

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 28 OCTOBER 2007: MORNING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 119:36

*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 68:15

**Confession of faith:** Nicene

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

And we believe one holy catholic\* and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

**Amen.**

*After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 79:5+9.*

Law

Psalm: 79:5+9

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: 93:1

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 8

**Text:** Deuteronomy 8:4

*"Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years."*

The Bible starts with the history of two persons:

- In Paradise there lived two naked people – they were put on earth unclothed.
- After committing sin their situation changed for the Lord made them clothes of skin.
- The garments they received together with the Lord's promise that they would be redeemed of their sin when someone would be born of their seed who would destroy the serpent.
- Which meant that by the grace of God they would eventually be saved.

In the chapter we read together Moses exhorts the people of Israel to serve this Lord.

- In doing so, he reminds them of the journey through the desert.
- And in his commands Moses told the people what they must do when they are in Canaan.

Here he tells them what they must do now. The command is: Serve the Lord. That is why they are reminded of the Lord's grace. But note what the Lord refers to:

- He does not say that they came to know His grace in times of prosperity. He says that they must remember their life in the wilderness.
- They must not consider the joyful days. They must consider how the Lord used this time in the wilderness to humble them.
- That was a time during which the Lord tested them so that their disposition in their obedience to Him could be known. A period of testing is therefore a period of grace.

The Lord reminds them that they ate food unknown to them. He fed them with manna. They did not consider this to be the best food. In Psalm 107:18 the Holy Spirit tells us how the Israelites felt about the food the Lord gave them in the wilderness: *"Their souls abhorred all manner of food, and they drew near to the gates of death"*.

What they failed to see was that they did have food.

- They did not die of hunger.
- The Lord reminds them of these difficult times to show them His grace.
- In those times the Lord's grace stands out the clearest.
- The Lord made them suffer famine (verse 3) – but He gave them manna and the quails as food.
- The Lord let them suffer thirst (verse 15) – but He provided water so that they and their cattle could drink.

The Lord led them through a great and terrible wilderness.

- That was not a pleasant time and they remember how terrible it was (verse 15) – yet by the grace of God they now stand at the end of that journey.
- Poisonous serpents and scorpions killed them, but through that too the Lord led them.

What was the purpose of the Lord with all these trials He brought over Israel? The Lord gives three reasons:

- Firstly, that the wealth and power of the grace of the Lord might be revealed so that they would worship and revere Him.
- Secondly, *"to do you good in the end"* (verse 16).
- Thirdly, that they might understand the words that the Lord Jesus also quoted *"that man shall not live by bread alone: but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord"* (verse 3 and Matthew 4:4 and Luke 4:4).

Against this background the Lord points to the miracle that their clothes did not wear out.

- It was a miracle that during forty years in the wilderness their clothes did not wear out.
- Their sandals did not wear out and fall off their feet.

This was such a striking event that centuries later the prophet Nehemia still mentioned it: *"Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, they lacked nothing; their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell."* (Nehemia 9:21)

God's grace over us is today still indestructible – only we must see it.

To the Lord clothing is important, for garments are one of the strongest expressions of the Lord's grace that we carry with us every day.

- That is why the Lord employs clothing as proof of His ever-presence and His personal grace – on their bodies they experienced that the Lord guided and kept them without their garments wearing out.
- We read of clothing the first time when the Lord made garments of skin for Adam and Eve after they had sinned. Clothing is therefore also a symbol of God's grace to us.

*"Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them".* (Genesis 3:21)

Throughout the Bible clothing is an important symbol:

- The almight of God is symbolised with clothing. *"The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The Lord is clothed, He has girded Himself with strength."* (Psalm 93:1)
- Kings and powerful people wore garments that symbolised their power and authority: *"Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom".* (Daniel 5:29)

We read of festive clothing when people were happy and the opposite when not.

- People who repented their sin showed this in their clothing.
- A good example we find when Jonah preached in Nineveh. *"So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them."* (Jonah 3:5)

The Bible closes our earthly history and opens the new history of the Hereafter by showing us people clothed in a particular way.

- We do not start our new history naked. *"He who overcomes, shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels".* (Revelation 3:5)

What occurred between the two beginnings?

- Jesus Christ came and reconciled us with God so that we could start afresh wearing white clothes before the throne of God.
- To symbolise this salvation and its meaning in our life the Lord uses the symbol of clothing.

The Lord Jesus redeemed us from sin and its violence and now we may appropriate the wonderful benefits Jesus Christ acquired for us through His merit.

- His suretyship is a garment without which we may not appear before God.
- The Lord also says that Jesus Christ is clothed with power: *"and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ Our Lord."* (Romans 1:4)

The Lord says the following about the way in which we come to repentance and how this is expressed in our life: *"... for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."* (Galatians 3:27)

Our Christianity must be on us like clothing and all the unbelievers must see that there is a difference between us and them.

We read the same in Romans 13:14: *"Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."*

We must clothe ourselves with love. We must clothe ourselves with the new man who is renewed more and more towards the image of our Creator and towards the full knowledge of God.

*"But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection."* (Colossians 3:14) and the following verse *"... and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him."* (Colossians 3:10)

We must put on the clothes of righteousness and of holiness.

*"And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."* (Ephesians 4:24)

Where does the salvation in Christ take us?

- We shall be bodily resurrected from death and be renewed by God in the life eternal.
- This too is symbolised by the Lord with clothing.

*"For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory'."* (1 Corinthians 15:53-54)

The life eternal is put onto our bodies like clothing. We shall wear the clothes of victory.

- For the people who refuse to repent and refuse to serve God, clothing also symbolises what their fate will be.
- In Psalm 102:26 the Lord says that heaven and earth shall perish but God shall remain.

*"They will perish, but You remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing You will change them and they will be discarded. But You remain the same and Your years will never end."* (Psalm 102:26-27)

The same is written in Hebrews 1:1: *“They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment.”*

For us who are saved it will be different – we are clothed with glory.

- In Zechariah 3:4 we have a prophecy how we appear before God in sin and are forgiven and glorified. *“The angel said to those who were standing before him, ‘Take off his filthy clothes’. Then he said to Joshua, ‘See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you’.* (Zechariah 3:4)

The Lord revealed the glory of His salvation to Isaiah also. He exulted: *“I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest and as a bride adorns herself with jewels.”* (Isaiah 61:10)

The Lord clothed us in the Lord Jesus Christ with victory over sin and death.

- The Lord gave us a belt of power in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Our entire life – also the way in which we dress must reflect the glory of God.
- Our entire humanity must radiate the glory of God.

He is blessed who – although he/she has sinned – is clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Such person can be clothed with the garments of the righteousness of Jesus Christ always turn to the Lord in prayer.
- He can always turn to the Lord to thank Him for he is clothed in garments of which he need not be ashamed before God, his clothes are white and imperishably clean in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us rid ourselves of all that is dirty and ugly and let us wear the clothes of glory and live to meet the Lord until He clothes us with the imperishable white garments of eternity – of which the clothing of the Israelites that did not wear out was the sign.

**Amen**

Closing prayer

Closing Psalm: 104:1+21

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be merciful to you.

The Lord turn His countenance to you and give you peace.

**Amen**

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Scripture NIV