

Congregation, when Trudy and I lived in Dee Why we were members of the Dee Why RSL club. We loved going there for dinner and on occasions would bring friends along as well. We would usually get there at about 5:30 and our orders were taken and food usually arrived by 5:45 pm. And then just when we were enjoying a glass of wine and good food, all the lights would dim and we would all be asked to stand and face west, and the RSL would do its 'ode' for the fallen. And after 30 seconds or so, it would end with everyone saying, "Lest we forget" and dinner would continue.

Now the first time that occurred, I foolishly thought to myself, "What an inconvenience. How dare they interrupt our dinner." However, thinking about it a little deeper, I soon realized that at least one of the reasons I could sit there in peace and enjoy a meal with friends, is because many years ago, young men and perhaps not so young, laid down their lives for us, so that we can enjoy freedom. Since then I have never complained.

Now I mention this example, because one day there is going to be a scroll of remembrance read out with all our names on it. Note vv 16-17. God says, that those people who fear Him, will be his. A scroll of remembrance is written about all those who fear God's name and honour him. And between now and that day, we need to encourage each other to keep the faith. To remain obedient and to keep our eyes firmly fixed on our great reward. This encouragement is not just for a few days, but until we draw our final breath or until the Lord returns.

Congregation I don't want you to become discouraged in your Christian walk, your outreach efforts, your discussions with friends about the glorious gospel and the promises for all who believe. I know this takes commitment. And on occasions it is easily compounded when you see others, who never give God or the Christian faith a thought, prosper and get all the lucky breaks.

But note again vv 16-17; (Mal 3:16-17) On that last day, when God finally takes his treasured possession to himself, all those who fear God will be on the scroll of remembrance. Oh, what a great day that will be. All our efforts, all our endeavours, will finally be rewarded. The Creator God will say, "They shall be mine!"

Now that is one side of the coin. There is another side too, and we need to speak to that too. Note Chapter 4:1; "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." What a terrible thought. All those who do not honour and fear God will be burnt to stubble. They will not be remembered. Their names will not be on the scroll of remembrance.

Yet for us who continue with the good fight and continue to struggle, our reward will be great! The Creator God will say on that day, "They are mine." So don't say it is futile to serve God. Don't choose the broad way that leads to destruction. Rather, choose the narrow way that leads to life. We will be remembered.

There is an old song that goes a little like this: "When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and time shall be no more, and the morning breaks, eternal, bright and fair When the saved of earth shall gather over on the other shore, and the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there. When the roll, is called up yonder, When the roll, is called up yon-der, When the roll, is called up yon-der, When the roll is called up yonder I'll be there"

Please understand, we are not talking about a lucky dip or being in the lottery draw. We are speaking about a number that is sure and true for all who fear God. Sometimes I am frightened that many who say "Lord, Lord" will miss out, because their zest to obey and follow and serve and love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength has waned.

So many people have become flippant about their Christian faith. Some just pay lip service at best. They have become like the people in Malachi's day. God's people in Malachi's day brought their offerings, but only the blemished ones. God's people would come and weep on the altar, but never mind that they had divorced the covenant wives of their youth!

God's people were doing all the religious things, but their hearts were far from God! In fact, several times God's people questioning whether it was worthwhile having God. Indeed, some had come to the point that it was all futile. This is what happens when people forget their covenant faithful God. Or to put a NT spin on it, that is what people do when they take their eyes off the cross and what God has done for them in Christ. Before long they think they are hard done by and the wicked and ungodly seem to be blessed.

Congregation, do we need to remind each other again of what will happen to those whose names are not on the scroll of remembrance? They will end up as stubble. Rev 6:16-17 gives us a little clue; "They will call to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

Now, please understand, Scripture doesn't promise an easy path to heaven. On the contrary, the opposite is true! The Lord Jesus himself said that if he suffered, we can expect no less. But there is a day coming, when the righteous will receive their lasting reward, 2 Tim 4:8; "there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." So congregation live today in the light of that glorious day to come!

Now we may well ask, "Why do so many people seem to fall by the way. Why is it, that the Word of God preached has become irrelevant, or at least of second importance? Why don't people continue with the struggle?" Well there are a number of reasons, and I cannot cover them all, nor do I wish to sound simplistic about it. Let me outline a few. To continue the struggle seems to go against our basic nature because it requires that we believe in something we can't see. It takes faith. Our tendency is to that we want to see tangible rewards of our struggle.

