

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 25 May 2008: EVENING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 146:2

*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 89:6

**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 102:12

Scripture: Romans 10

Text: Romans 10:20

**But Isaiah is very bold and says, "I was found by those who did not seek Me, I became known to those who did not ask after Me." (Modern KJV)**

Isaiah was ministering to a nation struggling much to live according to the truth.

- Continually he was preaching that they should listen to the wonderful gospel of peace with God.
- He preached that, according to the contents of God's covenant, He would not, as long as they converted themselves, allow the nation of Israel to perish.

But the people were so set in their disobedience that they refused conversion and, as a result of their persistence in sin, were carried away into exile.

Many years afterwards the Apostle Paul delivered a sermon about these things, written down in the prophecies of Isaiah.

- What upsets in Paul's sermon is that the children of Israel have not at all improved after all these years.
- He pointed out that this is the reason why God poured out His mercy onto other nations.

It seems that some Israelites tried to excuse themselves from Paul's charge. Because of that, Paul is starting this sermon about the folly of his nation with a prayer. He prays for the salvation of his people.

From verse 4 onwards Paul is showing to the people that the fault is with them: they are self-righteous.

- He is showing them the folly of self-righteousness – this type of foolishness, of a man thinking that he can determine his own salvation, is absurd.
- The point of view that man can earn his salvation by good deeds is in direct conflict with the justification that we gain through faith.
- The Law clearly pointed out that Jesus Christ would come, because we cannot gain salvation through adherence to the law.
- The law as saviour, thus ran up against Christ.

This is the thread, running through Paul's sermon: The final purpose of the Law is the Lord Jesus Christ.

- This is why the Lord caused to be written in verse 6: Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*.)
- The meaning of these words is: Who would be able to cause his own salvation himself?

The answer to this is not given straightforwardly, but is clear from what is written in verse 7:

- Just as impossible as it is for one of you to enter death and to, like Jesus Christ did, return from there, just as impossible it is for you to effect your own salvation by adhering to the law as the Jews did.

The meaning of this passage is that the Lord wants us to see that He appeared to Israel in His mercy, but they did not see Him.

- They did not want to find Him.
- The Lord quotes from another passage of the Old Testament (Joel 2:32):  
**And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.**

Joel prophesied that the Messiah and the time of the Messiah is coming.

- Seen against that background, this passage quoted in Romans means that everyone calling upon the Christ will have the justice through Him.
- Especially look at the word "whosoever".
  - "Whosoever" shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.
  - Whosoever does not mean only the Jews.
  - Here, already the Lord reveals that the heathen, just like the Jews, would be redeemed, should they worship the Messiah.

This is exactly the matter here in Romans.

- The Jews believed that only they would share in the mercy of God.
- They strongly believed that no heathen would ever share in God's mercy or love.

Paul is putting it to the Israelites that they have to remember that they rejected the mercy of God.

- From verse 14 onwards Paul is showing them that official preachers, sent by God, brought them the gospel.
- God specially called people, sending them to preach the fullness of the gospel to the Jews.
- But they rejected it.

You must keep in mind that the theme of Paul's sermon is that the Lord Jesus Christ is the end-purpose of the Law.

- Therefore the attention of the Israelites is drawn to Moses having said that Jesus will point out the path of life to the Jews, as well as to the heathen.
- This path of life will specifically be the faith.
  - Paul is referring to Deuteronomy 30:12 where the Law is brought onto the people by Moses.
  - Moses stated also that the Word was very close to them, in their mouths and hearts and that it will determine the life and joy or death and misfortune to them.

The Law said the same as the prophecies of the Old Testament, namely that the Messiah will be showing the road to faith to both the Jews as well as to the heathen. (Joel 2:32)

Romans 10:12 is stating this matter very clearly:

**For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.**

Also think about Romans 1:16 teaching that the believer will be saved by faith.

- Here the Lord is not saying that it is mandatory that the believer has to be a Jew or somebody belonging to a specific nation.
- The justification through faith is valid for all believers.

Furthermore, in Romans 10:14 the Lord is revealing that, everywhere where the Lord is called on in faith, it happens after a sermon is preached.

- This happened every place where somebody, specially called and sent by God, delivered a sermon.
- This worshipping, according to Paul's writing, only occurred where true faith was present amongst the people.

The outstanding matter is that nobody can possess true faith unless the things believed in were heard through preaching. This matter is very important.

- So important is listening to the sermon that it is put on the par with listening to Jesus himself.
- Paul is referring to Isaiah 52:7 where it is prophesied that:
  - the prophets will proclaim Christ
  - and that the Christ eventually himself will come
  - and that after Him, He again will send out messengers: **How beautiful are the footsteps of those preaching the gospel of peace.**

The preachers are heralds.

