

¹² *Let your hope keep you joyful, be patient in your troubles, and pray at all times.*

The readings for your perusal today are: Jeremiah 15: 15-21, Romans 12: 9-21 and Matthew 16: 21-28.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

It is interesting how many of us are like the Prophet Jeremiah who had the attitude towards God of ‘I said’ instead of ‘what is it you want me to do Lord?’ or ‘Thy will be done.’ Does that ring a bell with you dear reader today? Jeremiah attitude was very much about telling God: ¹⁵ *Then I said, “LORD, you understand. Remember me and help me. Let me have revenge on those who persecute me. Do not be so patient with them that they succeed in killing me. Remember that it is for your sake that I am insulted.* Poor Jeremiah, he is feeling hard done by, just as we do when things do not go our way. Let us consider what has happened - God had given Jeremiah a job to do, Jeremiah had to prophecy or pass on God’s instruction to His people. Of course as we can read Jeremiah was not happy with this, he felt that he was all alone, in fact he wasn’t married at this point and had few friends, such is the prophets life or the life of the man and woman of faith. We know all too well here in the West and in other parts of the world that many people will not like you if you speak, spread and teach God’s message and especially if you live your life according to God’s word, because by doing this you are going directly up against the world. As we can see Jeremiah took his complaint to the Lord: ¹⁶ *You spoke to me, and I listened to every word. I belong to you, LORD God Almighty, and so your words filled my heart with joy and happiness.* ¹⁷ *I did not spend my time with other people, laughing and having a good time [following the ways of the immoral world]. In obedience to your orders I stayed by myself and was filled with anger.* God is aware of Jeremiah’s situation, as He is aware of our daily situation in life. God knows that Jeremiah has been faithful and has lived his life according to God’s word. He knows that Jeremiah digested God’s word when he found the lost scriptures in the temple during the reign of Josiah in 621 BC. We know that Jeremiah

was delighted in God's word, so much so that he made them part of himself, in other words he took God's word to heart and lived his life accordingly but found himself alone. Jeremiah knew and felt that divine constraint was upon him, he knew as the Bible tells us that he had to avoid those who are trouble or who are likely to lead us or him away from God.

Despite his faith and obedience to God and His Word Jeremiah had nagging doubts about himself, was he worthy to do God's work, was he doing the right thing, he was even doubting the faithfulness of God, for he felt let down, alone. Jeremiah even accuses God of being undependable, in contrast to earlier in the book when God describes himself as a 'fountain of living waters' in chap 2 v 13. So, Jeremiah questions: ¹⁸ *Why do I keep on suffering? Why are my wounds incurable? Why won't they heal? Do you intend to disappoint me like a stream that goes dry in the summer?"*

Jeremiah is human, he is prone to doubt as we all are, even the strongest man or woman of faith amongst us doubts and worry over their Christian service, but what did God do? He replied! He heard Jeremiah's cry and said: ¹⁹ *To this the LORD replied, "If you return, I will take you back, and you will be my servant again. If instead of talking nonsense you proclaim a worthwhile message, you will be my prophet again. The people will come back to you, and you will not need to go to them. ²⁰ I will make you like a solid bronze wall as far as they are concerned. They will fight against you, but they will not defeat you. I will be with you to protect you and keep you safe. ²¹ I will rescue you from the power of wicked and violent people. I, the LORD, have spoken."* Note God told him to repent and then went on to encourage Jeremiah and renewed Jeremiah's call, just as he does for us. I doubted, I questioned until I accepted God's call and asked for his forgiveness and fully accepted Christ's call upon my life and my ministry and it was like a weight lifted off me. As men and women of faith we must stop talking nonsense, giving excuses and follow God. We must stand fully upright at attention in front of God as he dresses us down for our behaviour and accept fully his grace and mercy in our lives and then go out singing and clapping and spreading His word. Don't let the devil fill your heads with

doubts, you are saved by the blood of the lamb, so stand up and walk tall in service to God, follow Christ and live.

As Christians we are called to serve, we are called to spread the healing, saving word of God to others and that means living our lives a certain way. We cannot be amoral but instead we have to be upright in our nature and be wise enough to know it will not be easy, and yet at the same time recognise that by living a good life in Christ we will be happy where many are unhappy. This is what Paul is telling us to do. ⁹ *Love must be completely sincere. Hate what is evil, hold on to what is good.* ¹⁰ *Love one another warmly as Christians, and be eager to show respect for one another.* ¹¹ *Work hard and do not be lazy. Serve the Lord with a heart full of devotion.* ¹² *Let your hope keep you joyful, be patient in your troubles, and pray at all times.* ¹³ *Share your belongings with your needy fellow Christians, and open your homes to strangers.*

