

**Reading Together**  
**New Testament Bible Reading**  
**July 4 – July 10**

**Monday, July 04 – Philippians 3:1 – 4:1**

The major theme of the Book of Philippians is joy. Joy is very different from happiness. Happiness depends on “outside” circumstance of your life, and joy comes from “within” and is not dependent on life circumstances but rather is dependent on eternal hope. Paul opens by exhorting the Philippians to rejoice in the hope of their salvation, and then Paul reminds them in verses 2-11 that their salvation is not based on the things they do or who they are, but instead their salvation is based on who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. Joy comes to the Christian as they realize that no matter what they have or have not done, Jesus has done all that needs to be done for them. The joy of knowing Christ is what fuels Paul’s desire to serve Christ. The good and bad in Paul’s past means nothing to him compared to what lies ahead for him because of what Christ has done for him. So rather than being consumed with things trying to make himself happy in this life (verses 18-19), Paul is instead consumed with what will bring true joy—serving the one who loved him and gave himself for him. Paul knows that no matter what is happening here on earth his citizenship in heaven is secure because of the finished work of Jesus Christ, and because of that he can stand firm in his faith (3: 20 – 4:1)

**Tuesday, July 05 – Philippians 4: 2 – 23**

As Paul closes this brief letter to the Philippians he deals briefly with what seems to be a conflict between two prominent women in the church, Euodia and Syntyche. We don’t know what the conflict was about, but we do see Paul urge the church to help these women resolve their conflict by coming to the point where they agree with each other in the Lord. In other words, they may still have things they disagree about, but the thing they agree on, Jesus Christ, is more important than anything that they may be disagreeing about. Next Paul moves onto some exhortations that each of us can take to heart. First, in verses 4-7, Paul reminds the Philippians to once again rejoice. The reason why we can rejoice is found in verse 5, “The Lord is near.” Because of Christ we have a near, close, intimate relationship with God our Father. Because of that we don’t have to fear like the rest of the world fears, and we can have peace no matter what the circumstances are of our lives.

Next, in 8-9, Paul reminds the Philippians to focus on things that are uplifting to them and will draw them closer in their relationship with Christ. Paul closes his letter by doing exactly that as he thanks the Philippians for the generosity

they have shown him and his ministry. Their generosity is a picture of their devotion to Christ, and an encouragement to Paul as he labors for Christ.

### **Wednesday, July 06 – 1 John 1: 1 – 10**

The writer of this brief letter is the Apostle John (he also wrote the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation). Unlike Paul's letters this letter is not addressed to a specific church, but rather is a general letter to all believers. The purpose of John writing this open letter to all believers was to combat several heresies (wrong teachings) that were starting to come into the church, which were rooted in Gnosticism. Gnostics were heavily influenced by Greek philosophy which taught that there was a separation between the physical realm (the body) and the spiritual realm. This false teaching led to even further false teachings, such as leading people to believe that their bodies could behave in an evil way and their souls could still be good. This kind of belief led to a license to sin, because your body could behave in all kinds of evil ways without affecting your spirit. Perhaps even worse, this teaching led the Gnostics to conclude that Jesus could not be both God and man. Man was physical and therefore evil, God was spirit and therefore holy, and Jesus could not possibly be both—he either had to be all man, or all God. Either of these wrong conclusions would mean that Jesus could not save us. Because of the fall of Adam and Eve, no mere man could live a life which was pleasing to God, which meant no mere man could offer a sacrifice that would be acceptable to God. But by the same token, no God could offer a sacrifice to pay the debt for our sins; the sacrifice had to come from a man who was like us but without sin.

John starts his letter by asserting that he and the other apostles were eyewitnesses to all that Jesus was and did (verses 1-3). This is a very important assertion for John to make as argues with those who are promoting false teachings. John and the other disciples knew the truth about Jesus because they were there with him. In verses 5-10 John gets right to the heart of the matter. John says that God is holy and those who want to walk with him must also be holy; this holiness comes because of Jesus' death for us on the cross (verse 7). If we claim that we are without sin, because while our bodies may sin, our spirits remain pure because they are separated from one another, John says we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. In order to be saved, you have to know you need a savior, and the proof that you understand that fact is found in your willingness to acknowledge your sinfulness (verse 9).

