of you.

- In the life all of us will encounter demands which are difficult to satisfy. But know that God accompanies you through it.
- When the Israelites went to take the land of Canaan, because they knew that during this process many of them would be killed, they were very scared.
- Yet the Lord told them:
"Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."
 (Deuteronomy 31:6)

When passing through such trying times, we should know that the Lord also provides much prosperity and joy.

- Daily He grants us His protection.
- **At any rate the Lord protects you as a true believer in such a way that after this life you will enter His Kingdom.**

- There is only Joy there: Think about Psalm 116 where the author sings that the pains of death surrounded him and that the pangs of hell laid hold of him: he found trouble and sorrow.
- Later he sings that he does not know what to render the Lord for all His benefits towards him because the Lord had released his bonds and that he is His redeemed servant.

There is a refrain running throughout the Bible – and through the ages all the believers have heard it. God also tells it to us:

Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10)

What then is the origin of the evil? It originates from the devil.

- During this life the Lord still allows the devil to upset our lives and cause discomfort – remember Job.
- But in the hereafter, because the Lord does not allow him there at all, this is no longer possible.
- In Article 13 of the Belgic Confession we confess: “In this thought we rest, knowing that he holds in check the devils and all our enemies, who cannot hurt us without his permission and will.”

From the Bible we learn that us that nothing can happen to us by chance but only by the direction of God.

- With this we confess that, during any time of difficulty that may come over us, we will be patient.
- It is quite noteworthy that in our confession, we promise to refrain from rebellion.
- We also confess that for our future we fully put our trust in God. Our trust shall be so strong that no other creature nor anything else will be able to sever us from God’s love. (Catechism Sunday 10)

Let us consider an example from the Bible:

- Paul is facing the Jewish Council where the people want to tear him to pieces.
- For his survival the soldiers removed him to their encampment where they guarded him.

For a moment, put yourself in his shoes: Where to you go to when the people you preach to hate you with such a passion?

That night the Lord stood by Paul and told him:

"Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome." (Acts 23:11)

Paul’s suffering thus had a purpose! Paul had to go to Rome bearing powerful witness to the Lord.

Let us look at another example from the Bible:

- Paul and the crew were subjected to a very long storm at sea. They had already lost all sense of direction.
- Then the Lord revealed His saving grace to Paul. The following day Paul could tell about it: **And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.** (Acts 27:22 MKJV)
But now, I say to you, be of good heart, for there will be no loss of life, but only of the ship. (Acts 27:22 Basic English Version)

Under the most trying circumstances, a group of people, who were mostly heathens, had to receive the message of salvation by the Lord!

- It is remarkable that they had to rely and take heart in Paul's faith in God.
- Carefully listen to the words of Paul and you will understand it:
And so, O men, be of good heart, for I have faith in God that it will be as he said to me. (Acts 27:25)

By confessing the power of his faith, not theirs, Paul convinced the men aboard the ship!
“... be of good heart, **for I have faith in God that it will be as he said to me...**”

From this a very clear message comes to us:

- We must break with our conceit and accept an authority that is higher and bigger than ours.
- To be able to take heart we must not want to manage matters through our own power.
- We, by removing the glory from God because we think that we are able to handle life, often cause our own despondency.
- The anguish emanating from that causes us to sink into dejection.

The truth is that sometimes we also worry about the completely wrong matters.

Rachel died giving birth to her second child.

- The Bible teaches that the midwife told her not to be worried, as it again was a boy that was born! (Genesis 35:17)
- See how misplaced somebody's comments can be. Whist Rachel was dying the midwife was concerned whether it was a boy or not.
- Should we *get our priorities in order, we sometimes will be worried about far less matters.*

During the times of worry descending upon you, you must be very conscious about the grace of God:
The true believers are those, with deep dependency, seeing themselves in the hands of God.

They are also those who are called to share in the grace of God. Let us again look at another example from the Bible:

- A blind man sat next to the road and he implored the Lord for His mercy.
- Jesus stopped and said: “Let him come”
- Calling the blind man, they said to him: “Be comforted: come, he has sent for you.” (Mark 10:49)
- Then the Lord healed him.
- In this way he was released from his life of darkness so that he could see God the Saviour.

