

teaching of Jesus, Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27-28.

**15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.**

"Rejoice... mourn" — as members of a body, sharing each other's joy and pain, 1 Cor. 12:25-26.

**16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.**

"Live in harmony" — as a fellowship holding kingdom values, not status-conscious Roman ones.

**17-18 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.**

"If it is possible... live at peace" — Christians cannot and should not aim to please everyone, but should love people within the fellowship and beyond it, making "the teaching about God our Saviour attractive", Titus 2:10.

**SUMMARY** There's a particular kind of relationship that the kingdom of God calls for. That's especially in the church fellowship, but also in the way Christians relate to others. It is based on love of a particular quality — sacrificial love, love that doesn't count the cost and which extends God's grace to those who are against us.

**REFLECTION** As far as possible we are to live at peace with everyone — but we don't have control of that. Trouble will come, both from those within the fellowship, and from outside it. Outside it is easier to understand. People have free will, and the way relationships work in the world, we love on the basis of choosing people who love us back. In the kingdom of God, we learn to love others above ourselves, with no thought about what comes back to us, and that's difficult. When we get harsh treatment from someone in the fellowship who is still practising what the world teaches, it is especially testing.

**QUESTION** *What we are expected to do towards others is humanly impossible. How is it that Paul can expect readers to follow his instructions?*

**PRAYER** Thank You, Father, for first loving me. I hear Your call to live for You by loving others, regardless of whether they return it.

Following Jesus can be difficult and the cost can seem too great. But what is that, compared with Your Son paying for my freedom with His life?

Fill me with Your Spirit and Your unconditional love, as I pray this in and through Jesus. Amen.

The Living Word online with click-through links, every Wednesday for the week following — [www.thelivingword.uk](http://www.thelivingword.uk)

See also other Living Word Publications

[www.glowweobley.com](http://www.glowweobley.com) — join others in the latest suggested prayers for our community  
[believethegoodnews.com](http://believethegoodnews.com) — fresh encouragement from God's word today

# The Living Word

[www.thelivingword.uk](http://www.thelivingword.uk) PRINT EDITION

Bible readings for Sunday, August 30, 2020, with explanatory notes

Bible study on the Revised Common Lectionary passages for **August 30**  
Prepare by reading the Bible passages beforehand — read again to reflect on the pulpit teaching

Theme: **There's personal sacrifice in following God's call**

Psalms 26:1-8, Jeremiah 15:15-21 — The cost of commitment to God

Matthew 16:21-28 — Jesus explains that He is called to suffer and die

Romans 12:9-21 — The call is to show God's life by sacrificial love

## Psalms 26:1-8, Jeremiah 15:15-21 — The cost of commitment to God

*Following God's call requires us to live by different priorities*

**1-2 Vindicate me, LORD, for I have led a blameless life; I have trusted in the LORD and have not faltered. Test me, LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind...**

"Blameless... trusted... not faltered... test me" — the psalmist invites the Lord to examine his integrity without claiming to be sinless, Psalm 25:7, 18.

**3 ...for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love and have lived in reliance on Your faithfulness.**

"Love and... faithfulness" — the awareness of God's unwavering, loyal love which is God's promise to those "who keep the demands of His covenant," Psalm 25:10.

**4 I do not sit with the deceitful, nor do I associate with hypocrites.**

"Sit with... deceitful... hypocrites" — not associating with bad company, the standard of Psalm 1:1.

**5 I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked.**

"I abhor... and refuse" — faithfulness is doing what is right, but also avoiding wrong associations.

**6-7 I wash my hands in innocence, and go about Your altar, LORD, proclaiming aloud Your praise and telling of all Your wonderful deeds.**

"Go about Your altar" — speaking out praise of God beside His altar was a way of sharing devotion.

**8 LORD, I love the house where You live, the place where your glory dwells.**

"I love the house where You live" — the ark in the inner tabernacle was held to be a place of the special presence of God. To love the house of God is to invite God's response in unfailing love, or mercy, Psalm 26:11.

## Jeremiah 15:15-21

**15 LORD, You understand; remember me and care for me. Avenge me on my persecutors. You are long-suffering — do not take me away; think of how I suffer reproach for Your sake.**

"You understand...how I suffer reproach" — Jeremiah's prophetic anointing caused him to see things revealed by God, not yet seen by his family and countrymen, the tension known by prophetic people.

**16 When Your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear Your name, LORD God Almighty.**

"I ate them" — figuratively, by reflecting on them.

**17 I never sat in the company of revellers, never made merry with them; I sat alone because Your hand was on me and You had filled me with indignation.**

"I sat alone" — Jeremiah never married, Jer. 16:2, and aware of the Lord's indignation at the sins of Judah, Jer. 6:11, for him this was not a time to celebrate.

**18 Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? You are to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails.**

"My pain...a spring that fails" — Jeremiah doubts

whether he is up to the task, and still hearing God.

**19 Therefore this is what the LORD says: "If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve Me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be My spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them.**

"If you repent" — God gets Jeremiah to turn from his confusion with popular opinion, and press through with leading the people to repent.

