

¹¹ Tell them that as surely as I, the Sovereign LORD, am the living God, I do not enjoy seeing sinners die. I would rather see them stop sinning and live.'

The readings for today for your perusal is Ezekiel 33: 7-11, Psalm 119: 33-40, Romans 13: 8-14 & Matthew 18: 15-20.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

God has given all men and women of faith a job to do and this is also true for the prophet Ezekiel. In the book of Ezekiel, we find that God has instructed Ezekiel to warn the *house of Israel* which means both the nation and the individual people who make up the nation as a whole. God said to Ezekiel: ⁷ *"Now, mortal man, I am making you a lookout for the nation of Israel. You must pass on to them the warnings I give you. As someone who is called to protect or watch over people you have a responsibility for their safety, whether it is as a sentry on guard duty, or whether you are a manager or a parent you have to keep an eye out for danger and warn off the people so they do not become victims of it.*

Such was the case here with the Israelites in exile. ⁸ If I announce that an evil person is going to die but you do not warn him to change his ways so that he can save his life, then he will die, still a sinner, and I will hold you responsible for his death. ⁹ If you do warn an evil person and he doesn't stop sinning, he will die, still a sinner, but your life will be spared." Here in the reading from the book of Ezekiel we come to the heart of the message that God has given to the world ever since the fall of mankind in the garden of Eden, we have to warn people about their immoral living standards. Today's people live in a deeply amoral world, they are selfish through and through, they only care about themselves first and foremost and do not like to be told they are wrong, we just need to look around us at the amount of people who ignore the rules for protecting people from Covid 19, many do not wear masks, many go out and do not social distance. The Bible teaches us and shows us that no one wants to take responsibility for their life choices, it is always someone else's or something else's fault, but God gave us all free will to choose freely whether to live our lives by His commands or to choose to take the wide easy path of hedonistic

pleasure, the devils commands. But as men and women of faith we have a responsibility to preach and teach the Gospel message of salvation to those around us and in our own families. As Christians we need to be a shining example of faith and right living in this dark, wanton world. The world is watching us to see if we slip up so it can ridicule us and use that as an excuse to ignore God's teachings. But Ezekiel was told quite clearly by God that if we do not preach and teach the Gospel message of salvation, we will be held responsible on the day of judgment for not doing our part. However, if we have taught the Gospel message and people choose to ignore it and deliberately continue living a sinful amoral life then they will *die in sin* and be held solely responsible for their own actions and burn in hell because of it. We mustn't be complacent when it comes to saving peoples souls, we must always speak the Gospel truth, never water it down but speak it plainly and truthfully, reverently fear or respect God and do not worry about wanton man's opinions after all only God's opinion matters.

Of course when we read the book of Ezekiel once again we find that the Israelites have now expressed their conscious recognising of their sins whereas beforehand they blamed it all on their forefathers, it was their forefathers faults that they were in exile and were suffering but now they have openly admitted that they are the ones actually at fault for not obeying God. ¹⁰ *The LORD spoke to me. "Mortal man," he said, "repeat to the Israelites what they are saying: 'We are burdened with our sins and the wrongs we have done. We are wasting away. How can we live?'* ¹¹ *Tell them that as surely as I, the Sovereign LORD, am the living God, I do not enjoy seeing sinners die. I would rather see them stop sinning and live. Israel, stop the evil you are doing. Why do you want to die?* Once again, we have the truth of the matter, God doesn't want anyone to die in sin, He wants all of mankind to come to salvation through the acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. After all it was His death on the Cross of Calvary and subsequent glorious resurrection that redeemed mankind from the power of sin. So why does the people of the world want to ignore God and deliberately go on sinning, it beggars belief, but such is the way of the world today,

which gives us a bigger challenge, but through prayerful support we will accomplish God's work.

How we accomplish God's work is simply to live by His commands. Again in the Bible we find a good example in that we find the Psalmist praying earnestly for instruction in God's will as he longs for His precepts or teachings He prays to God: ³³ *Teach me, LORD, the meaning of your laws, and I will obey them at all times.* ³⁴ *Explain your law to me, and I will obey it; I will keep it with all my heart.* ³⁵ *Keep me obedient to your commandments, because in them I find happiness.* ³⁶ *Give me the desire to obey your laws rather than to get rich.* ³⁷ *Keep me from paying attention to what is worthless; be good to me, as you have promised.* ³⁸ *Keep your promise to me, your servant—the promise you make to those who obey you.* ³⁹ *Save me from the insults I fear; how wonderful are your judgments!* ⁴⁰ *I want to obey your commands; give me new life, for you are righteous.* The Psalmist is asking God to fulfil the promises found in His word so that the servant, the man or woman of faith, will have reverence for God. Notice though that throughout the Bible the Lord's saving acts are always the fulfilment of His promises towards those who recognise that He is the true God. By studying and reading the bible prayerfully we gain knowledge, we gain wisdom and that wisdom of God allows us to make the conscious effort to live our lives by His standards and His teachings. The simple straightforward truth is that the man or woman who walks upright with God is a happy and contented person, for we are at peace regardless of what traps, pitfalls and hardships the devil puts in our way.

