

or compulsion of sin belonged to the old person, and was decisively broken when that old person died with Christ. A believer is not the same person as they were before receiving Christ, but a new creation, 2 Cor. 5:17.

8-10 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him. The death He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God.

"If we died with Christ... we will also live with Him" – in eternal life but also in a new quality of

REFLECTION The challenge Paul writes about is not opposition from men (although he had plenty of that) but the more subtle confusion that the enemy sows. Having grasped that God delights in treating us better than we could possibly deserve, forgiving us for everything where we have messed up, and granting us a new start in a new way of living when we turn to Christ, confusion comes. A deception begins to twist the truth – if faith alone is the path to salvation, then does it matter how we live afterwards?

There will always be the temptation to sin, but Paul points out that the desire to live independently and selfishly belonged to the old life, the one that was put to death with Christ and buried by us in baptism. We can say a firm 'no' to that desire because it doesn't belong in our new life. That is part of learning to see ourselves as the new, regenerated people that God sees – which will help us to live up to it.

QUESTION *If we have died to sin, why is it that we still battle with attitudes that don't belong, and need to put them right with God?*

PRAYER O God our Father, I thank You for Your Son Jesus and for His sacrifice in shedding His blood for me on the Cross – so that in Him I could know freedom from sin and condemnation.

I receive Jesus Christ as my Saviour again now. I invite Jesus to be Lord of my life. And I respond to Your call to be a worshipper, a witness and one who works with You in Your mission.

I recognise that the path will not always be easy and that obedience has a cost. I trust in Your foresight and providential care as I depend on You and seek to live fruitfully for You and by Your guidance. In Jesus name. Amen.

life here and now. As Christ went through an irreversible transformation, so do we in being born again, free from the fear of death and living in new life aware of Jesus with us.

11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

"Count yourselves" – the new life and new relationship with both sin and God, call for thinking about ourselves in a new way, deadened to the pull of sin and enlivened to God "in Christ Jesus" – the first use of this important phrase much used by Paul.

The Living Word

Bible readings for Sunday, June 21, 2020, with explanatory notes

www.thelivingword.uk PRINT EDITION

Bible study on the Revised Common Lectionary passages for **June 21**

Prepare by reading the Bible passages beforehand – read again to reflect on the pulpit teaching

Theme: **Three facets of new life: providence, promise and also persecution**

Jeremiah 20:7-13 – Jeremiah speaks truth and encounters hatred

Matthew 10:24-39 – Living for Christ brings pain but also provision

Romans 6:1-11 – Dying to the old life kills off sin's grasp

and also Psalm 69:7-18

Jeremiah 20:7-13 – The prophet speaks truth and encounters hatred

He is scorned because what he faithfully speaks out has not yet happened

7 You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived [or persuaded]; You overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me.

"You deceived" me... and I was deceived" – a word play on two forms of the same word meaning entice or seduce. Jeremiah feels coerced into a ministry which provokes hatred, most recently the bullying of Pashur the priest, vv.1-6.

8 Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long.

"Proclaiming violence and destruction" – an unpopular and as yet unfulfilled forecast made Jeremiah a target for mocking, v.7.

9 But if I say, "I will not mention His word or speak any more in His name," His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.

"A fire shut up" – classic description of what it feels like to carry a word from God to hostile hearers.

• **For further study**, compare Jer. 1:6-8; Amos 3:8; Acts 4:20; 1 Cor. 9:16.

10 I hear many whispering, "Terror on every side! Denounce him! Let's denounce him!" All my friends are

waiting for me to slip, saying, "Perhaps he will be deceived; then we will prevail over him and take our revenge on him."

"Terror on every side" – mocking Jeremiah's prophetic naming of his persecutor: 'The man who lives in terror', v.3.

"I hear many" – the prophet's struggle is, typically, three-fold; from God's enemies, from others who are envious and waiting for him to slip up; and with a burden from God to convey.

11 But the Lord is with me like a mighty warrior; so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced; their dishonour will never be forgotten.

"But the Lord" – having poured out his heart in lament Jeremiah declares his trust in God's response, recalling earlier promises, 1:8, 18, 15:20-24.

12 Lord Almighty, You who examine the righteous and probe the heart and mind, let me see Your vengeance on them, for to You I have committed my cause.

"You who... probe... heart and mind" – God knows the true motives behind every action. The vengeance Jeremiah requests is not personal but in the context of the survival of the nation.

13 Sing to the Lord! Give praise to the Lord! He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked.

"Give praise" – faith in God coming through for him.