- A herald is somebody running in front of the king whenever the king was undertaking a journey.
- The herald would be continually blowing his trumpet, proclaiming that the king was approaching.
- The Lord says that He coupled religion and worship to the ministry just like the arrival of the king is coupled to the message of the herald.
- The preacher is the herald running in front with the message that the Lord is on his way!

Why does Paul go to such great detail?

- Because the Jews are denying that this gospel was ever brought to them.
- They did not recognise the prophets as ambassadors of the Lord.
- Also not the Messiah – Jesus Christ – upon his arrival.

Their denial about the Jews hearing this gospel, understanding and believing it, is shown clearly in the words of the Lord Jesus:

**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! ( Luke 13:34)**

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who are killing the prophets.

- Paul's whole argument is aimed at pointing out that the prophets did not speak out of their own conviction or power.
- In fact, it was the Lord Jesus himself, speaking through the mouth of the prophets.

Paul further proves that the situation since Isaiah is still unchanged.

- During the times of Isaiah, not many people were listening to the preaching because Isaiah once said: **Lord, who believed our preaching?** (Isaiah 53:1)
  - When Isaiah said this, he was complaining about the disbelief of his nation.
    - The prophet was complaining because whilst the beautiful gospel of redemption was being brought to the people they stubbornly refused to believe it.

Therefore the Lord is saying that faith comes through hearing, and that what you must hear, is the Word of God. (v.17) Only through ministering can you believe, because the Holy Spirit uses the preaching to explain the Word of God, so that it can lead you growing in your faith.

The Lord now is asking (v.18): **Have you perhaps not heard the gospel?**

- Is that what you are appealing to when doing things that the Lord does not want?
- Or when you believe things that are false?
- Or when you are lacking in knowledge of the Lord and his Word?

The answer is short: You certainly have heard.

- The voice of the Lord went over the whole earth and His words were heard everywhere.
- The Lord did not withhold his gospel from anybody.
- Everybody's excuse is hereby nullified: We are standing guilty.

Then the Lord is asking: Did you perhaps not understand?

- If the people did not understand it is because they did not want to understand.
- Here the Lord is referring to Deuteronomy 32:21
  - The Jews exasperated God through their disobedience.
  - God then said that He is going to make them envious by causing diligence amongst those who are the "non-Jew" – the heathen.

The meaning of the text shows clearly:

- The Lord appeared to Israel, but they did not want to see Him.
- The Lord then appeared to those who did not ask that He should appear to them.
- The heathen – those who were called by the Lord as the "non-Jew". The Lord caused Himself to be found by those who did not seek Him.

The Lord says that he went to great lengths for His people. He quotes from Isaiah 65:2 where it is written that the Lord extended His hands the whole day long towards a disobedient and rebellious people. Israel thus heard clearly but persisted in contradiction.

Now, brothers and sisters we must see ourselves in this Bible passage. What are we doing with the mercy of God? Jesus also died for us!

- In fact, He is again calling us to the Holy Communion so that we may again hear it.
- Are you still jubilant because the Lord Jesus let Himself be found by us? Are you still aware of how large the grace of God is and what it entails for us?

We must always remember this – not only when we are preparing for the Holy Communion.

- We must especially remember this when we let an opportunity pass by to pray, attend church or to read the Bible . That is an opportunity that is lost.
- Our church-going, especially, is of great importance to the Lord, therefore he is giving much attention in this passage to let us understand that He uses the sermon to further our growth in faith.
- The sermon is also used by the Lord to expel false teachings from our minds.
- He is using the ministry of the Word to sharpen our knowledge and, above all, to gather us in His presence.
- Through the ministry He blesses us
- And He strengthens us.

This passage in the Bible contains somewhat of an admonishment. because of the believer hearing but refusing to listen to it. Nevertheless this is a passage of mercy because it says that all day long the Lord is stretching His hands over us.

- Even if we are contradictory, still the Lord continually visits us in His Love.
- We are those to whom the Lord appeared, without us asking for it.
- We are those who He led to find Him whilst we were not looking for Him.

But now the bond between God and us is forged.

- We are incorporated in the Lord Jesus Christ's covenant of redemption.
- We must be very thankful about the excellence of the Lord, answering thereto by devoting our whole life to the Lord.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer

Closing Psalm 71:1,9

The Lord bless and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you, the Lord turn his countenance to you and give you peace.

**Amen**

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**25 May 2008**

**Scripture: King James Version.**