

*'8 The Lord is loving and merciful, slow to become angry and full of constant love. 9 He is good to everyone and has compassion on all he made'*

Today's readings for your perusal are: Psalm 145: 8-14, Romans 7: 15-25a and Matthew 11: 16-19 & 25-30

### **THOUGHT FOR THE DAY**

"God is good, His the care" is one of the hymns we sing to praise the love and loyalty of our God. Loyalty is a hard thing to come by today, but for us it is the truth, God is loyal to His people. He is unfailingly loyal to us all and the Psalmist picks up on this. The Lord's gracious benevolence abounds all around us every day of our lives, but do we notice it? *10 All your creatures, Lord, will praise you, and all your people will give you thanks.* God's creation and all His created creatures will continually praise God but only man will be able to express their gratitude for God's deliverance of us through His love. *11 They will speak of the glory of your royal power and tell of your might, 12 so that everyone will know your mighty deeds and the glorious majesty of your kingdom. 13 Your rule is eternal, and you are king forever. The Lord is faithful to his promises; he is merciful in all his acts. 14 He helps those who are in trouble; he lifts those who have fallen.* It is because God loves us that He is merciful to all of us, when we cry to Him with a genuine penitential heart, a heart which is truly sorry for its wrongdoings does He listen? The answer is Yes! He knows our faults and our every weakness, so I encourage you to take it to the Lord in prayer and let Him heal and uplift you afresh today.

The truth is mankind does struggle spiritually each day of their lives, we just need to look at the world in which we live. Look at the immorality all around us, we are not perfect, we should not judge how others choose to live, we instead should focus on the Lord our God, take our prayers to Him in earnest for this fallen world and continually ask Him for His help so that we can do His will here on earth and bring the word of salvation to the sinners.

Paul understood this all too well in his letter to the early Roman church: *15 I do not understand what I do; for I don't do what I would like to do, but instead I do what I hate.* Paul is being honest here, he is clearly letting us know that even he struggles with sin. Mankind is a frail creature prone to giving in to the desires of the flesh, philosophy talks about man being governed by pain and or pleasure as its two masters and that is true. We as a sinful being want pleasure all the time, our world and our society is a hedonistic one, where we want what is best for us, or what gives us the most pleasure. Unfortunately, Paul realised this and is trying to help us understand that our physical body is at war with our spiritual essence, our soul. God wants us to live a good upright and wholesome life, but the ways of the world encourage us to ignore the word of God and do what we want and doing what we want causes a struggle within. This spiritual struggle within us creates tension, it causes us to have mixed feelings over our faith, about what the Bible teaches and what the world says all of which brings confusion, again Paul addresses this: *16 Since what I do is what I don't want to do, this shows that I agree that the Law is right.* The Holy Spirit lets us and let Paul know that the word of God is right, it helps us see how good it is and how wrong sin is. It is our guide so we should use it to help us, the word of God is not a hinderance, what is a hinderance to us is our sinful wantful rebellious nature, so I say to you ignore the whispers of the Devil and listen to the still quiet voice of God and live. That is why Paul says: *17 So I am not really the one who does this thing; rather it is the sin that lives in me.* This is not an attempt to give an excuse and say well I can't help it, it is the sin within me that controls me so there is nothing I can do about it, well for Paul and for us this is not an attempt to escape moral responsibility for our actions but is a reminder that sin can control us if we let it. Man has a fallen nature, since the time of Adam and Eve we have allowed sin to ruin and run our lives, and we cannot allow that to be the case, do not be like the modern world and deny responsibility but pick up your cross and follow Jesus, admit your faults to God and to yourself and take it to God in prayer, for it is only through the

grace mercy and Love of God that we have been freed from the power of sin once and for all. Do not listen to the ways of the world, ignore the pleading and procrastination of those around you who say that Christians are out of touch with the world and are useless, this is the world reacting out of fear to the Gospel truth! Instead be like Paul and many other Christians and say: *22 My inner being delights in the law of God.* Only a Christian can say this. For we can and do say that God's word brings life and we truly delight in His teachings. Yet: *23 But I see a different law at work in my body - a law that fights against the law which my mind approves of. It makes me a prisoner to the law of sin which is at work in my body.* *24 What an unhappy man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death?* Now we come to the answer, Paul has given us a hard lesson to read and understand today, but there is a lot to be said here and one which needs to be unpacked by the reader. Man is an unhappy creature, we walk about burdened by sin, by the woes of the world on our shoulders, blaming everyone else for our inadequacies, our failures but that is the devil's way, not God's way. God knows that there is no way we can escape sin, or the burden it places on our lives, but Paul has given us the answer to his question, *"Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death?"* Sin leads to death eternal but: *25 Thanks be to God, who does this through our Lord Jesus Christ! This, then, is my condition: on my own I can serve God's law only with my mind, while my human nature serves the law of sin.* God's answer to the problem of sin was Jesus Christ, a name that is feared throughout the world because He is the Son of God, our Saviour! He died so that we can live, it was on the cross of Calvary and through His glorious resurrection that the power of sin was destroyed, sin no longer has any control over us unless we allow it. How can you be a Christian and consciously choose to sin, that does not make sense, choose life not death.