¹⁴ *Ask God to bless those who persecute you—yes, ask him to bless, not to curse.* ¹⁵ *Be happy with those who are happy, weep with those who weep.* ¹⁶ *Have the same concern for everyone. Do not be proud, but accept humble duties. Do not think of yourselves as wise.*

¹⁷ *If someone has done you wrong, do not repay him with a wrong. Try to do what everyone considers to be good.* ¹⁸ *Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody.* ¹⁹ *Never take revenge, my friends, but instead let God's anger do it. For the scripture says, "I will take revenge, I will pay back, says the Lord."* ²⁰ *Instead, as the scripture says: "If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them a drink; for by doing this you will make them burn with shame."* ²¹ *Do not let evil defeat you; instead, conquer evil with good.*

We have all heard the saying, "if you talk the talk, you have to walk the walk?" As Christians, we must live by the principles found in the Word of God. Here Paul is giving us practical advice or principles for living a good upright life in Christ. Are you able to recognise areas in your life today where you need to put some of these principles into practice? Read it later, meditate or think and reflect about it and ask God to show you where you need to make a difference in your life, maybe it just

needs a tweak or maybe a major change. You will know for the Holy Spirit will convict you or speak to you of a problem and then God will give you the strength through the same Holy Spirit to make that change. You must be intentional about making these principles of God a lifestyle and ask the Holy Spirit to help you do so. After all you will see for yourself how by living this way, good will always overcome evil.

Yet we also know that some people are basically impossible to get along with but Paul tells us ¹⁸ *Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody.* In other words, do as much as you can to live at peace with everyone if possible. Be a blessing to those you meet, even though they may not be nice to you, show them God's love, you after all cannot do *their* part, but you must do *your* part to maintain peace with others in God's name. So be a maker and maintainer of peace today and every day of your life.

However, pride can let us down as we can see from Jesus' preparing his disciples for what was to happen at Jerusalem. Jesus stopped teaching in parables and instead focused his disciple's minds on what was ahead of him, but as we know they couldn't accept it, but it says much to our own service and attitude to service also. ²¹ *From that time on Jesus began to say plainly to his disciples, "I must go to Jerusalem and suffer much from the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. I will be put to death, but three days later I will be raised to life."*

²² *Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "God forbid it, Lord!" he said. "That must never happen to you!"* The adversary Satan got to Peter and Jesus rebuked him, that is he rebuked Satan and then told off Peter and instructed his disciples on what service meant. Peter was full of pride, he was full of himself as some commentators have stated and this can be seen here, for Peter thought he knew better than Jesus.

²³ *Jesus turned around and said to Peter, "Get away from me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my way, because these thoughts of yours don't come from God, but from human nature."* God knows

what we are like, but He still calls us to serve Him and to live our lives according to His Word. Peter was referred to as a diamond in the rough, God knew Peter needed to be refined and through the fire of faith he was, as has every man and woman of faith since, including you and me. Isn't that encouraging to know that God loves us just the same now as He always has, even with our faults and failings.

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you want to come with me, you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me.

²⁵ For if you want to save your own life, you will lose it; but if you lose your life for my sake, you will find it. ²⁶ Will you gain anything if you win the whole world but lose your life? Of course not! There is nothing you can give to regain your life. ²⁷ For the Son of Man is about to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he will reward each one according to his deeds. ²⁸ I assure you that there are some here who will not die until they have seen the Son of Man come as King."

Note what Jesus said, you must forget self, if you lose your life for my sake you will find it. Get rid of your old selfish, self-centred self and put on the new man, the new woman of faith, stand strong in Christ, defend Him, speak and live your lives according to His Word and you will lose your old way of life and find a new better life, a happier, peaceful life in Christ but the world may take your life from you as happens to many of our brothers and sisters in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, but if we lose this life as Jesus said we gain a new everlasting one with Him. So why worry?

Reflect on your faith today, reflect on your walk with God. Stop talking nonsense, repent of your mistakes and bad attitude if you have one, come to God and be renewed in the love, grace and mercy of Christ and pick up your cross and follow Him, you won't be disappointed.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, bless me today and grant me your peace. Help me to walk with you throughout my life, help me to listen to you

and your Holy Spirit. Guide my life always so that I can be a blessing in Jesus name to those I meet and interact with in life. Help me to pray for those I see around me and grant me the power of discernment to know when and what to pray for.

Lord you taught us to pray for others and to ask you for anything in your name, so I ask for your help today in my own life, to make me stronger in faith, to be more open to your teachings and help me make a difference for the better in peoples lives. Help me to read and reflect upon your Word, which gives us spiritual food. I know at times Lord I have not been faithful in picking up your Word so forgive me for this as I ask you to forgive me of my other sins and wrongdoings, whether by word or deed or lack of action. Instead cleanse, renew and up lift me with the cleansing power of your Holy Spirit and help me walk with you by and in grace. Amen.