Off course with that comes responsibility, the prophets, the disciples and the Apostles all had that responsibility but each and every man and women of faith has the same responsibility to bring mankind to salvation but as Paul reminds us we also have a duty to live. ⁸ *Be under obligation to no one—the only obligation you have is to love one another. Whoever does this has obeyed the Law.* ⁹ *The commandments, “Do not commit adultery; do not commit murder; do not steal; do not desire what belongs to someone else”—all these, and any others besides, are summed up in the one command, “Love your*

*neighbour as you love yourself.”*¹⁰ *If you love others, you will never do them wrong; to love, then, is to obey the whole Law. Love is the only debt that is never paid off. No matter how much one has loved, he is under obligation to keep on loving. But we are not called just to show God’s love to our fellow Christians but we also have to show God’s love to our fellow man, regardless of who they are, what their station in life is or the colour of their skin. We are called to love the sinner and hate the sin, so pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit to give you a loving heart and the wisdom and courage to act on it. Love of our neighbour encompasses all our social responsibilities, after all Jesus taught us that our neighbour is anyone who is in need, which is probably the idea Paul has in mind here in his letter to the Romans. This is not a command in that we have to love ourselves it is merely a reflection, a recognition of the fact that we naturally do so. As Paul emphasis:*¹¹ *You must do this, because you know that the time has come for you to wake up from your sleep. For the moment when we will be saved is closer now than it was when we first believed.*¹² *The night is nearly over, day is almost here. Let us stop doing the things that belong to the dark, and let us take up weapons for fighting in the light.*¹³ *Let us conduct ourselves properly, as people who live in the light of day—no orgies or drunkenness, no immorality or indecency, no fighting or jealousy.*¹⁴ *But take up the weapons of the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop paying attention to your sinful nature and satisfying its desires.* Once again, the Bible is reminding us that we are in the end times and that the coming of the end of the present age is near. Paul here in his letter to the Roman church and to us the modern day reader, it is used to provide motivation and encouragement to the believer to act now and not be lazy in their application of their faith. The time of salvation, the closing period of the present age, before the consummation of the kingdom of God is nearer now that it was during Paul’s writing. Each day brings us nearer to the second appearing of Christ when He splits the skies when He come in His glory to bring God’s judgment on this fallen world.

The people that Paul was writing to our early Christian brothers and sisters believed that the death and resurrection of Christ were the crucial events of history that began the last days. Since

the next great event in God's redemptive plan is the second coming of Christ, *the night* no matter how long chronologically it may last is actually *almost gone*. As the NKJV puts it *put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ* in other words let us all display outwardly to the sinners of this world what has already taken place inwardly by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This means for us practising all the virtues associated with Christ and by so doing we will shine brightly in this dark sinful uncaring world and bring people to Christ, such is our responsibility and our care. So do not fear but trust in the Lord always for he will guide your path, because The Lord is my light and my Salvation and I can do anything through Christ who strengthens me. Blessings always. Amen.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father we live in a dark, uncaring world, a world full of sin and pain, help us Lord to walk always in your light, so that we may not stumble and fall but instead walk upright in your service. Help us Lord to pray for our family and friends, for our colleagues at work, and for the stranger in the street. Guide our words and our actions always with the Holy Spirit we pray, so that we can be a blessing and a bringer of hope to those who are lost in our world.

Too many people are wandering aimlessly in a spiritual emptiness, they are dead inside and wonder why they are not happy or fulfilled, instead they try to always to find fleeting pleasures of the flesh only to be left just as empty when things don't go their own way. In Jesus name we pray now Lord for those whom we know who need you today.....go to them Lord and heal them, physically, emotionally and spiritually we pray. Help us Lord to always pray for those around us, give us the power of discernment so that we can know and recognise when and who to pray for, knowing that you are always listening to our prayers and then give us the patience to leave it with you.

Bless the police, the firemen and women, the paramedics, the doctors and nurses and all who work in the care industry. Bless also the engineers, the delivery drivers and all the people who provide us with our food, clothing, heating and lighting. Also, Lord we ask you to grant wisdom and strength to the leaders of our governments so that they can govern wisely and safely for us all and help all of those who are called Christians in the world. Strengthen their faith, especially those who are being persecuted for their faith and trust in you. Bless them and keep them always we pray. Amen.