

“Being Renewed Day by Day”

June 16, 2024
King City United Church
Rev. Padre Andrew K. Lee

Prayer for Illumination

Holy God, let your Spirit now move in us, to turn us away from the temporary and move us to your eternal love made visible in Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

Amen.

Scripture Readings

2 Corinthians 4:13–5:1

¹³ But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—“I believed, and so I spoke”—we also believe, and so we speak, ¹⁴ because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. ¹⁵ Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, ¹⁸ because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

⁵ For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

This is the Words of the witness.

Thanks be to God.

< Children's Time >

Good morning, my friends! Now we are in June. I can't believe we are passing the first half of this year of 2024. Can you remember what you've done for the last five months of this year? Time flies. My 2024 hasn't been easy. But I have also found that God guides us even when stressed out. We call it divine grace or, in a more complicated word, God's Providence. Today, I brought a Bible story of God's planning for Israelites when they had a hard time.

In the Old Testament, there is a story about the anointing of the first King of Israel. Do you know who the king was? It was Saul, and the prophet Samuel anointed him.

Let's dive into the story of Saul. There was a young man named Saul. One day, Saul and his father's servant were looking for his father's donkeys but couldn't find them. Donkeys disappeared. They looked all over the hill and fields for the donkeys but could not find them anywhere. Saul disappointingly told the servant that they had better go back home. "I have an idea," said the servant. "I heard that Samuel the prophet is in next town. Maybe he can pray to God and ask him where the donkeys are." They expected the prophet to solve their problem, even if they lost their donkeys. So Saul and the servant went to the next town to find Samuel's house. When Saul saw a man walking along the road, he asked where Samuel was. The man replied, "Hello Saul, I am Samuel. Stop worrying about the donkeys." Although they had never met, Samuel already knew who he was and knew his name, and he even knew about the donkeys. Saul went inside and ate a meal with him. The next morning, they walked outside, and Samuel gave Saul a special message from God. "Saul, the lord has chosen you to be king over all of Israel." Saul was somewhat surprised by this. Why

would God choose me? "I'm no one. I'm just a guy from a small town." However, with all their confidence, Samuel poured oil on Saul's head to show that God had chosen him. Soon, he was invited to the Israelites. Although Saul was nervous and shy about coming forward to the crowd, God pushed him to be the king, and people cheered.

My friends, isn't it funny that he met the prophet and became a king while looking for the donkeys? It was God's calling, which sometimes comes upon a person who doesn't think he or she is ready. But God is amazing. God is calling an incomplete person and makes all things done by the imperfect person. We all are imperfect, but when God calls you, you will know it's time for inauguration, a new start for God. My friends, be ready, set, and go when God calls you. May God guide you as God guide Saul. Amen.

<Reflection>

I was born and raised in South Korea; I know the Korean culture very well, and I'd like to tell you a really interesting thing about Koreans, comparing Canadians. When Canadians meet a new person, we introduce ourselves by name, like, "Hello, I'm Andrew." We don't ask his or her age at the first encounter. And we naturally come to know how old he or she is when the person celebrates his or her grandchild having a 6-year-old birthday party.

On the contrary, Koreans usually introduce themselves by job title and then, a bit later, exchange information about age. Sometimes, they start by mentioning their ages first. Even just before fighting each other, they try to

know the age of the counterpart: "How, on earth, old are you?!" This is because they want to make clear that who is old should be respected more.

Today, I'd like to ask you this kind of question but in a converse way. Instead of questioning "how old you are," I'd like to ask "How renewed you are." It is a theologically important question and has a biblical foundation because Apostle Paul declares in the passage today that our inner nature is being renewed day by day. Therefore, we Christians may ask each other how renewed we are. We are being renewed. Actually, we are not just in spirit but also body. Medical research says 330,000,000,000 three hundred and thirty thousand million body cells are being replaced every day, and, in 80 days, our whole body cells are being replaced, calculating the mass of our body. Based on this calculation, your account from 80 days ago is now totally renewed. So, if I ask how renewed you are, that question wouldn't be that ridiculous. We are being renewed every day, and we believe we are getting closer to God since we are known to God. All the steps and the journey to God that we all are having must include phenomena and non-phenomena. When we are alive, we meet God and have many paths to God. When we are dead, we believe we come to meet God face to face. In the world we live in and the world beyond, every step is the journey of getting closer to and meeting God. Being renewed every day cannot be mere lip service. We know that we are biologically being renewed. And being renewed every day is a principle of nature. Not being renewed every day means an utter death. Only a dead body cannot be renewed. Christians believe that our inner self is renewed. The Holy Spirit helps us be renewed and ignite our desire for spiritual renewal.