**20 I will make you a wall to this people,**

**SUMMARY** Jeremiah tells God about the pain that has come to him for sticking faithfully to what God was revealing to him. There was the reproach of those that didn't understand. Others wanted to feast and party, but Jeremiah, aware of the bigger picture, couldn't be one of the crowd. He was running dry in trying to communicate a message that only brought him trouble. He was having a 'wobble' in his call — was he even on the right track? God turned him round and encouraged him to go right on speaking the message he had been given — with greater authority.

**APPLICATION** What God wants from us can set us on a different path from our family and friends. They don't understand and tensions arise. But there is a particular spiritual authority that comes from staying with God on a difficult path.

**QUESTION** *When have you faced criticism from friends for sticking to what you felt was righteous? How did God see you through this?*

**Matthew 16:21-28** — Jesus explains that He is called to suffer and die

*Disciples learn to let go of the world's acclaim to gain God's*

**21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.**

"From that time on" — a turning point: now Jesus begins to teach that He must "suffer many things" in Jerusalem, be killed and then raised to life. Following Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Messiah, Matt. 16:16, Jesus begins to reveal the suffering path of the Messiah.

• *For further study, the three predictions of His death, see also Matthew 17:22-23, 20:18-19.*

**22 Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to You!"**

"This shall never happen" — Peter had

**a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue and save you," declares the LORD.**

"I will make you... a fortified wall" — by speaking true words (unlike the false prophets); a recommissioning in words that restate Jeremiah's original call, Jer. 1:17-19.

**21 "I will save you from the hands of the wicked and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel."**

pain that has come to him for sticking faithfully to what God was revealing to him. There was the reproach of those that didn't understand. Others wanted to feast and party, but Jeremiah, aware of the bigger picture, couldn't be one of the crowd. He was running dry in trying to communicate a message that only brought him trouble. He was having a 'wobble' in his call — was he even on the right track? God turned him round and encouraged him to go right on speaking the message he had been given — with greater authority.

**APPLICATION** What God wants from us can set us on a different path from our family and friends. They don't understand and tensions arise. But there is a particular spiritual authority that comes from staying with God on a difficult path.

**QUESTION** *When have you faced criticism from friends for sticking to what you felt was righteous? How did God see you through this?*

recognised Jesus as Messiah, but like most Jews saw that as triumphant and conquering.

• *For further study on the Messiah that must suffer, see Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Zech. 12:10; 13:7.*

**23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."**

"Get behind me, Satan" — because the devil had offered the same temptation to avoid suffering and death, Matthew 4:10. But the Cross was central to the Messiah's saving mission.

**24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me.**

"Deny themselves... take up their cross" — not falsely adopting an impoverished life, but renouncing all that is self-centred and personally ambitious to put the kingdom of God first, Matthew 6:33.

"Follow" — can be literal or of personal allegiance.

**25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me will find it.**

"Save life... lose it... loses their life... find it" — Jesus sets out the paradox: finding kingdom life in discipleship by letting go of personal aspirations.

**26-27 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in His Father's glory with His angels, and then He will**

**SUMMARY** At this point in the gospel story, Peter has declared who Jesus is, the Messiah of God. Now Jesus tells the disciples about the suffering and death He will endure at the hands of the temple hierarchy. Peter the Rock reacts sharply, as if to say that he won't let that happen — and for that moment 'the Rock' becomes a stumbling block in the way of God's plan. Those who follow Me as disciples, Jesus tells them, have to let go of the regular rewards of life and accept the world's condemnation of their call — but in doing so, they will discover the extraordinary life of God's kingdom.

**APPLICATION** To lose one's life to gain it is a tough proposition. But that's the dilemma for everyone who believes and receives Christ to become a Christian. It is a saying 'no' to the old path of life, with its aspirations and successes, in order to say 'yes' to Jesus and follow Him on a path with its own pain and difficulties — and its own special heavenly reward.

**QUESTION** *It is one thing to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour, but how do you feel about submitting to Jesus as Lord and becoming one of His apprentices?*

**Romans 12:9-21** — The call is to show God's life by sacrificial love

*Christians are enabled to prefer and honour others above themselves*

**9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.**

"Love must be sincere" — the church is built on relationships, which must be real (lit., without hypocrisy) reflecting kingdom values. We are to demonstrate love to those in the church fellowship; also oppressors (v.14) and outsiders (vv.17-21).

**10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves.**

"Honour... above yourselves" — as Jesus was seen to do, Phil. 2:3-7. Only a mind renewed by the Holy Spirit (v.2) could embrace such an idea. Roman society was full of competition for honour.

**11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep**

**reward each person according to what they have done.**

"Gain the whole world" — sacrificing selfish ambition opens the way to kingdom life now, extending into eternal life with Jesus, rather than spiritual death and eternal separation from God.

**28 "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."**

"Some who are standing here" — Peter, James and John would see the Son of Man transfigured in royal splendour (alternative translation for "in His kingdom") six days later.

**your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord.**

"Keep your spiritual fervour" — this could be translated "be set on fire by the Spirit", passionate about faith in Jesus and keen to exercise ministry to others in the fellowship.

**12-13 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.**

"Hope... affliction" — affliction was (and for the fervent Christian, is) inevitable, John 16:33; 2 Tim. 3:12, but Christians are enabled to face it confidently and with inner joy.

**14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.**

"Bless those who persecute" — reflecting the