

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 9 MARCH 2014 MORNING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 103:7

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 73:11

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 138:4

Law

Psalm: 138:4

Prayer:

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation of 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 40:6

Scripture reading: Joshua 1

Scripture text: Joshua 1:9

Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

(Joshua 1:9)

How often does it happen that we shy away from what we have to do?

- Then we are unwilling to tackle a specific task because we feel that our own power is too little and that we are unable to do so.
- Or we tackle a task with so much half-heartedness that whatever we could still do is also nullified.

In the passage we have read an old man faces us. Joshua. He is no longer a youngster.

- Forty years ago he was one of the men that had to spy on Canaan and report whether the land could be possessed.
- We remember that this same Joshua together with Caleb brought out a minority report stating that they believed the land could indeed be possessed.

By now Joshua is spiritually a lot stronger than that day. Meanwhile he was thoroughly trained by life – readied for his calling.

- In the times since his spy mission and his ascending Moses as leader of Israel there was his battle against the Amalekites.
- Furthermore Joshua was constantly with Moses – he was the right-hand man of Moses.
 - He received training and the example from Moses in leading the people.
 - We could say that in a certain sense he received practical training to some day take over the leadership over the people.

The Israelites had no doubt at all whom the man would be to one-day take over from Moses.

- There was only one possible choice – Joshua.
- Still his courage faltered the day he had to take over from Moses.

The taking over did not catch Joshua offside.

- He was already prepared that he had to take over from Moses.
- In Deuteronomy 31:7 we read that Moses called him and in the presence of the children of Israel told him:

"Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it.

During this event Moses also encouraged him:

"And the Lord, He is the one who goes before you.

He will be with you,

He will not leave you nor forsake you;

do not fear nor be dismayed."

But still, when the day arrived Joshua hesitated. We hear the Lord addressing him. Thrice the Lord had to assure him:

Be strong!

And in verse 7:

Be strong and of good courage!

The entire assembly knew Joshua. He was not a man of words only.

- He was a man of deeds. - This they noticed throughout his entire life.
- They considered him to be truly strong.

But God sees the insides of man. He knew Joshua in his weakness.

Therefore He told Joshua:

Be strong!

At the end the Lord has all the people also encouraging him.

- They say that they will heed Joshua as they heeded Moses.
- They assured him that they knew that God would be with him as He was with Moses.
- And then again the refrain:
Be strong and of good courage!

Only after hearing these words Joshua acted. Only at that stage did he gain courage. Then he is strengthened. Then he will invade Canaan.

We then read further about his power in the Lord. In his entire life we see the strength of the Lord that was promised to him.

- He does not storm into Canaan and do battle with everybody.
- No, because faith-trust and strength and courage in God is not faith-fanaticism.
 - It expects you using the brain given to you by the Father.
 - It expects also that you will develop your responsibility to the maximum.

Strength in the Lord is in fact a calmness in which you know that the Lord will guide you through all, as long as you develop and use your responsibility and brain to the maximum in every matter.

Look in this instance at the example the Bible gives us in Joshua.

- Joshua was a top strategist. History researchers consider him to be the greatest militarist produced by the world in his times.
- We have dug up the Amarna letters where this history is also recorded.
- These world history descriptions of these documents confirm everything written in the Bible about the history of Joshua.

In these documents we read that Palestine of those times was divided into very small kingdoms.

- But these small kingdoms had good defense agreements with each other.
- It was thus not easy attacking or invading them.
- In their armies they used battlewagons that could move very fast and has extremely long blades attached to the wheels which cut the foot soldiers of the enemy to ribbons.
- Furthermore it was so that these small kingdoms were always attacked from the south via Egypt or otherwise from the north, from the direction of the mount Lebanon. They were well prepared against attacks from both these directions.

But Joshua surprised them completely. He goes through the desert and attacks then from the east.

- This is the first time in their history that this happens – the people of Palestine always believed that it was impossible to attack them from the direction out of the desert.
- Joshua caught them totally unawares.
- Further he surprises them by invading Palestine right in the center.
 - Thereby he divided the land in two and totally destroyed the power of the armies.
 - Now they were unable to reach each other and form a proper battlefield.

The Holy Spirit guides Joshua to even greater insights and heights.

- He chooses the battleground.
- He forces the Canaanites to fight in the stony field and hillocks where they cannot use their battle wagons.
- He totally disturbs their method of battling. In this way he occupied Canaan.

From this, beloved, you learn that the strength in the Lord does not mean that resistance will stay out.

- The Lord gives us His strength and therefore He commands us to continue the battle in this world with hope.
- And this, so that the glory of the victory can go to Him.

It is also not for no reason that the Lord tells us to have good faith and be strong because we can depend upon His aid.

- God the Father never leaves us to our own lot.
- He also never denies us the needed help.

The confirmation of these promises by the Lord is summarized in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- On the cross He took the wrath of the Father onto Himself to atone our sins and us with the Father.
- By this deed He ensured us that in future we will live in the strength and courage of God.

This gives us the needed courage of life because God never leaves the work of His hands.

- Therefore He would also not bring His Son Jesus to the cross and deny us the love and aid He attained there.
- Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

In our times it is even more true than in the times of Joshua.

- The earnings of the Lord Jesus Christ for us did not reach its entire fulfillment on the cross.
- It is still being fulfilled in it that He continually pleads to the Father for us.
- He is continually in prayer and supplication to the Father to envelop us in His strength so that we need not be scared or frightened.

Joshua was told that the Lord would be with him wherever he goes.

- We have a richer promise. No, more than a promise, because we experience the presence of God so much more powerful.
- Through the cross God Himself came to dwell in us – He is not only with us, He is inside of us.
- The Lord Jesus sent God the Holy Spirit back to be our Leader, so that we can continue living with strength and courage.
 - Strength, because the wisdom of God prompts us.
 - Courage, because He is the Planner. No matter how large the trial, He plans even that so that we can safely and to our good be taken through it.

But we have even more. God the Father assures us of these matters via the preaching.

- With every sermon God the Holy Spirit comes and completes the cross-earnings in the sense that He assures us about the truth thereof.
- He continually installs it into our hearts to the strengthening of our faith and to our encouragement during the battle.

The battle was tough for the people during the times of the Lord Jesus, but we can expect that in our times it will increase.

- Therefore we must, the nearer we come to the end, so much more hear the words of the Lord:

Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

No matter how much tension our times brings, just believe.

- But do not fall into faith fanaticism.
- Seek responsibility together with your faith.
- Add deed to your word. Why would you hesitate? Because the Lord is with you, wherever you may go and He again assures you about it through the revelation in His Holy Word.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 18:17

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
Helping Reverend
Reformed Church Clanwilliam
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