

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 18 JULY 2010: MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 42:3

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 146:1, 7

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 universal 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 103:5

Law

Psalm: 103:5

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 2:3,4

Scripture reading: Romans 2:1 –16 and Romans 14:1 - 23

Scripture text: Romans 14:11

For it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God." (Romans 14:11)

The letter to the Romans has a particular theme: The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a power of God to salvation of everyone who believes. (1:16)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16,17)

The people sharing this salvation must follow a specific lifestyle else they cannot be part of the saving power of God.

This brings us to a big dilemma: This judgement rules that there are no neutral areas in anybody's life.

- Either you apply your power and obedience to service of God and His Kingdom,
- or you serve the devil and the forces of hell.

Therefore the letter to the Romans brings us face to face with the following important realities:

- God and God alone handles the judgement over people and their activities. Any person placing himself in the place of God the Judge forfeits his sanctification.
- The Lord sharply lines out this matter: Somebody judging (writing off) other people will, because he also sins, himself be judged.
 - o The Lord makes it clear that the person judging others might not be guilty of the same sin, but he does have other sins and therefore somebody judging others will be in trouble himself.

The Lord clearly motivates that God and God alone has measures that are true and containing the full truth – only He can, with full truth, judge over right and wrong.

- Somebody judging other people must keep in mind that they themselves cannot escape the judgement of God.
- People judging other people are unable to see the mercy and tolerance of God towards sinners.
- The reason is that they cannot see how the Lord bestows mercy on other people, just as sinful as they.
- People doing that are in contempt of the mercy and love of God.

The crux of the matter is that the Lord warns that there are people living under the illusion that they have exemption from the judgement of the Lord whilst others must undergo it.

- The Lord wants us to realise that all people are subject to the judgement of the Lord.

It is true that, because they have something else: they are under the mercy of the Lord, the believers fall in a different way under the judgement of the Lord.

- The Lord, in fact, wants us to experience His mercy of not having fallen into the moral decay of the heathendom.
- It is purely His mercy keeping us away from it.

Together herewith is the voice of the Holy Spirit calling us to conversion else the judgement of the Lord would be executed over us – as over the people mentioned in chapter 1:26 – 32

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. 28 And

even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

(Romans 1:26-32)

We must realise that the Lord should have already punished us for all our deeds, but it has not happened yet.

- Because the judgement of the Lord is still waiting we have not been punished yet.
- We are still receiving mercy-time to grow, without judging other people, out of our own sins.

Verse 4 puts it very clearly that the mercy of the Lord wants to lead us to conversion.

- Should we not want to make this mercy of the gospel of the Lord Jesus our own, we will land into serious trouble.
- The judgement of the Lord will overtake us.

Here the Bible teaches something not easily accepted during our times in many circles, namely that we must not hide behind the Lord's incorruptible and just mercy.

- To the people not wanting to listen there is plainly no mercy.
- Such people, through their wrong conduct, cause themselves loads of trouble. The Bible says:

But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God, (Romans 2:5)

Take note of the accentuation words: **hardness and your impenitent heart**. This is where the trouble starts and it is also the matter driving the trouble.

- Impenitence means "rebellious against the Lord"
- Impenitence means that you stall and refuse to change:
 - o You do not want to live towards the mercy of God.
 - o You want to stall in sin and all the matters you like, but disliked by the Lord.

Impenitence has in these two read passages also the meaning that impenitent people, because they are always ready to argue or criticise, do not serve the edification of their co-believers in the congregation.

The Lord reveals what these things lead to.

- He, in His just and final judgement, will be experienced by some as a terrible judgement and as an incalculable blessing by others.
- It is not two different acts; it is one just judgement coming over everybody.

To the one group the final judgement is an event where the Lord grants them access to eternal life.

- These are those who broke away from decay and sought the glory of God – even should they many times have been under pressure or possibly have had little abilities.

The final destination of the other group is oppression and anxiety.

- The Lord tells exactly which people they are: they are those who were headstrong, arrogant and did wrong things.

This matter is so important to the Lord that He repeated it twice (in a style that formed a mirror image)

- The first time in chapter 2:7,8
...eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness-indignation and wrath, (Romans 2:7,8)
- The second time in chapter 2:9,10
...tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 2:9,10)

Each time the Lord also puts the persuasion of these two groups in contrast with each other.

The Lord does not execute His final judgement on a base of prejudice.

- He does not judge the Jew different than the Greek. Put in our modern idiom: The Lord does not make a difference in judging a European or Zulu.
- He does not adopt the person
- He judges the attribute and obedience of each person to the Lord.

