

## 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1 Keep the focus on God's grace which is eternal

**The Holy Spirit, the One who raised Jesus from the dead, is working in us**

13-14 It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to Himself.

*"I believed... I have spoken" – Paul quoting a version of Psalm 116:10. Exercising faith leads to testimony stories, big and small; testimony is a powerful way to raise faith in others. Paul often told the story of being changed from persecutor to missionary by his encounter with Jesus.*

*"Present us... to Himself" – the Holy Spirit's extraordinary power resurrected Jesus, Romans 8:11, 1 Cor. 15:20. His transformative power is at work in us to present us, made holy and acceptable, to God. A trinitarian saying.*

15 All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting

**In practice** Paul is calling his experiences "light and momentary troubles", even if they look the opposite - but he is teaching us about keeping a heavenly and eternal focus, in those moments when hell seems to be breaking out.

The more we declare and live in the Lordship of Jesus, the more the forces of darkness will try to throw us off. Paul's teaching is that spiritual opposition (often through people one would not expect) is par for the course and "momentary". The gains are eternal. We only see our side of the battle, not the "eternal glory" that results, for example, from a person led to Christ. "Keep on keeping on", he seems to be saying, even if our "tents" seem to be collapsing in the gale.

**Question** What is your story of praying and pressing in spiritually - and feeling the kickback of the enemy's oppression? How long-lived was this?

away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

*Being renewed" – the Holy Spirit's resurrection life is always renewing us inwardly (and us together as the Church). The more the outward testing – for Paul, this was sometimes brutal – the greater our reliance on God, and the deeper the relationship with Him.*

17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

*"Light and momentary" – Paul's irony, but a reminder that as our life is eternal, our perspective should be also. Developed in the following verse.*

18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

2 Cor. 5:1 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

*"Earthly tent" – a tent or even marquee has a limited life. For all of us, earthly life lasts... until it doesn't last any more. But the reality is a heavenly life more permanent than a castle.*

# The Living Word

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The Bible readings for Sunday, June 10, 2018 with commentary notes

Church calendar readings for **Sunday, June 10**, 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: Are we trusting God or following man's understanding?**

1 Samuel 8:4-20, and 11:14-15 - God's way is displaced by man's way of leading Israel

Mark 3:20-32 - God's order coming into broken lives exposes the reaction of man's disorder

2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1 - Man's mortality is painful but temporary, but God's grace and transforming work is everlasting

## 1 Samuel 8:4-20, 11:14-15 Now Israel wants a king as their leader

**Warned that it would be a costly decision, they plead for a political leader**

4-5 So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

*"A king to lead us" – The leaders come up with insubstantial reasons for wanting a king, rather than a prophetic judge. Samuel's sons have proved dishonest and the Ammonites and Philistines (v.20) continue to threaten. However, the real reason will become clear.*

6 But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord.

*It was a rejection of Samuel, who had served them well. And a rejection of God's way: Israel was called to be distinct from the surrounding nations in doing things differently.*

7-9 And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected Me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights."

*"Rejected Me as their king" – meaning they wanted their own way. This would be played out with the rejection of Christ the King.*

**For further study,** Acts 3:13-15, 7:51-53.

*Samuel warns the people of the cost of taking this new direction, based on the practices of the Canaanite kings that surrounded them.*

10-15 Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were

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asking him for a king. He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plough his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants.

*"Take a tenth" – in reality, a second tenth. Israel was instructed to devote a tenth to the Lord. The demands of an earthly king would double up on all the land, produce and people that would be consecrated to the Lord.*

16-18 Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day."

**In practice** The people of God, had been commanded to be set apart for Him – to be holy, as He is holy. Therefore they were to follow His ways and uphold His values as distinct from the nations around. They had known God's leading with the visible presence of fire and cloud. But now they wanted a "king to lead us, such as the other nations have" and to "go out before us" in battle.

God's way requires real listening – and trust. We often choose what we consider a more predictable path. God just wants us to know Him and listen to Him and be guided in that relationship – and like Israel, to show His way to others.

**Question** Think of an example where you, or your church, seem to be stuck in "man's way". What would God's way look like?

*"His slaves" – conscripted labour. "The best of your fields... and.. cattle" - Saul gave his officials military commands and farms, 1 Sam. 22:7*

19-20 But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."

*The motive becomes clear. God wanted them to be spiritually-led and spiritually dependent, as they were during the Exodus – but it was a tall order. The Israelites wanted to be seen as a match for the surrounding tribes, with a figurehead king to lead them in battle.*

1 Sam. 11:14-15 Then Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingship." So all the people went to Gilgal and made Saul king in the presence of the Lord. There they sacrificed fellowship offerings before the Lord, and Saul and all the Israelites held a great celebration.

*Meanwhile, good-looking Saul who came from a noble family, was anointed (on the Lord's instructions) by Samuel. He now receives his coronation. It is the start of a reign characterised by independence from God – 40 difficult years. Kingship was allowed, but not required, by the law, Deut. 17:14-20.*

## Mark 3:20-32 God's order coming into broken lives brings a kick-back

### **Jesus teaches that prejudice can call the Holy Spirit's work the devil's**

20-21 Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that He and his disciples were not even able to eat. When His family heard about this, they went to take charge of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind."

*"Out of His mind" – Jesus' family were still seeing Him in a worldly way.*

22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons He is driving out demons."

*Jesus' following had caused a commission to be sent to Galilee. Threatened by a man who was doing what they could not do, they resort to evil slander. Mark's gospel doesn't mention the healed blind-and-dumb man, Matt. 12:22, Luke 11:14, that prompted the accusation that he was in league with Beelzebul, the prince of demons, John 10:20.*

23-26 So Jesus called them over to Him and began to speak to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come.

**In practice** This opposition to Jesus came from a mindset of religiosity after two miraculous healing incidents in the sight of all. This was a power encounter in which evil spirits were speaking out that Jesus was the Son of God.

To attribute the unarguably good healings of needy people to the work of the chief of demons, or Satan, was blasphemy of the most serious kind – just what Jesus was frequently accused of. A misplaced sense of 'religious correctness' is still a real barrier to the Good News in a church or congregation.

**Question** When have your prejudices acted as a barrier to Bible truth?

*Jesus points out the ridiculous nature of their accusation. History teaches that in opposition to revivals the most bitter accusations are made by those who profess the same faith.*

27 In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house.

*Here the strong man is tied; healing miracles are taking place.*

28-29 Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin."

*Jesus says that only one sin puts a person beyond forgiveness, attributing the redemptive work of God to Satan, perhaps because a person locked in such prejudice is unable to acknowledge their need of forgiveness. Recognising the possibility of having committed the unforgivable sin, by definition shows the capacity to turn from it.*

30 He said this because they were saying, "He has an impure spirit."

31-32 Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call Him. A crowd was sitting around Him, and they told Him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for You."