In the world, we work hard to make some progress and with the Lord's blessing we do. In our Christian lives, it doesn't seem to pay dividends at all. I know of parents who have prayed every night for their children to come to faith, only to see them straying from God's path. I say to them, don't stop praying.

We exert a lot of energy on various outreach programs, with little if any result. We are then tempted to say, why bother? And then on occasions we behave like Asaph. We look at the worldly and for a moment we think they are doing OK. Thankfully, the Holy Spirit causes us to remember what happens to the wicked when we read God's word and we know they are on slippery ground as our text also reminds us. They will be stubble!

So how can we encourage each other? Note the text. Those who feared the Lord spoke to one another – the fellowship of the saints and the Lord listened and heard them. And a scroll of remembrance was written in the presence of God concerning those who feared the Lord and honoured his name. God doesn't forget his loved ones nor never will. Isaiah records in 49:15, "See I will never forget you, I have carved you in the palm of my hand."

Matter of fact, God says much more. "They shall be mine". They will be his treasured possession. He will show compassion on them. Just as a father has compassion on his son, so the Lord will have compassion on his children! Instead of a day like a furnace, you will experience the sun of righteousness and it will rise with healing in its wings.

Then indeed we will be like new calves who run from the stall. Have you ever seen that? You know I have seen it. We used to rear calves and I used to keep them in the shed for about six weeks. And then usually in September when the sun rose with new warmth, we would let them out. And the calves would run and leap and skip and sometimes they would be so enthusiastic that they would run straight into the fences. They were so pleased, so full of life. Nothing could be better for them. And we would sit there and just enjoy watching them.

That's what it is going to be for us. We could not wish for anything better. On that day it will be clear and plain. You will see the difference between the wicked and the righteous. You will then see who has the best reward! So how can we be sure that our name is in the book of life? God gives his people the answer. Be sure to remember, to do the law of my servant Moses.

In other words, love me, show it in obedience, trust in me. That was the way for the Old Testament people. Obedience to God's laws that he gave at Mt Horeb (Mt Sinai). The sin sacrifices, the offerings, the first fruits, the tithe. All pointers designed to give God's OT people peace with their Creator for it pointed to the ultimate sacrifice to come. Even our text gives a further pointer. God promises to send another prophet. Elijah is to come, the one who is also mentioned in 3:1 as the messenger, none other than John the Baptist.

And what did John the Baptist do? He pointed to the coming Christ. And he did that by preaching the need for repentance and belief. That a Father's heart would turn to his sons and a son's to his fathers. And for those who repented, Jesus would take away their sins. That is God's answer to avoiding the ultimate curse.

I don't know whether you have ever noticed that the last word in the OT is curse and the first verse in the New Testament speaks about God's answer, the good news of Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all our sins by his death on the cross for

The Book of Life.

all those who believe in Him. He is the One who puts our name in the book of life written with his own blood. He is the ONE who stretches out his hands and says, "They shall be mine!" He's the one who says that we will never be snatched out of his eternal hands.

One more thing. This side of heaven it would be wrong to say that we shouldn't worry about how the wicked and the arrogant seem to prosper. And it would be terribly wrong for some are ones we love, because they are blood. And so we are duty bound, to tell them by word and deed, of the great things God has done for us and does for all who believe.

We need to pray that we can do it winsomely. Let us show people how good it is to know Jesus as our Saviour. Let us show them how good it is to be part of God's people forever. Let us show them the peace we have that passes understanding when the world is in turmoil. And when needed, let us remind them with tears what will happen to those who names are not written in the Book of Life. Let us love these people, for the sake of the gospel but not at the cost of the gospel.

Pray with them. Pray that the Holy Spirit would change them and that they would gladly be washed in the blood of the Lamb. We can do this, for the Day of Judgment has not yet arrived. It is still the day of salvation. May many hear and respond to the gospel.

Just think – one day soon, there will be no more sorrow, or mourning, or tears. No more sin. Give thanks that your name is written in the book of life. One day our blessed saviour will say to us, "You are mine!" Amen.