

MONDAY
14 JUNE
2 Corinthians 6:1-10
Psalm 98
Matthew 5:38-42

TUESDAY
15 JUNE
2 Corinthians 8:1-9
Psalm 146
Matthew 5:43-end

WEDNESDAY 16
JUNE
2 Corinthians 9:6-11
Psalm 112
Matthew 6:1-6. 16-18

THURSDAY
17 JUNE
2 Corinthians 11:1-11
Psalm 111
Matthew 6:7-15

FRIDAY
18 JUNE
2 Corinthians 11:18.
21b-30
Psalm 34:1-6
Matthew 6:19-23

SATURDAY
19 JUNE
2 Corinthians 12:1-10
Psalm 89:20-33
Matthew 6:24-end

REFLECTION

In these days of social media and soundbites, people are often quoted out of context, completely distorting the message. But 'twas ever thus when it comes to the Bible. Reading only some of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians this week, you'd be forgiven for thinking what a braggart he was, boasting about his afflictions, his holiness, his knowledge, his visions!



It doesn't help when we read those scathing words from Jesus on Wednesday about boastful hypocrites. But Paul was no hypocrite. Those things he "boasted" about were true. And if we know the context, perhaps we can understand him. People he sarcastically calls "super-apostles" on Thursday were boasting of their own importance and distorting the Gospel of grace, the saving strength of God for those who are weak. Paul's readers couldn't hear the tone of his voice (or see an accompanying emoji!), so in readings from Thursday to Saturday he explains that he's acting a part for a reason, being "foolish", a rhetorical device.

Quoting the Bible out of context is like sharing only part of someone's social media post, or broadcasting a heavily edited interview. So, let's not automatically treat it as... Gospel.

PRAYER

God of those who are weak and weary,
 strengthen our faith in you.
 When life is hard and we struggle to see your face,
 help us to distinguish the bigger picture of your
 enduring love,
 surrounding and supporting us through times of trial.

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

PART XXXIV – NAHUM – A DIFFICULT BOOK FOR OUR TIMES

Georgina Byrne continues our book-by-book series about the Bible.
 "The Lord is slow to anger but great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty." (Nahum 1:3)

The book of Nahum is not an easy read. It is certainly short, and it has a breathless, rushing quality about it, but the subject matter and the violence of the language mean that this book is seldom read aloud in church.

The writer is Nahum, about whom we know nothing except that this oracle came to him concerning the city of Nineveh. We recall the city from book of Jonah, but here we see it in a different light and (regardless of when we date Jonah) in a different period. The city, the jewel in the crown of the Assyrian Empire, is about to be destroyed by God, and the whole empire will fall. By the end of the seventh century BC the Babylonians were beginning to challenge the supremacy of the Assyrians, and, indeed, Nineveh was destroyed by 612 BC.

This oracle is addressed to the king of Assyria, whom the prophet accuses of "endless cruelty", and describes to him exactly how the wicked city will be overrun by warriors clad in crimson, plundered and put to the sword. The Lord is "avenging and wrathful" and powerful enough to dry up rivers and melt mountains. The city will be shattered.

The language Nahum uses is difficult. The city is described as a woman, a prostitute or a mistress, and the humiliation of the city is given in lewd terms, of a woman publicly shamed by her nakedness. It is imagery familiar in Old Testament prophecy, where cities and peoples are described in feminine and sexual terms, but we recoil at it.

Of course the real audience for the oracle is the people of Judah, themselves humiliated and shamed by the Assyrians. The clue comes in 1:15, where the prophet assures them that they will never again be invaded and encourages them to celebrate their feasts. In the fierce anger directed at the Assyrians, the prophet is quietly assuring God's people that salvation is near.

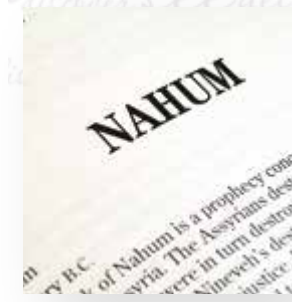
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LIVE the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU
 THROUGH THE WEEK

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 and
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Basilica of St Clotilde, Paris.
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Second week after Trinity

Monday 14 June to
 Saturday 19 June
 2021

WEEK