This attribute we have towards the Lord shows in the way we live.

- Everybody does not do the same as they do not think and understand in the same way. Also their talents are not the same.
- The Lord refers to examples of this: some people only eat vegetables whilst others eat everything.
- The Bible indicates that the person eating vegetables only is the one misunderstanding matters, because the Bible teaches that such a person is somebody who is weak.
- Still the Lord does not say that such a person is committing sin. On the contrary, the Lord stresses the point that He has adopted him. (14:3)
For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. (Romans 14:2,3)

The Bible is very clear: we must not argue about matters not directly related to our salvation.

- This we call less important matters.
- The Bible gives examples of such matters:
 - o Some people do not eat his, and others do not eat that.
 - o Some regard this day of the week as the most important whilst others regard another day of the week as the most important.
- Such matters do not free us from our sins, thus we may have different viewpoints about it.

On the other hand we must maintain all matters relevant to the glory of God.

- Principles prescribed and demanded by the Lord for true worship are not debatable.
- These principles place the purpose of our existence into perspective: We may never live for ourselves. Immaterial whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.(14:8)

For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. (Romans 14:8)

Our lives must bear these signs. Therefore the Lord grants us a lot of freedom. He says that should I, as I understand it to be, consider something to be impure, then to me, it is impure. (14:14)

I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

(Romans 14:14)

Still, I must not force my viewpoint on such less important matters onto my neighbour, because then I grieve him – the Lord dislikes it because it is not according to the love.

Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. (Romans 14:15)

The Lord gives His reason why we should not follow this style:

- He says that by such altercation we bring down people whom the Lord Jesus died for. (14:15)
- The Bible in Basic English translates it as such: “Do not let your food be destruction to him for whom Christ went into death.”

We know that our worship deals with serving and worshipping the Lord.

- But something we think about less is what is meant when it comes to our mutual faith-activities.
- Again the Bible puts it clearly that the Lord Jesus died and arose so that He can rule over the living and dead.

In His rule over us He describes exactly what conduct He expects from us:

- We must not altercate about less important matters.
- We must pay attention to justness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
- We must pay attention to the matters building and promoting mutual peace.(14:17 – 19)
for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. (Romans 14:17 – 19)

In short: our worshipping deals with the true worship of God and the edification of the congregation.

- Should we not do these things, then not only do we land in a position of discomfort with the Lord – the Lord warns us that we also lose our name with the people. (14:16)
Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; (Romans 14:16)
- You may now think that it is at any rate not a matter to the Lord should other people (possibly even non-believers) go about slandering and speaking badly about the members of the church.
- But it is not so. The church is the body of the Lord and He, because His glory immediately comes to play, does not like it at all should people go about speaking badly about the church.
- This is why the Lord demands that even the heathen must bear good testimony about a man before he may be elected as an elder. (Timothy)

Our congregation must take a strong grasp of this message: We, amongst ourselves, may not be argumentative about matters not really serving the being and glory of God.

- We, should we not agree about matters must especially guard against despising or writing off each other.
- Should we do something that is really wrong to the face of the Lord, then we must investigate it with the proper proof from the Bible.

In this investigation we must not err like the Romans did in that everybody wanted to force his own viewpoint onto the other members of the congregation.

- We must continue with the investigation until we have the full truth from the Bible and then submit ourselves thereto.
- We must also not, when we have done something wrong, sin towards the other side, in other words, pretend as if somebody else from the congregation, who admonished me, just wanted to split hairs.
- Indeed the Holy Spirit uses us to admonish and build up each other to the glory of God.
- The final product must be that we do what the Lord says: We must bow to Him.

The crucifixion-death of the Lord Jesus was not just for a joke or superficial redemption.

- His death is totally encroaching upon all of us.
- His death reaches into the deepest depth of our character and demands us to change and convert from sin.
- We must erase all tracks of man obedient to Satan and by heart and soul worship our eternal Saviour, Jesus Christ.
- This we do by word and confession – but we also do it by the deed, hand in hand with all that, through the Lord are together with me, grouped into one congregation.

We must realise that the Lord Jesus will have us bow to Him at any rate.

- Those who are obedient will, by the cross-death, be redeemed from all their sin and will bow to Him in the hereafter.
- Those that do not want to listen, stalling in their own arrogance and non-conversion, will bow to His judgement. They, without them being able to do anything about it, will end up in the eternal Hades.

Remember the words of the Lord:

"As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God." (Romans 14:11)

Amen

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 43:1

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

Amen

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