



2 Corinthians 4:13—5:1; Mark 3:20-35
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Churches of all denominations claim with great pride to be a “*church family*.” We tend to project onto the Church all our best aspirations for life together, and when one church does not meet our requirements, we move on testing the next one and then the next until we realize that there is no perfect church. At that point, either we make peace with the discovery and live in faith, or we abandon the project altogether.

“Church family” is not a title to be given lightly. There is no perfect family and every family experiences growing pains, tensions, and conflicts. In some extreme cases, families experience painful rifts, emotional fusion, brokenness, abuse, and dysfunction (that is, they do not *behave* as a family).

Belonging to a church family does not simply mean people fill a common space for worship, study the Bible together, or take a part in service projects. Such Christians share the same Baptism and participate in the Lord’s Supper. They rally around the name of Jesus. But their participation remains superficial. They remain Christians by name only and often other things take priority over their faith, things that become idolatries such as nationalism, race, political ideology, economic class, and religious affiliation.

Jesus alerts us that not all those who call “Lord, Lord...” will enter the kingdom of God. They may be great prophets; they may be great healers; they may be great teachers, servants, and

donors and still be off track (see Matthew 7:21-25). This saying of Jesus may create anxiety and confusion.

He lets us know in no hidden ways what it means to belong to his family: “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:35). His understanding of “family” includes and goes beyond blood relations.

Doing the will of God: That is the eternal call and the greatest challenge. When that does not happen and the will of God is ignored, dismissed, or even opposed, “a kingdom is divided against itself,” and so is any household, any community of believers, anyone who puts a hand to the plow (Luke 9:2).

Jesus is appealing to one’s integrity and faith. He wants us to take stock of who we are and, in full trust in God, act on God’s Word. We are children created in the image of God and called to the light to grow into God’s likeness.

The 13th century theologian, Meister Eckhart, taught:

The seed of God is in us.... Now, the seed of a pear tree grows into a pear tree, a hazel seed into a hazel tree, the seed of God into God.

God is not outside of us that we should seek God even beyond space. God is within us¹ and delights in us.² The “journey” is a call to grow in our friendship/fellowship/communion with God and God’s creation, a call to be “One” and restore all things in God. We are ambassadors to this and reconcilers of the world.³

Return to 2 Corinthians and read from 4:1 to 5:5.

¹ Zephaniah 3:17; Deuteronomy 30:10-16; Isaiah 30:21; Acts 7:28; Luke 17:20-21; John 14:23; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:22; 3:17-19; Colossians 1:24-29; Romans 8:10; 1 John 3:24; Revelation 21:3

² Psalm 18:16; 116:15

³ 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Ephesians 6:20

Because of the gift of the Spirit in us, we are alerted to God's abiding in us and to God's desire to reveal God's Self to us so that we can, thus enlightened, live and grow and act, and be a beacon of hope and light for others to see.⁴

This does not mean that we are spared difficulties, tragedies, and abuse. It does mean, though, that the God of Life is ever present and strengthens us through grace so that we may face all that the world hurls at us and not lose hope. We remain faithful and obedient.⁵ We proclaim the glory of God by our very existence.

Cranes were first invented in ancient Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) for the collection of water. The technology was then employed in Egypt and later in Greece for construction purposes.

Cranes can be used to lift heavy materials during building projects or to move containers to and from ships. A counterweight that offsets the weight of the load keeps the crane from tipping during its work of lifting.

Paul writes to the Corinthians about the spreading of grace to the glory of God. Amid this encouragement he acknowledges the frailty of our human journey, a suffering that prepares us for an "eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

Paul is speaking a word of hope in what cannot be seen. Hope in God's grace and eternal glory is the counterweight that equips us to carry the heavy burdens we encounter in our lives and the lives of others.

Every day the Spirit of Jesus trains us for greater things even as our outer body declines and faces many challenges. But our

⁴ Isaiah 30:17; Daniel 12:3; Matthew 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:9; Act 13:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Philippians 2:12-16

⁵ 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

hope is in the presence of God in us from whom nothing can separate us.⁶

Let us be docile and cooperative in our own growth.

Let us spend private time with the Spirit in prayer and meditation.

Let us grow closer to the One who creates us, fills us, transforms us, and brings us all together in Holy Communion with all creation. Amen.

⁶ Romans 8:31-39