Jesus knew the problems we had so he compared us to children squabbling in the market place: *16 "Now, to what can I compare*

*the people of this day? They are like children sitting in the marketplace. One group shouts to the other, 17 "We played wedding music for you, but you wouldn't dance! We sang funeral songs, but you wouldn't cry!" 18 When John came, he fasted and drank no wine, and everyone said, "He has a demon in him!" 19 When the Son of Man came, he ate and drank, and everyone said, "Look at this man! He is a glutton and wine drinker, a friend of tax collectors and other outcasts!" **God's wisdom, however, is shown to be true by its results.**"*

Wisdom is shown here by Jesus, he is reminding the people that God gave them both John and Jesus to help them see the way forward, but they steadfastly refused to listen or change their ways, typical then and is still the case today, men and women of today's world would rather deny the Gospel message than live a good life following it. You cannot teach a fool, but a wise man will take correction. The foolish man will listen to everything and anything the world says, but will ignore the wisdom of God that is why sin leads to death.

*25 At that time Jesus said, "Father, Lord of heaven and earth! I thank you because you have shown to the unlearned what you have hidden from the wise and learned. 26 Yes, Father, this was how you were pleased to have it happen. 27 "My Father has given me all things. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. 28 "Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest. 30 For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light." God will give you the power and the strength you need to serve Him. Jesus is not a hard taskmaster, although being a Christian is hard because we are asked not to live as the world lives, but to look always towards God and His teachings. Jesus is saying that He is good and His teachings is good, not burdensome or difficult unlike the impossible demands of the world. Religious rules and the worlds regulations can be harsh*

and pressing and quickly overburden us all, that is why people are so unhappy and unfulfilled. But Jesus is telling us that His way is the only way, it is not difficult and is not harsh, but is comfortable, gracious and pleasant. The Christian is a happy creature because he or she trusts in God and walks happily with Him always. God not only tells us what to do, the Bible, He gives us the strength and wisdom to do it. Jesus leads us to a place that is comfortable, gracious and pleasant. Serving God is the best thing in the world and is easy if we learn to hear from Him and simply obey rather than struggle to do things He never asked us to do for Him. Take time and seek God, let Him guide you with His Holy Spirit. Remember it will not always be easy as the world is against us and the Devil is out to stop us doing God's will and work, but there will always be comfort, grace and pleasure associated with doing God's work. Jesus wants to lighten the load you have been carrying all by yourself and give you rest. *"My soul finds rest in God alone; from Him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress."* (Psalm 62: 1-2.)

*Jesus said: "Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest."*

### PRAYER

Lord we are tired, we are worn out with worry and the mental struggle coping with the lockdown around us. We struggle to understand why many people around us are not following advise and are going out and about as if there is no virus affecting us, and then when we here on the news that there is local lockdowns being imposed we shake our heads in dismay over the foolishness of man. Yet you Lord teach us to listen and follow your Word, this gives us valuable guidance and wisdom for life, if only the people would listen and heed it, the world would be a better place. Help us Lord to pray for healing, and for wisdom today.

Guide us Lord Jesus to know when to pray and who to pray for, help us and give us the words to speak and guide our actions so that we can show your love to our fellow human beings, regardless of who they are or the colour of their skin, help us Lord to be a blessing to the in your name and bring them hope.

Grant to us your peace today, strengthen and heal us we pray so that we can help those around us by praying for them. You taught us to pray and ask in your name knowing that if we believe it in our heart it will be done, so we pray in your name Jesus to bring healing to our world, healing for hurt feelings, healing for bruised egos, healing for broken hearts and shattered lives.

Lord we pray in your name for wisdom to be given to our leaders so that they can make the hard decisions, do not let pettiness and egos misguide them, help them make wise decisions and not try to score meaningless points to distract from inadequacies and bad decisions. Help them see and know the truth so that they can work together to bring about an end to or lockdown and bring in your peace, In Jesus name we pray. Amen