

# St. Paul: Weekly Devotions

*Devotions on week's readings  
for 08.30.15 (Pentecost 14b)*

## **Day One: 2 Kings 2:9-14**

*Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." And Elijah said, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me." And he said, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so." And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more.*

When a weary and discouraged Elijah arrived at the cave at Mt. Horeb, God promised him that he would appoint a successor, someone who would take the weight of the prophet's ministry from his shoulders. And now here he is! Elisha has accepted God's calling. He is willing to take over for Elijah. He asks Elijah for a double portion of his spirit because Elisha has

already given up his earthly inheritance. He has left his home and family and land and wealth in order to be a prophet.

Elijah says, "You have asked a hard thing..." But it doesn't seem that hard. He just needs to be present to see when Elijah is taken into heaven, and in the next verse it takes place. What's so hard about that?

I believe that Elisha's request is hard because he does not know what he is asking for. He doesn't appreciate the weight of the calling to speak the word given him by the Spirit. While Elijah is lifted up by God, Elisha must carry on with the broken and sin-filled nation of Israel, confronting men and women who will reject him and the truth he speaks.

But it is God's Spirit. It is God's work. It is God who carried Elijah to heaven. And it is God who will carry Elisha through his days of service.

**Prayer:** *Father in heaven, I want an inheritance. Not money, not land, not earthly goods. But give my life meaning. Let me serve you. It is a heavy thing I ask, but I know that you will bless me. Amen.*

## Day Two: 2 Kings 2:9-14

*And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more... Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and the other, and Elisha went over.*

Here are two important points to clear up: First, God doesn't do magic wands and staffs. The Bible doesn't have items that get infused with magical power. That's how we like to think of things because we want to control God and use his power for our will.

So when God commanded Moses to make a bronze serpent, the people started to worship it! Same thing with the vestments of the priests. And, of course, we all know about the magic power of the Holy Grail. We seem ready to worship anything that looks powerful!

No! Elisha uses Elijah's cloak to work a miracle, but it is God's plan to show that he

has stepped into the prophet's role.

Second, God does miracles for their meaning and message, not for amazement. Moses parts the Red Sea. Joshua parts the Jordan. And then Elijah and Elisha both part the Jordan as if this is just the magician's way of getting around.

No, there is meaning in Elisha re-entering Israel this way. He is entering the land God promised, beside the city of Jericho where Joshua first led the people across the river. And he is coming to reassert God's sovereignty. Jericho is now a pagan city, practicing child sacrifice. But God is not defeated. He is not weak. His prophet Elijah was weary, but God's word will now be proclaimed against evil by Elisha. And God will not stop seeking his sheep.

This is not about amazement. It's about God's message. He will cross every barrier to bring his kingdom into your life also!

**Prayer:** *Father, I don't need to see a miracle. I only need you. Cross my barriers of doubt and build your kingdom in me. Amen.*

### **Day Three: Eph 6:10-20**

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup>Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup>Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

The morning radio show on WJR sometimes has a segment they call “What’s Bugging You?” People call in to talk about the things that make them angry. Enemies. Problems. Challenges.

During that program the radio station often schedules a series of commercials from a local pest control company. Evidently, they think their ad will stick with you better if you’re thinking about tiny pests like ants and termites.

In reality, it is those tiny problems that bother us the most. We are more distracted by an itchy insect bite than by injustice. We may be more troubled by our neighbor’s

long grass or dandelions than by the awareness that our neighbor does not know Jesus Christ or have eternal life.

We’re “bugged” by troubles in our life, irritations and inconveniences. But Paul says our real enemy is unseen – Satan and all his fellow fallen angels. Our real problems are not work or money or food, but how to stand against this hidden enemy to rescue those he has captured!

How can we triumph against such a powerful invisible foe? Easy! In fact, it’s already done! We have unlimited power available to us in our Savior. Kept safe in him, guarded by his forgiveness, dressed in his armor, filled with his Spirit, “we are more than conquerors through him who loves us.”

If you have such a great victory against your real enemy, how can you be “bugged” today by little things?

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, dress me. Train me. Prepare me. Strengthen me. I am not afraid to fight with you by my side, for you have won the victory for me. Amen.*

### Day Three: Mark 7:14-23

<sup>15</sup> *“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. <sup>16</sup>By their fruit you will recognize them...*

<sup>21</sup> *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

I recently worshiped in a church that was very nice. Columned aisles. Beautiful windows. But then I noticed that not a single person spoke to me. I tried to make eye contact and smile, but no one welcomed me.

Many people would like to beautify the church, to donate a stained glass window or to pay for new decorations. But what really beautifies God house is the people who worship there and their faithfulness to God’s word.

Jesus never said, “Watch out for churches that don’t have a strong nursery program, for you’ll have to deal with fussy kids in church.” He never said, “Watch out for boring pastors, for they’ll make the service seem even longer!” He never even said, “Watch out for

unfriendly people in church for they will make you feel bad.” Instead, Jesus spoke over and over again about the danger of false teachers.

Instead of seeking a friendly church and trying to make it faithful, we should seek a faithful church and help to make it friendly. Jesus’ true word ought to be our first and highest priority.

Would you like to make our church more beautiful? First, be in the word of God and help to share the truth with your fellow believers in Bible class, small group, Sunday school, and worship. Second, then you can add your smile that springs from the love you have found in Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, thank you for my church. Help me, by your Spirit, to make it better, to bear the fruits that will show others that you are present in this place. Amen.*

<p>These devotions help us to think ahead about the Bible verses we will read in worship next week. They are written weekly by Pastor Don Neuendorf. You can learn more about our worship or our church at <a href="http://stpaulannarbor.org">stpaulannarbor.org</a></p>
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