

## WELCOME 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022 – 8 Pentecost '22 C

Romans 15:5-21 & 16:25-27

**Welcome!** It's great to be together again today! Today we wrap up our journey through the book of Romans as a family of disciples...*Bible Study Qs* are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & so you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups** on Friday @ 1p.m.

**As we move into this week...** Cathy Freeman, Sally Pearson, Rohan Browning. Sprinters: the fastest of the fast in Australian sport. Rob de Castella, Lee Troop, Sinead Diver. Marathon runners. Endurance. Perseverance. The long-haul.

For the follower of Jesus, Gospel endurance is the difference b/t those two groups of stellar athletes. **WE'RE** in a marathon. Our race isn't over & it's lifelong. In a quick fix, microwave nutrition, instant communication right now gratification world, the God who created you for life w/ him is in it w/ you for the long-haul: every moment every day of your life equipping & empowering you to live in his presence & serve those around you especially when you are tempted to give up or give in. God has a vision for your life that far exceeds anything you'd imagine & that impacts the lives of people around you for lasting good.

**I** pray that God, the source of hope,

*will fill you completely with joy & peace because you trust in him.*

*Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Gospel endurance is to walk/live in the restored relationship w/ the Father won for you by the death/resurrection of Jesus Christ as his child in spite of difficulty or opposition. It's daily living what you know to be true about God & about your place in his rule of love in spite of circumstances or a culture that try to pull you out of that conviction/assurance. It's persistent trust/reliance on what God has done, is doing & has promised to do despite trouble or threat.

We'll explore & experience that together...Let's pray...

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Lord Jesus...be present & powerful among us today. Give your Spirit free rein in our hearts. Let your Word & your promises take root in our souls & bear fruit that lasts into eternity through us in the lives of others. Shape us always into your image & likeness so the world can experience your glory... In your Name we pray...Amen.*

Let's sing with Kings Kaleidoscope – All Glory Be To Christ

## FAITH CHAT:

1. Where in your life is endurance or perseverance most essential?  
Where do you need it most now? How's it going?
2. How do you think Paul would answer this question:  
How should someone plan for the future?

## PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON

Let's pray...

Gracious Father, thank you for the legacy of saving love you have poured into our lives in your Son. Do not let us waste our lives on things that have no eternal value, but cause us to spend our lives for your eternal purposes every day. Make us living witnesses to you so that we hand over faith, hope & love in Christ to every generation. We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## 8 PENTECOST '22 C – OPERATION GOSPEL: GOSPEL ENDURANCE

Last week, we looked at a question: both as Faith Chat & Take it Home...

**If** Living Water Fellowship ceased to exist, do you think the people of Wagga Wagga would notice? Would they care? What would be different or lost?

1<sup>st</sup> - Speculative/what if but 2<sup>nd</sup> - practical **What's** 1 thing I can do this week to ensure the mission entrusted to us by God makes a notable difference in this city?

I want to go back to that for a minute because I saw something when Mary & I led devotions out at Caloola Ct this week that I often see when I walk through the CBD. It happened in my house twice in the last few weeks. **Im**permanence. Back at Caloola after a 2 year pandemic-imposed hiatus & there was only 1 person in the "congregation" I recognized from <sup>b/4</sup>...I understand folks are in care facilities toward the tail end of their earthly lives...That was obvious. Going out of Business signs...another post-pandemic reality that the already challenging work of small business operation is even harder & businesses are not always long-lasting. My house...microwave & the dog gave up their fleeting earthly existence. Replaced microwave 1<sup>st</sup> but I reckon we miss the dog most...please do **NOT** give us a new dog.

Impermanence...no surprise there. Nothing of this earth lasts forever & as Paul wraps up his letter to the disciples in Rome, you can hear him writing/working to prepare them for the marathon they're in. The question permeates all Paul's letters **How** do I equip THE CHURCH to leave an eternally lasting legacy in the lives of others? How do we build in gospel endurance to the mission-life of disciples? How do we empower disciples for the long haul? How do I equip them to cope w/ challenges, struggles, obstacles, & difficulties & remain faithful in witness to Christ for a lifetime in mission? How do I prepare them for the future when it's hard, it hurts & calls for disciplined obedient living? How do I encourage them when the temptation to give up & quit is enormous? How do I help them keep going in spite of difficulty or lack of success? **How** do we run this marathon until Jesus ends the race?

Rom 15...**We** who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. We should help others do what is right & build them up in the Lord. For even Christ didn't live to please himself. As the Scriptures say, "The insults of those who insult you, O God, have fallen on me." Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. The Scriptures give us hope & encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled. May God, who gives this patience & encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise & glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1<sup>st</sup> 6 vss...look at the **POWER** there

Paul starts by highlighting the **essential** nature of the Christian community. We looked at that last week too...**WE ARE THE ONES** Christ has entrusted w/ the gospel so that it is lived & told in this world. Paul reminds us we're in this mission to demonstrate new life in Christ – to show this city the triumph of grace over all things as a community/family/church. In the last 50-60 years though, too often we've converted what we know as church to a system of packaged programs products & services branded & marketed to what we hope is a waiting world whose individual felt needs we can meet in competition against the other packaged programs products & services branded & marketed by the other churches in town...like competing grocery stores or takeaway joints. That's not what Jesus died rose & gave us his Spirit to do & that's not what Paul says.

