

Reading Together
New Testament Bible Reading
June 27 to July 3

Monday, June 27 – Ephesians 4: 1 – 16

In these verses Paul makes the point that while we are all different, we are all one in Christ. We have come from different backgrounds, we have different gifts, but we are all important to Christ and to his Church. Christ has called us and given us his Holy Spirit so that we can live in love and unity with one another in spite of our differences. As we live together and love each other well we grow in our faith and help others to grow as well, and the more we do this we become a picture of what is taking place in the heavenly courts where in chapter 7 of the book of Revelations we see people from every tribe tongue and race gathered around the throne of Jesus singing his praises.

Tuesday, June 28 – Ephesians 4: 17 – 5: 20

In these verses Paul lays out the way that Christians are to live. Because of what Christ has done for us, our lives are to be different from the way the rest of the world lives, and the way that is natural for us to live. In verse 23 Paul tells us that we are to have a different way that we think from the rest of the world and then in verses 24 and 25 Paul tells us that we are to put off the old way of living and put on a new way of living. In the following verses Paul then explains what that new way of living looks like. Perhaps the new way of life is best summarized in 5: 1-2 where Paul tells us to be imitators of God and to live a life of love that is like the life of love Christ lived for us.

Wednesday, June 29 – Ephesians 5: 21 – 6: 9

In the verses we are reading today, Paul talks about how we are to live in our human relationships. Pay careful attention to 5:21 where Paul calls all of us to submit to one another in Christ, no matter who we are or what our position in life might be. Then Paul details what submission looks like in our basic human relationships. Paul calls on

wives to submit to their husbands just as the church is to submit to Christ, but then Paul goes on and tells husbands that they are to love their wives just as Christ has loved the church. How did Christ love the church? He died for it. Stop and think for a moment, who is called to a greater submission the wife or the husband? If husbands loved their wives the way Christ loved the church, it wouldn't be so hard for the wives to submit to their husbands would it? Paul then goes on to explain how children and parents live out submissiveness in their relationships, and how slaves and masters (employees and employers) live out submissiveness in their relationships. But the overriding point is that, as Christians, we are called to mutual submission. We are all debtors to Christ, we are princes and princesses in Christ.

Thursday, June 30 – Ephesians 6: 10 – 23

In this very familiar passage Paul reminds of a very important spiritual truth. The real battle that we fight is a spiritual battle, and to fight that battle we need spiritual weapons. Paul tells us to start by buckling the belt of truth around our waist. For a soldier in Paul's day the belt held everything together. Next, Paul says to take the breastplate of righteousness and put it on. The breastplate protected the heart, and it is not our righteousness that protects our hearts but the righteousness of Christ. On our feet we are to wear the shoes of the gospel to be ready to go and march at a moments notice to proclaim Christ to the world we live in. On our heads we wear the helmet of salvation, the knowledge of what Christ has done for us. In one hand we hold the shield of faith, because faith is what we must have to repel Satan's attacks. In the other hand we are to have the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word. The Word of God is our only offensive weapon. Finally, we must remember that prayer is our wartime walkie-talkie. It's how we communicate with God and ask for help as the enemy advances against us.

Friday, July 01 – Philippians 1: 1 – 26

The book of Philippians is often referred to as Paul's letter of joy, It is the only letter that Paul wrote to a church that was not written for the sake of correcting wrong behavior or thinking of some kind. In this letter Paul just exhorts the church in Philippi to live lives filled with joy because of what Christ has done for them.

Paul opens this letter, like many of his other letters, by once again thanking and praising God for the work God is doing in the church at Philippi, and then in verse 9 Paul prays for the church. Notice the character and focus of Paul's prayer. It is that the Philippians would understand more and more the love of Christ for them and that that love would transform their lives.

In verses 12-26 Paul says something that is very stunning. At the time Paul wrote this he was under house arrest and chained between two Roman soldiers. But look what Paul writes in verses 12-14. Paul says that the chains he has been forced to wear are causing the Gospel to spread throughout the entire palace of Caesar. Even though Paul would rather be in a different life situation, he is able to rejoice in his present circumstances because of what he sees happening.

Saturday, July 02 – Philippians 1: 27 – 2: 18

In these verses Paul gives clear and practical instructions for how we are to live our lives. These instructions are based completely on us imitating Christ. Just as Christ humbled himself, and gave up the riches of heaven to become a suffering servant who would die for us, we too must be willing to give up our rights and our lives to each other. The centerpiece of today's reading and perhaps all of Scripture are verses 6-11 of chapter 2. Take time to really soak them in. Jesus, being just like God, gave up everything in order to become a servant who died for us, and because of his willing sacrifice God raised Jesus up and gave him the name that is above every other name—a name that all people will one day worship.

What Christ has done for us is the basis for all that Paul is calling us to do in these verses. We live our lives the way we do because of what Christ has done for us.

Verses 12-13 need special attention. In these verses Paul says we are to work out our salvation in fear and trembling, and when we read these verses we can fall into the trap of thinking that our salvation is up to us—it is dependent on what we do. The rest of Scripture teaches us that this is not the case. When Paul tells us to work out our salvation he is telling us that we have a part to play in our salvation. We must be willing to make ourselves available and to cooperate by allowing the Holy Spirit to work in our lives.

Sunday, July 03 – Philippians 2: 19 – 30

These verses talk about two men whom Paul depended on greatly during the time of his house arrest. Both of them are examples of shining like stars in the universe (2: 15). Both of them were willing to give all that they had so that the cause of the Gospel could be advanced. Epaphroditus pushed himself to the point of death to minister to Paul and to help to advance the gospel. The willing service of Timothy and Epaphroditus was because they understood all that Christ had done for them.