

2 Corinthians 5:6-10,14-17 New life in Christ reveals God's kingdom

As new creations in Christ, we feel the tension of the old human life

6-7 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. For we live by faith, not by sight.

"In the body" – our human existence.

"Live by faith" – not super-spiritual believing the unbelievable, but living all of life in a trust relationship with God; looking to an eternal view past the immediate. Looks back to 2 Cor. 4:18-5:1.

8-10 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please Him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

"Appear before the judgment seat" – like today's phrase 'called to appear before the bench'. This was the bēma, where the Roman governor sat to deliver judicial verdicts.

"Receive what is due" – there is judgment in heaven and we will have to give account for what

In practice There's a tension in living for Christ but at the same time in the world's ways. We ask Jesus to be our Saviour and Lord, to become a new creation, but we find a lot of old creation habits and attitudes trying to hang on. The new life of the Spirit, which is the context of this letter and others written to early church believers, demands that we see ourselves as heaven sees us, and grow in living up to this new identity. Too easily we slide back into responding to the world around us as we see it with our eyes, rather than learning to perceive it, drawing on the spiritual awareness given by the Holy Spirit. People let us down – that is what humans do. The worldly view will blame and judge; as those in Christ we ask what is going on in them, and as those compelled by Christ's love, we should choose to treat them with the same grace we ourselves have received.

Question What excites you about the new life, and what holds you back from it?

we have done "in the body", our present lives. Where we fall short of "living for Him" we should keep short accounts with God and others.

14-15 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.

"Christ's love compels us" – Paul's motivation is his revelation of the price paid for him by Jesus, and the relationship of love which holds him. Knowing Jesus' love for us through His sacrificial death compels us to live for Him, not ourselves.

16-17 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

"The new creation" – a change of identity. From the old unregenerate person to the new, spiritual person, in which we see things differently, and the old, worldly point of view seems narrow and inadequate. The worldly view of Christ – a historic figure to imitate – is overtaken by the Holy Spirit's revelation of Christ in us and who we are "in Christ", our heavenly identity.

The Living Word

The Bible readings for Sunday, June 17, 2018 with commentary notes

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Church calendar readings for **Sunday, June 17**, 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: Three passages teach on how God's order and man's way of doing things are different

1 Samuel 15:34-16:13 – *God's way of choosing David looks on the heart*

Mark 4:26-34 – *God's realm grows unseen where it is planted*

2 Corinthians 5:6-10, 14-17 – *New life in Christ brings the kingdom of God into focus*

1 Samuel 15:34-16:13 In God's order, character trumps appearance

Samuel anoints David saying that the Lord is more concerned with heart than more obvious attributes

34-35 Then Samuel left for Ramah, but Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul. Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the Lord regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.

"Ramah... Gibeah" – only a few miles apart.

"The Lord regretted..." – echoes 15:11 and God's regret at the time of the flood, Genesis 6:7. This is not a conflict with 1 Sam. 15:29 where 'will not regret' in some versions means will not 'relent' or 'change His mind'. Saul's call to kingship had started well, 1 Sam. 9-10, but his character was to self-justify and on this test of whether he had followed a very specific command he lied twice, 1 Sam. 15:3, 13, 20-22.

For further study, see 2 Sam. 11:27, 12:7-12, Hebrews 13:7

1 Sam. 16:1 The Lord said to Samuel,

"How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."

Jesse – grandson of Boaz and Ruth.

2 But Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me."

Samuel had reason to be cautious – he had told Saul that God had rejected his kingship.

The Lord said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.'"

3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate."

Bringing a sacrifice gave Samuel a pretext for going to Bethlehem and following what the Lord would show him next.

4 Samuel did what the Lord said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the

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elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?"

5 Samuel replied, "Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord."

Like Saul, Jesse's oldest son looked impressive, but God saw what his heart was like, Psalm 139:1, which comes out in 1 Sam. 17:28.

7 But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

"The Lord looks at the heart" – a much-quoted verse, and principle. The Lord is concerned with character and spiritual disposition, whereas we are more swayed by attributes we can see. Saul stood out in appearance and height, 1 Sam. 9:2, but lacked the stature of character.

8-11 Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "The Lord has not

chosen this one either." Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, "Nor has the Lord chosen this one." Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The Lord has not chosen these." So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?"

"There is still the youngest," Jesse answered. "He is tending the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives."

12 So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; this is the one."

13 So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

With v. 14 this is the pivotal moment when by this physical action with oil there is a transfer of the spiritual anointing of God's Spirit from Saul to David (which he recalls in worship, Psalm 51:11). It begins a seven-year process of Saul being displaced as king by David.

In practice How can God, with divine foreknowledge, allow what will turn to failure? This makes a powerful statement about the principle of man's freewill, but also the seriousness of the wrong exercise of freewill and errant leadership.

In the O.T. the Holy Spirit comes on a person for a purpose, e.g. to serve as prophet or king or leader. In the NT the Spirit was given at Pentecost for all believers to ask and receive, and to "be being filled" for empowered ministry.

In God's "trust and test" Saul's arrogant, self-justifying personality lacked the honesty to know his need of God and putting mistakes right with God. David made mistakes, but God had his heart – a crucial difference.

Question What is your experience of God "trusting and testing" your freewill?

Mark 4:26-34 God's realm of influence grows unseen where it is planted

Jesus teaches that the kingdom of God is hidden growth like seed that sprouts from the soil

26-29 He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like.

The disciples thought the kingdom of God was a righteous political rule – looking back to David. Not so. All of Jesus' teaching sought to demonstrate and explain how the kingdom of God, God's rule and purpose, impacts man's freewill existence. God's kingdom exists and grows and produces its good effect in ways that are largely unseen and unrecognised – in our hearts, and through us as changed people, bringing God's order in righteous, beneficial change to our world.

A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain – first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

"He also said" – Mark recounts some further seed

In practice This teaching reminds us that God's kingdom does come and does grow whether or not we can see the impact of praying 'Your kingdom come'. The change and growth keeps on happening "all by itself" as God's will is done with the patchy support and partnership of His people. This teaching emphasises God's sovereignty in fulfilling His purpose, but the witness of the Bible as a whole is on the way God chooses us to be His 'executive partners' through our lives and relationships.

Heroes of faith like William Wilberforce and John Wesley whose hearts were changed by the Holy Spirit were passionate in their mission and persevering in setbacks and opposition and lack of progress. Centuries later, we see with more clarity what their prayer and persistence achieved for eternity.

Question Can you recall something you prayed for persistently without seeing change at the time – and then, looking back, you could see the shift?

parables which are about the unseen life of the kingdom of God which will appear. The kingdom of God is hidden, 4:21, but will certainly become established like a crop, and grow.

30-32 Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade."

"Like a mustard seed – the contrast between a very small beginning (the mustard seed was proverbially small) and spectacular growth.

33-34 With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with His own disciples, he explained everything.

Mark shows that he is including a compilation of these parables, not a chronological account.