Awareness & consideration of those who don't see things the way we do. Encourage & build each other up & hold each other accountable so that we foster what is right, true & good. Look to the needs of others rather than personal wants. A unified heart & mind – a harmony that is a contrast to the divisiveness, antagonism & adversarial nature of the culture around us. How do we run this marathon until Jesus ends the race? Never lose sight of the essential nature of the Xn community – the church – the family of faith – the body of Christ. 2<sup>nd</sup> ...

**Therefore,** accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory. Remember, Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. He also came so the Gentiles might give glory to God for his mercies to them. How do we keep going in spite of difficulty or lack of success? **Hold** fast to the essential character of our identity & call. You & I live against the backdrop of God fulfilling those two promises. 1<sup>st</sup> - Christ is sent from heaven to earth as the fulfilment of the covenant God made w/ Abraham: to bless all the nations of the earth through Abe & his descendant forever. It's a confirmation of a much older promise made in the Garden...that a son would be born who will crush the serpent's head while sacrificing his life to put sin death & evil to an end. 2<sup>nd</sup> – AND Christ is the fulfilment of God's reclaiming the whole world to himself beyond the borders of his chosen Jewish people. We are the living witness to the unique promise to Abraham & the universal promise to the whole creation. That's our identity & our call.

The gospel is always always always the driving force for us...God chose to love – to forgive – to die so we can be with him forever...so his rule of love & his reign of grace & his kingdom of life & light would be our home here, now & forever. The very heart of the good news is that only Jesus' death & resurrection bring light to our dark world, life to our dead lives, forgives sin & welcomes us into God's family. Jesus' victory over the grave defeats once & forever sin, death, & evil & releases his power

into our lives now & always. That power of the resurrection on Easter morning & of the Spirit poured out at Pentecost lives in you will not relent or release its hold on you until the day Christ calls us home.

As long as we have the immense privilege of knowing Jesus Christ risen & ruling claiming us as God's beloved children...As long as we have the great privilege of being agents of that good news of sharing what we have received from the risen Jesus...as long as we share the hope of eternity, we cannot give up. No matter how assaulted, how beleaguered, how besieged by Satan's forces & a rebellious world. No amount of trouble can make us quit, no amount of pain can cause us to turn away from our call/privilege/duty. How do we keep going in spite of difficulty or lack of success? Hold fast to the essential character of our identity & call.

3<sup>rd</sup>...**I** pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy & peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. I am fully convinced, my dear brothers & sisters, that you are full of goodness. You know these things so well you can teach each other all about them. How do we prepare for the future when it's hard, it hurts & calls for disciplined obedient living? How do we encourage one another when the temptation to give up & quit is enormous? **Live** from the essential wellspring of mission... overflowing joy peace hope and deep & selfless love.

Overflowing joy & peace is only possible when your life is grounded & growing from the source of real hope...Christ crucified risen & ruling over all things...the commitment of the Father to bring you at last into his presence where all sorrow tears pain & struggle is wiped away forever. Is your heart tuned into eternity or tomorrow? Do you measure your life based on stuff you'll eventually throw away or is your life's highest aim/greatest ambition to expose others to the salvation & eternal glory of God as we receive it in Jesus?

Are you betting your life trusting the one who is trustworthy & relying on the one who is reliable one & obeying the authority of the one who just says the word & lives are changed & made new? Gospel endurance lives from the assurance that God never gives up & never lets go & never stops loving you & never holds back his blessings until His purposes & His will for you are accomplished. Faith is not betting on the improbable. Faith is not counting on the implausible. Faith is not wishing for the unattainable. **Faith** is trusting the One who is trustworthy. Faith is relying on the One who is reliable. Faith is effective – faith is powerful - because Christ is Lord. Don't lose that last sentence...*You know these things so well you can teach each other all about them.* Paul has never set foot in Rome & he says you have all you need...

God does not intend his church to apologize for its existence & shrink back into a corner of the room & never say nothing to nobody. God's people are not meant to be invisible in the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden...a lamp lit is set on a stand to give light to the whole house...you will shine like stars in this crooked & perverse & dark world.

I love what Pauls says to Timothy...Paul writes knowing his days are numbered & every time the jail cell swings open it might be the last time he draws breath...but he's not finished the race yet...**I** am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation & eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen." 2 Tim 2:10 Paul's entire existence was oriented in the direction of living toward eternity & bringing w/ him as many people as he could...His life was directed toward the harvest of souls that would stand in praise & worship before God on the last day & through all eternity. Making the Kingdom real here/now.

How do we run this marathon until Jesus ends the race? Never lose sight of the essential nature of the Xn community.

How do we keep going in spite of difficulty or lack of success? Hold fast to the essential character of our identity & call.

How do we prepare for the future when it's hard, it hurts & calls for disciplined obedient living? How do we encourage one another when the temptation to give up & quit is enormous? Live from the essential wellspring of mission...overflowing joy peace hope and deep & selfless love.

Rob de Castella Kieren Perkins Grant Hackett Tour de France riders Sinead Diver... Paul Peter John legions of disciples & finally the baton passes to you & me...

Our race isn't over & it's lifelong. God created you for life w/ him & is in it w/ you for the long-haul: every moment every day of your life equipping & empowering you to live in his presence & serve those around you especially when you are tempted to give up or give in...Now it's on us to walk/live in the restored relationship w/ the Father won for us by the death/resurrection of Jesus Christ in spite of difficulty or opposition...to live daily what we know to be true about God & about our place in his rule of love in spite of circumstances or a culture that try to pull us out of that conviction/assurance...to trust & rely on what God has done, is doing & has promised to do despite trouble or threat.

**TAKE IT HOME –**

Where will I live with endurance this week?