If you want to be spiritually challenged and renewed, most of your intentions are from the Holy Spirit. That work, the work of changing and

renewing, is one of the important works of the Holy Spirit. Apostle Paul surely knew the works of the Holy Spirit, and he gave many teachings about the spirit.

When we read today's passage, I must reflect on two things. First, the issue of Hellenism: Is his Hellenistic approach acceptable? Is his dualistic approach acceptable to contemporary Christians? Second, is his explanation still valid?

For the matter of discrepancy of Hellenism and Hebraism hasn't stopped since the time of Apostle's Paul. I know interesting debates between a Swedish theologian, Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, a German. The discussion agenda was the point of contact of divinity. [\[1\]](#) how do we meet God? Is God immanent or transcendental? In other words, "Is God inside or out?" If someone asks you, what is your answer?

A British priest named Bede Griffiths (1906~1993), born in 1906 and died in 1993, who was a Benedictine monk, travelled around the world asking various people of faith traditions, "Where is God?" Interestingly, Hindus and Buddhists would typically point to their heart, while Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the West would point outside of themselves to the heavens. [\[2\]](#) Where is God? Inside or outside? Up or down?

While Western theology and churches have floundered in the swamp of the binaries, the discovery of wave-particle duality about the light gave a light to the Westerners. Most scientists in the early 20th century believed that light is either a wave or a particle. However, since the discovery of quantum physics, people gradually understood that light is both a wave and a particle. The impact of scientific discovery became the motif for

Westerners to rediscover a new way of approaching a matter, which is called "both-and-way of thinking," which is from Asian philosophy. This Asian way of thinking is critical in that it is similar to Hebraism, which was the foundation of the Bible and is even helpful in understanding divinity and Christianity. And now, I raise the question again: Is God imminent or transcendental? Is God in or out? Yes. God is imminent and transcendental. Yes, God is both in and out. And the modern theologians catch the gist right away: God is imminent and, at the same time, transcendental. Therefore, the point of contact of divinity can be in or out or both.

Then, one thing remains: Can we validate the Apostle Paul's dualistic explanation about the Kingdom of God and eternity? In order not to misinterpret Christianity, we need to know the background. The people whom the Apostle Paul is talking to were the residents of the city of Corinth. And the culture and the ethos of the city were of Hellenism. Our biblical worldview gives birth to Hebraism, which differs from Hellenism. That is, his approach in the 2 Corinthians chapter 4 is dualistic, which is from Hellenism and doesn't go very well with Hebraism. The Apostle Paul says, "We look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal." [3] This statement fits the context of Corinthians, who faced Roman persecution. The moment they were experiencing was risky. Being a Christian easily costs their lives in that context. In this respect, God uses the Apostle Paul to encourage people to stand against the Roman persecution and understand the Kingdom of God clearly.

Brothers and sisters and friends! We Christians are being renewed when we are spiritually renewed. We are being physically and spiritually renewed every day when we meet God until we meet God face to face. The

point of contact of divinity happened in our past and is happening in our present and the future, so it always happens. In this respect, the meaning of spiritual renewal for the Apostle Paul is that we meet God every day and moment. His encounter with the divine presence every day made him confess the continuation of divine presence and its eternity, and we believe that eternity awakens us to recognize that our physical death is not the utter end of life but a new door for eternity. Without hope of eternity, how could our faith stand? Although he gives us an imperfect and dualistic explanation of the Kingdom of God, it cannot undermine our love for God, the eternal source of divine grace.

It cannot separate us from the love of Christ (n)either death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.[\[4\]](#) May this faithful confession by the Apostle Paul be your confession of your lips and your life today and this moment. Let us pray silently.

[\[1\]](#) *Anknüpfungspunkt*.

[\[2\]](#) Wayne Teasdale, *The Mystic Heart* (NY: New World Library, 2001), 79.

[\[3\]](#) 2 Cor.4:18.

[\[4\]](#) Romans 8:35,38-40.