

**Endurance – Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2014**

***“Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes,  
And I shall observe it to the end. “ Psalm 119:33***

Beloved in The Lord,

The end is more important than the beginning in the race of life. Last week we saw the promises that Jesus gave to those who overcome. The rewards are given to those who endure to the end. Jesus said: ***“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev.2:10).***

The Greek is a little bit clearer in that it says keep the faith until death and I will give you the crown of life. There are people who start well, but they do not endure and they fall away from the faith. There are some who receive God’s Word with joy, they flourish for a short while, and then with time they fall away. Jesus bears this out in His teaching about the sower and the seeds.

***And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, “Behold, the sower went out to sow; <sup>4</sup> and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. <sup>5</sup> Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup> Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. <sup>8</sup> And others fell on the good soil and \*yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. <sup>9</sup> He who has ears, let him hear.”***

***<sup>18</sup> “Hear then the parable of the sower. <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. <sup>20</sup> The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup> yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. <sup>22</sup> And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.” (Matthew 13:3-9;18-23)***

The important factor here is the soil. In order for us to grow, flourish, bear fruit, and endure to the end in our faith, we need to be good soil. Good soil is a heart that is soft and surrendered to God. A heart that trusts in Him. A heart that is washed in the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.

The first type of soil Jesus talks about is the road side. This is soil that is hard trodden and not pliable at all. Because it is hard, the seed stays on top and the birds come and take it away. Jesus said the roadside pictures hearts that do not understand. They hear the Word,

but are not open and therefore do not understand and Satan comes and snatches away the truth from them.

The next type of soil was rocky ground. This is the heart that hears the Word and immediately accepts it with joy. But because the ground is rocky, there is nowhere for the seed to take root and so the joy is temporary. Because there is no depth to this heart's faith, there is no endurance. It is a temporary thing. We will return to this thought a little later.

Then there is the thorny soil. This is best described as a divided heart. A heart which has weeds growing in it that have not been eradicated. I know from my own experience in our garden, if I don't regularly eradicate the weeds (which I don't) they very quickly take over. They take all the goodness from the soil and kill off the good plants. This is why it is so important to allow The Holy Spirit to point out the weeds in our heart and to have Jesus kill them with His blood.

Then finally there is the good soil. This is the soil in which the plant grows and bears fruit. This is the heart that is open to God, that is submitted to Him. This is soil in which the roots can go down deep and really become established.

Paul wrote in his letter to the Colossians:

***"Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, <sup>7</sup> having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.***

***<sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, <sup>10</sup> and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;"(Col.2:6-10).***

Paul clearly teaches us that we need to be firmly rooted in Christ Jesus The Lord. That means to build your whole life on Him. It means to have Him as the source of all your strength and wisdom. We are not to rely on so called human wisdom, teachings and philosophies, but purely on God's Word alone.

Human philosophies and wisdom that are not in line with Scripture are weeds, and they threaten to take over our minds if we let them.

It is of vital importance that we submit ourselves to regular self-examination and that we examine our beliefs and question why we believe what we do. If we find that we have beliefs that are contrary to Scripture, then we need to discard them so that they do not hinder our growth and fruitfulness.

We need to be deeply and firmly rooted in God's Word. If we are not, we are warned by Jesus that we will not endure. He said about the seed that was on the rocky ground that had no real roots:

***"Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away" (Mt.13:5-6).***

I warned you last week that we can expect the opposition to and persecution of the Christian faith to steadily increase. Our faith will be tested. The sun will scorch. In order for us not to wither, we need to be firmly rooted in Jesus and God's Word. We need to be watered with the Living Water of the Word every day.

We should pray the words of our text everyday: ***“Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, And I shall observe it to the end. “ Psalm 119:33***

It is only by praying like this every day, and walking with God every day, that we will endure to the end, we will finish honourably and along the way bear much fruit for God's Kingdom.

I will admit to you truthfully, that it is not easy to endure. I know from many experiences in my life that it is easy to begin things but to endure to the end, to reach the goal is hard. In order to do so we must be committed to it. We must commit to succeed no matter what. It is important to keep the goal before your eyes at all times. You need to be regularly reminding yourself of your goal.

My goal is to honour God with my life, to bear much fruit for Him and His glory, to finish the race, and when I finally stand before Him I would like to hear Him say -“Well done good and faithful servant.”

We have an enemy who works unrelentingly day and night to stop us; to hinder us from reaching our goal. Satan does not want God to be glorified through us.

What motivates my aforementioned goal?

I realise that it cost God a tremendous price to redeem me from sin and death. He has invested so much in me and in every person that turns to Him. He so loved us that He bought us with the life blood of His only begotten Son. Jesus holy and pure blood was the purchase price.

Paul wrote:

***“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? <sup>20</sup> For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Cor.6:19-20).***

We have been bought with a price, the precious blood of Jesus. God so loved us. We should respond to His love by offering ourselves to Him fully; by living a life that brings Him glory and honour.

We will endure to the end and remain faithful if we regularly remind ourselves that we are not our own. We belong to Him.

We are His plant, therefore we should allow Him to raise us, feed us, care for us, prune us and shape us.

In our own strength and wisdom, doing things our way, we will fail. That is why Paul writes: ***“May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ” (2.Thes.3:5).***

Herein is the key. It is the steadfastness of Christ in the love of God.

Not my will but yours O Lord. To submit, to trust, to commit, to surrender all to Him. To keep our eyes on Him ever and always. To fill our hearts with His Word. To meditate on His Word day and night.

May God grant that this message today lands on fertile and good soil. May we bear fruit for God's glory. May we endure to the end. May we be like the Psalmist and make a commitment to endure to the end.

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And I shall observe it to the end. “ Psalm 119:33***

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.