The Living Word, on Wednesday for the following week – www.thelivingword.uk

See also

www.glowweobley.com – join others in the latest suggested prayers for our community
believethegoodnews.com – fresh encouragement from God's word today

REFLECTION Our view of how God is experienced shifts from Old Testament, to the NT pre-resurrection, and then to the Spirit-led church learning to work out their new life in Christ. However, one experience is consistent – the inevitable opposition that comes. Sinful men, stirred up by an active devil, cause Jeremiah a lot of pain, and he pours out his heart first, before turning to praise God for His faithfulness, which he knows will sustain him. The lesson for us is on the lines of 'no pain, no gain' and being prepared for opposition to our witness, when it comes.

QUESTION *If we find that what we share lovingly, provokes hostility, how do we handle it?*

Matthew 10:24-39 – Living for Christ brings pain but also provision

Oppression and conflict come with the territory but God's care is over it

24-25 "The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

"Beelzebul" – a name derived from a Philistine deity and used by the Pharisees for the prince of demons, Matt. 12:24-28. It came to be a name for Satan himself, Matt. 9:34.

26 "So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.

"Do not be afraid of them" – refers back to persecutors, Matt. 10:22-23: "You will be hated by everyone because of Me". Believers live aware that what the world has called the Lord, it will call us.

27 "What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.

"Proclaim from the roofs" – above the noisy, crowded streets, rooftop to rooftop was a good way to spread a message. The time is now coming to make the Good News generally known.

28-29 "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care.

"Destroy... in hell" – only God has the authority to condemn to hell. Not annihilation but ruination.

30-31 "And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

"Don't be afraid" – a command resonating through the Bible. If sparrows and small details are subject to God's providence, persecution will not compromise His plan or disciples.

32-33 "Whoever acknowledges Me before others, I will also acknowledge before My Father in heaven. But whoever disowns Me before others, I will disown before My Father in heaven.

"Whoever acknowledges Me" – an astonishing claim that could only be made by the One who shares divinity with His Father in heaven.

34-36 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law – a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'

"I did not come to bring peace" – of a social or political kind. Jesus did come to make a way of peace with God, John 14:27, Romans 8:6. However, His demand that people make a decision about Him will always divide people of the light who belong to Him, from those of darkness under the influence of the devil.

37 "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves their son or daughter

more than Me is not worthy of Me.

"Loves their father or mother more" – asking for uncompromising devotion; for many Jews, honouring father and mother was tantamount to the greatest commandment.

38-39 "Whoever does not take up their cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and

whoever loses their life for My sake will find it."

"Take up their cross" – we read back from knowing about Christ's death but this was the first mention of the cross by Matthew. The cross, death by torture, stood for the opposite of self-preservation; to be a disciple of Jesus was to follow Him regardless of consequences.

REFLECTION The immediate context is Jesus preparing His disciples for a factional time in the aftermath of His death and Resurrection. The Good News of Jesus and His kingdom, the new life received by faith alone and the nature of the gospel, have all been divisive at times, especially where church power has been threatened. John Wesley, a very short man, found himself locked out of churches even though he was a Church of England minister, and he resorted to finding an impressive tomb to climb up on and preach to whoever gathered in the churchyard. That was his version of proclaiming the message from the rooftops. He experienced God's providence in seeing thousands turn to Christ, and gathered in an early form of home groups, and later, being able to build chapels that they did not need to pay pew-rents to attend.

QUESTION *Jesus says (twice) that we must not be afraid, although we should be ready to face difficulty and trouble. How do we reconcile those two things?*

Romans 6:1-11 – Dying to the old life kills off sin's grasp

Christ was raised from the dead and we are reborn into new life in Him

1-2 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

"Shall we go on sinning" – Paul's earlier statement: "Where sin increased, grace increased all the more" raises the logical, but morally flawed, question of whether a person justified by faith alone can live however they want. His response was, "What a ghastly thought!" (J B Phillips). The believer's relationship with sin is different, having died to its allure.

3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? 4 We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

"Buried with Him through baptism into death" – Paul's audience would all have been baptised by immersion following their decision to believe in, and live for, Jesus. Going down into the water was symbolic of the death and burial of the old sinful and self-centred life. Similarly, rising out of the water was an identification with Christ's resurrection, and entering into new life in Him.

5-7 For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we will certainly also be united with Him in a resurrection like His. For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

"Our old self" – often rendered as "the old man" bringing out more clearly who we were in the natural state, represented by Adam. All human beings were born "in Adam", 1 Corinthians 15:22.

"No longer slaves to sin... set free" – Paul is not saying that Christians no longer sin, but the rule