### **Thursday, July 07 – 1 John 2: 1 – 17**

In 2:1 John says he is writing to us so that we will not sin, but John also knows that all of us, including him, are sinful, and will continue to sin, so it is

important for us to understand that we have one who will come to God in our defense, Jesus the Righteous One. His death atoned for, or made the payment for our sin.

Next John lays out a very interesting argument that is important for us to follow carefully. John starts this argument in verse 3 with the statement that the proof of knowing Jesus is that we obey his commands. As we read on we see what the essence of Jesus' command is in verses 7-11. Jesus' command for us is simply this that we love each other. If we are not willing to love each other then Christ's love is not in us and we don't love him like we think we do.

The thoughts in verses 15-17 go right along with John's exhortation for us to love each other. If we are busy loving the world then we are centered on ourselves, because we selfishly want for ourselves what the world has to offer to us to please us. One who knows Christ, no longer loves what the world has to offer them, because they realize Christ offers them so much more. This realization fills the believer's heart with love for Christ, which in turn flows out to the world around us.

#### **Friday, July 08 – 1 John 2: 18 – 29**

In these verses John specifically goes after those who try to distort Christianity and the ministry of Christ. John calls these people anti-Christ, people who go against Christ and his teachings. These people generally pretend to be what they are not. They pretend to be followers of Christ, but instead distort his teachings and lead people astray. In verse 20, John tells us that we know the truth because we have the Holy Spirit. Anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ is an anti-Christ. It is important for us to continue on in our belief that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God made flesh, who died for our sins and rose again on the third day right to the very end, and not waver from our belief because of false teachings. What we believe will affect how we live. If we really believe and understand all that Jesus has done for us, and how much Jesus loves us it can't help but change our outlook on life and as a result the way we live our lives.

#### **Saturday, 9 – 1 John 3: 1 – 24**

In chapter 3 John continues to make his argument against the false teachings of Gnosticism, and he doesn't pull any punches along the way! John starts by reminding us that we have been greatly loved by God and we are in fact children of God. Our status as children of God means that we must live our lives in a different way, but verse 2 makes it clear that we are not there yet. As long as we have breath in our lungs we will struggle with sin, but one day when Christ appears and we have new resurrected bodies we will be like Jesus

completely and unable to sin any more. Don't be confused by what John says in the verses that follow (verses 4-10). John is not saying that as Christians we will no longer sin. Rather John is saying that as Christians we should no longer continue to deliberately sin by seeking to please ourselves all of the time. Rather than practicing sinful patterns in our lives, as Christians we should be practicing righteousness. As Christians we should be seeking to do what is right and loving our brothers rather than seeking to simply please ourselves and our desires (verse 10). In verses 11-24, John expands on this line of thinking by encouraging his readers to really practice what they believe. Don't just talk about loving others, but love them as Jesus has loved us by laying down his life for us (verses 16-18).

So often, when we read verses like these, it makes us feel guilty that we are not all that we should be, and we aren't! But John tells us two very important things at the end of this chapter. First, in verses 19-22, John tells us that even though we know we are sinners and God knows we are sinners, we should be free from guilt and from condemnation, because Jesus has paid the debt for all our sins. We can come before God boldly because Jesus' death clears our guilt away. The second important thing that John tells us is in verses 23-24. Obedience to God is found in just two things, belief in Jesus and second, loving each other. When you boil Christianity down to its simplest form, that's really what it is all about—believing and trusting in Christ completely and loving one another. If we are doing those two things well, we will see huge changes in our lives.

### **Sunday, July 10 – 1 John 4: 1 – 21**

Having made the argument that we are sinners who need a savior, John next tells his readers how to discern true teaching from false teaching. John states the test very clearly in verse 2. If the teaching is coming from the Spirit of God it will proclaim that Jesus is God made flesh, any teaching contrary to this is a false teaching from the antichrist. False teaching comes from the viewpoint of the world, true teaching comes from God.

In the same way true love comes only from God, and his love is the means by which we love others. If we know God (have a personal relationship with him), then we will love others. If we do not love others it is proof that we do not know God at all, because God is love. God's love is proved by the fact that he sent his son into the world to die for our sins, so that we can truly live. Notice how love forms the centerpiece for all that John says about why we believe and how we should live. The love of Christ changes everything.