In another passage the Bible teaches that we must not become despondent. Experiencing difficulties has a specific purpose in our lives. The Lord teaches that even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. (2 Corinthians 4:16)

- The satan has built into the culture of humans a lot of planning by which he wants to bring us under the impression that there are forces, over and above God, deciding over the destiny of mankind.
- But in contrast with these false conceptions the Lord reveals Himself very clearly. He is God from eternity to eternity.
 - In Job 12:7 –12 it is written that the Lord created everything in existence and that He still is maintaining it. So powerful is God that he cares for every individual thing.
 - Matthew (6: 26 – 30) adds to this by teaching that the Lord cares for every little bird. They do not sow, neither do they build warehouses, but still the Lord sees to it that they obtain food.

- It is also written that man must look at the lilies of the field. They do not work – they grow only because God lets everyone of them grow.
- Psalm 104 adds to this that every blade of grass growing does so because it is planned by the Lord.

All people having such a great dependency on the Lord will understand how weak and wrong a person could be.

- This is why the author of Psalm 38:18 (MKJV) states: “For I will declare my iniquity; **I will be in anguish over my sin**”.
- This is where our concern should be – our sin must worry us so that we may confess our injustices.

The evening prior to the crucifixion the Lord woke up His disciples and urged them not to linger with this life and it's matters.

- They must set their **sights to the time beyond our history** when the Lord has overcome the world.
- There we also have the peace of God. (John 16:33)

You must always keep in mind that the whole life, suffering, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus in fact proves the stability of God's council over your life.

- In providence the Lord Jesus was promised.
- Then He arrived and fulfilled all the promises made in the Old Testament, through many centuries, by the Lord about Him.
- These matters were promised and granted to enable us to be of good courage and to trust in God.

We do not need to be ashamed should we become scared and dejected. We must just not be so caught up by it that we come to a halt and no longer fulfil our calling.

- The danger lies in that dejectedness may cause us to lose track resulting in our hands growing weak and losing our witness to the Lord.
- Think about this: the Lord Jesus also was afraid..
 - In fearing of what was to happen, He sweated blood.
 - Still He decided to, in obedience to God, submit Himself to the hatred and hypocrisy of the people so that he may save them.
 - You are also one of those who were saved.

Therefore you may not allow dejectedness to pull you off the road and parking you somewhere so that life may pass you by. We were called to live life to the glory of God. We were created for the purpose of complying with everything commanded by the Holy Spirit in order of us managing life responsibly.

But you must keep in mind that there is a continuation in the revelation of the Lord. As final fulfilment of the redemptive council the Lord Jesus will someday return.

- He will arrive on the clouds to destroy this present earth and its continuation.
- Then he will judge the responsibility each of us displayed during our earthly life.
- He then will judge our works and our faith.

As we are as a matter of fact unable to succeed in everything, there will be instances where we will be painted into a corner, but the fact that we are the saved children of God must awaken the fighting

spirit within us to not delete the colour of our redemption by our dejectedness. Remember that we are living in the Godly power of Jesus Christ.

Those who, with the highest degree of responsibility, believed in the redemption disposed by God in His Mediatorship will inhabit, in the everlasting presence of God the Almighty, the new earth.

Together let us look at what our confession teaches in the Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 10 about these matters:

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: 62:4

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

Dr MJ Du Plessis

Reformed Church Bellville

5 April 2009

Scripture Modern King James Version

PS.

Of course it is not true that we only need to blindly take heart. *Also we have a large responsibility to comply with.* In Joshua 7 and 8 we have a good example of this. Ai was only a small hamlet but they decisively conquered the Israelites. In retrospect it was because Achan sinned against God. After Achan was stoned to death the Lord commanded Joshua to attack Ai again. Joshua was dejected and afraid.

The Lord told Joshua: "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land.

(Joshua 8:1)

Consider the words of the Lord. Joshua must comply with his responsibility: he must take all the soldiers with him and arise. **The principle is that we must do everything we have to without having second thoughts.** Afterwards we must believe that the Lord will look after the rest.