

Sermon for Lent 3C At Calvary Rockhampton and Living Waters Yeppoon

24th March 2019

Learning from our past, are you up to the challenge?

Dear heavenly Father, strengthen us by your Holy Spirit so that we may endure the temptations placed before us and look to your faithfulness for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Have you ever felt abandoned? Have you felt that you have failed?

Were you competing in a sport and never quite made the top of the grade?

You know, St Paul in his letters to the Corinthians is clear in his asserting that the Israelites, Gods Chosen have 'form', in this failure to come up to a standard expected of them!

Paul writes that they were all baptised into Moses by the cloud and the waters of the sea, that they drank the spiritual waters and ate of the spiritual rock which accompanied them. This as we can see is really powerful stuff!

And yet, does he not also say, that God was not pleased with many? In fact, our text says he was not pleased with most! Those things that Paul speaks of in this reading, highlight some key examples of the type of living which God does not see as being in our best interests! We can see that Gods commandments are deeply connected to the ways in which God wants us to live!

God does have plans for us. God does have standards he wants us each to live up to. The temptation to go off the track is there, for each of us. Our challenge is to know what God wants of each of us, and then to do our very best to be and to do accordingly.

Of course, the early Israelites were following Moses. God interacted very directly with his people, opening the way through the sea, guiding them, feeding them, giving them drink. And still, they were stuffing things up!

And yet, even with us and those with those places we could have been, heights we could have scaled, incredible things that we could have done, we have

consolation. The boy child that was born in Bethlehem, Jesus Christ, gives us hope for our future.

Paul writes that we are all tempted, yet none more than what is part of our natural state of being. God knows us, knows our temptations and has in place for us help, guidance and a healing hand! We are not left adrift in the ocean of life. God is there with and for us.

Gods word is there for us, giving us guidance, bestowing strength upon us.

Paul tells us that God has provided a way out, just as he did for the Israelites. Its up to each of us to look to God, look to his church, to be what God wants us to be! God giving us Christ with his generosity, grace and love, is the answer for us!

You know, the other day I talked with a good friend. A friend that is a good bloke, kind generous, a great worker in his community. But is that enough? It might be in this world, in this life, but is it enough for the next life?

I would say no, not enough for the next life. There is more that God wants of us! He wants our commitment. He wants our participation. He wants us to read his word, to act in accordance with his wishes (commandments)!

Just like the tennis players who make a foot fault who finds their serve doesn't count, we too can foot fault! Paul reminds us of those of the Israelites who grumbled, complained, didn't love, honour and fear God!

For us in this present day, Gods message for us is still the same! Even though God has taken us into his family through our Baptism, we can still stuff it all up! Paul warns us that if we consciously go against God, sin willingly, that God can still disinherit us!

In the parlance of tennis, "The ball is in our court!"

So, are we willing to learn from God's people in the past, or do we think we know better? Are we willing to put God to the test hoping he won't test us in return? Are we willing to see how far we can push the boundaries of his grace hoping we won't be disqualified?

I mean, think of it, do we ever test and question God's love if bad things happen to us or to others around us? Do we question how a loving God allows so many floods, fires, and disasters? Do we ever ask God to do something for us before he gets our attention or trust? Do we consciously and knowingly sin against him and those he loves, hoping he'll keep on forgiving us?

Well, the good news is the promises of God and the faithfulness of God still remain! You see, that's the other thing we learn from the past - just how patient and loving God is to his own rebellious and cantankerous people! The problem isn't with God's faithfulness or even with his judgments and expectations. The problem is with us!

Disqualification doesn't happen to those who trust in God. The Israelites stopped trusting him and so they disqualified themselves. Therefore, don't give up. Keep trusting in him and his faithfulness to you.

Don't give up in the fight against your temptations in life. Turn to God and trust he'll help you in your times of need. He won't let you be tested beyond your ability to endure it. And even if you do fail, turn back to the Lord, and you'll receive mercy and forgiveness, because God is faithful!

This is how we can say: the peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.