

## 2 Corinthians 4:5-12 Paul's "Jesus Christ is Lord" message brings trials

### God's power and human vulnerability go together, Paul explains

5 For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

*"Preach... not ourselves" – False teachers, then as now, needed to prove themselves. But not Paul, who consistently presented a Jesus-centred message, Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Col. 2:6, as one serving the churches and not as a spiritual overlord, 2 Cor. 1:24. To confess Jesus as our Lord is to say to other Christians that we are their servants, in the Lord's service.*

6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

*"Treasure in jars of clay" – the light that comes from knowing Jesus and seeing God's glory in Him is rich treasure to share with others, but it is packaged in ordinary, rather unattractive*

**In practice** Not many of us have Paul's kind of call. We're not as ready as those early believers to lay down their lives for the sake of the gospel. But do we subconsciously expect the Christian life to be a favoured and protected one?

For the born-again believer, both of these strands play out together. There is favour and God's provision – protection, too. There is knowing that we are loved and being sustained by the inner joy of the Lord that is our strength. But once we decide that Jesus Christ is our Lord, and make that part of our life message, then we become targets. There is spiritual attack, often from unexpected quarters. The people we look to as giants of the faith were all pelted, with accusations and insults and in former days, harder missiles too.

Having an authentic faith seen by others puts us on a mission, and mission brings challenges. They are often 'breaking experiences' for us and our pride, but at the same time lifegiving experiences for others who find Jesus through us.

**Question** How much are you led by the Spirit of God? What gets in the way?

*containers (that's us), which show by contrast the priceless nature of the gospel.*

8-9 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

*"Hard pressed" – Paul backs this up with examples in 2 Cor. 11:23-33.*

10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

*"Carry... the death" – sharing in the painful mission of Jesus, Col. 1:24, which is an honour.*

11 For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body.

12 So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

*"Death is at work in us" – the way of bringing life and eternal life to others, was death for Jesus and Christian ministry and mission is Jesus-like. Paul reflects that bringing the life of Jesus and His Spirit puts him often at risk of death.*

# The Living Word

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The Bible readings for Sunday, June 3, 2018 with commentary notes

Church calendar readings for **Sunday, June 3**, in Bible order

Prepare for Sunday by reading the Bible passages beforehand – or reflect on Sunday's teaching by looking at the Scriptures again

**Theme: God's kingdom purpose calls for humble dependence when opposition threatens**

**1 Samuel 3:1-20** – God finds a young hearer He can trust with a difficult message

**Mark 2:23-3:6** – Healing in the synagogue brings religious opposition

**2 Corinthians 4:5-12** – Paul's proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord brings the trials that Jesus knew

## 1 Samuel 3:1-20 God appears to Samuel and tests his obedience

### God finds the person He can trust to hear and act on His message

1 The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.

*"Not many visions" – with the sense that such as there were, were not widely known. Eli had perhaps forgotten, and Samuel never known, the experience of the Lord speaking.*

2-3 One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was.

*The lamp... had not... gone out" – the seven-branched lamp had to be filled up with oil at nightfall and kept burning all night, Samuel's duty for the elderly priest. This suggests a time before dawn.*

4 Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am."

*"Here I am" – Samuel hasn't heard the Lord speak before, and his response is tested three times. He shows himself to be willing, even at nighttime, and gives the same response of others greatly used by God, Gen. 22:1, 11; Exod. 3:4; Isa 6:8.*

5 And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

6 Again the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

7 Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

*"Did not yet know" – The young boy was an apprentice priest, not a prophet (although that was about to change), not yet with that relationship with the Lord to know His voice.*

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8 A third time the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realised that the Lord was calling the boy.

9 So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if He calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

*Samuel's station was near the Ark of the Covenant, where God would be expected to be heard.*

10 The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

*"The Lord... stood there" – language indicates a theophany, or visible manifestation of God to humans. See Gen. 18:2, 28:13, Num. 22:22.*

11 And the Lord said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle.

*"Ears...tingle" – the language of disaster, later used of the foretold destruction of Jerusalem and Judah handed over by God to the Babylonians.*

12 At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family – from beginning to end.

13 For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God, and he failed to restrain them.

**In practice** Our situation is different from Old Testament times. God has always spoken to His people, but then the Holy Spirit 'came upon' righteous kings, priests and prophets situationally. Samuel was chosen at a young age to be a leader of his people through hearing and being obedient to God.

Coming into a relationship with Jesus, and making a regular practice of asking for the infilling of His Spirit, is how we are enabled hear Him, often through His word. We have to quiet our own thoughts and other noise first.

**Question** How would you get quiet to hear God to speak to you?

14 Therefore I swore to the house of Eli, 'The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.'

*Eli's sons' actions were deliberate and rebellious and in their contempt of God amounted to blasphemy. Inadvertent sins of priests could be atoned for, but the guilt of defiant sin could not be removed, Num. 15:30.*

15-16 Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the Lord. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son."

Samuel answered, "Here I am."

17 "What was it he said to you?" Eli asked. "Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you."

18 So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, "He is the Lord; let Him do what is good in his eyes."

*Eli had already received this word of judgment in detail from the unnamed 'man of God', 1 Sam. 2:27-36, which confirmed that the young Samuel had in fact heard from God.*

19-20 The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and He let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognised that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord.

## Mark 2:23-3:6 Healing in the synagogue brings religious opposition

### **Healing ministry in the synagogue uncovers religious opposition**

2:23-24 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain-fields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

*"His disciples... began to pick..." The disciples, not Jesus. Harvesting (with a sickle) was one of 39 things prohibited on the Sabbath, but picking grains, Deut. 23:24-25, was allowed. Israel's land was to be seen as the Lord's.*

25-26 He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

27-28 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

*Jesus says He is Lord of the Sabbath – possibly also, that it is a matter for individual conscience.*

3:1 Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shrivelled hand was there.

**In practice** Here two views of the Sabbath are sharply contrasted. The disciples were following common (and legal) practice. The man with the disability had a legitimate need. Those looking for "a reason to accuse" found grounds in a narrow view of Sabbath day observance. Read this passage with Mark 2:21-22 to see the inflexible 'religious spirit' that criticises a healing miracle because the Lord does it on a particular day. But it's an attitude we can easily slip into – what is familiar is not necessarily 'right' or the Lord's will.

**Question** Would a different Sunday, where someone was healed, be welcome?

2-3 Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shrivelled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

*"Looking for a reason to accuse" – Jesus has already exposed the religiosity of the Pharisees and they react as those who feel threatened.*

4 Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.

*"They remained silent... stubborn hearts" – see similar synagogue confrontation recorded in Luke 13:10-17. Note that both this story and the grainfield one follow on in Mark from the 'new wine needing new wineskins' teaching, Mark 2:21-22. When the kingdom of God comes near, people are healed but religious inflexibility kicks back.*

6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

*For further study, see 11:18, 12:12, 14:1-2 and 10-11 in this gospel.*