

Reading Together
New Testament Bible Reading
April 18 – April 24

Monday, April 18 – 2 Corinthians 7: 1 - 16

Paul wants the Corinthians to feel the same way about him that he does about them. In verse 2 Paul asks them to make room in their hearts for him. Apparently Paul was concerned that his last letter had hurt them (verse 8) and they no longer cared for him as they once did. Paul expresses the hope that even though his letter seemed to hurt them it actually would end up helping them because it would lead them to Godly repentance.

Verse 10 is a very important verse because, in this verse, Paul lays out the difference between real repentance that leads to life and worldly sorrow over sin that just leads to death. Godly repentance involves awareness that our sin has offended God. Worldly sorrow over sin involves just being sorry about the consequences of our sin. Real repentance involves not just sorrow for our sin but a turning away from our sin to Christ. Ultimately all of our sin is a sin against God, and therefore the repentance and sorrow for our sin must be directed to God.

Tuesday, April 19 – 2 Corinthians 8: 1 - 15

One of the things that Paul wanted to see happen as a result of his missionary journeys was that the gentile churches in Asia Minor would give generously to the Jewish Church in Jerusalem, because that church was enduring a severe famine and intense persecution. Paul wanted the gentile churches to give generously because in doing so they would show love to the church in Jerusalem. Remember there were still many in the Jerusalem church who questioned the salvation of the gentiles, because they were gentiles. The Macedonian

Churches were the churches in and around Philippi, and they had given generously to this relief effort. In this passage Paul holds them up as an example for the church in Corinth.

As we think about helping others in need, what Paul wrote in verse 9 is very helpful for us to remember—that though Jesus was rich, he became poor for our sakes. Paul is encouraging us to follow the example of Jesus as we give ourselves to others.

Wednesday, April 20 – 2 Corinthians 8: 16 – 9: 15

As Paul continues to talk about the gift he is collecting for the church in Jerusalem, he establishes some good principals for us to take note of. First, he is carefully planning how to go about sharing this gift with the church in Jerusalem. It is not just about handing them money, it is about making a statement of Christ's love and the gentile Christian's love for this body of believers, and Paul does not want that message to get lost. In Chapter 9 Paul goads the church in Corinth to be generous in their giving. He says that he has already bragged to the other churches about their generosity and he wants them to be prepared to be as generous as he has bragged about them being. That brings us to the second principal that Paul lays out for the way we should give in 9:6, "Whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." Paul's promise to them is that God will not disappoint them if they are willing to give generously. The third principal we should notice is found at the end of chapter 9. Ultimately our giving is a gift to God, and an expression of our love for God. God's gift to us is indescribable and that should motivate the way we give back to him.

Thursday, April 21 – 2 Corinthians 10: 1 – 18

In this passage Paul once again defends his ministry. There were some in the church in Corinth who were complaining that Paul was a big talker in his letters, but when he was there in person he was much more timid. What Paul says is that if he needs to come on strongly when he comes, he is not afraid to do so, because he is not fighting the fight in his own strength-- he is fighting with the weapons of God (verse 4). Notice what Paul says about those weapons in verses 4 and 5. The weapons of God (His Word and the Holy Spirit) have the power to destroy every stronghold and every argument. The end of verse 5 has a very important phrase for us to remember. As Christians all that we are and everything we are about should have Christ as its center. Taking every thought captive and making it obedient to Christ means that everything we process in our heads goes through the filter of Christ, and is understood as Christ would have us understand it.

Friday, April 22 – 2 Corinthians 11: 1 – 15

In this passage Paul warns the Corinthians about following the teachings of false apostles. There were many who distorted the truth about Christ (a different Christ verse 4). Paul warns the Corinthians to hold to the truth that he has taught to them. We must also be careful not to fall prey to false teachings. That is why it is important that we don't just listen to what other people say, but that we search the Scriptures for ourselves and make sure that what we are being taught lines up with the truth.

Saturday, April 23 – 2 Corinthians 11: 16 – 33

Paul uses a little sarcasm in this passage to point out to the Corinthians just how conceited and big headed they had become in thinking that they knew everything there was to know. In verses 21 to 33, Paul first catalogs his religious heritage, and then his sufferings that he has endured for the sake of the gospel. Paul does all of that to show the Corinthians that he is not doing what he is doing for fame, or for riches, he is doing it because he loves them and he loves Jesus. If Paul had wanted riches and fame he would have stayed in Judaism.

Sunday, April 24 – 2 Corinthians 12: 1 – 21

In chapter 12 Paul continues to catalog his credentials. He talks about an experience that he had where he was given a special heavenly vision. Clearly Paul had received special insights which he could have boasted about, but instead he would rather boast about his weaknesses, because through his weaknesses Christ is glorified. In fact, Paul, in verses 7-9, talks about a thorn in the flesh that God had given him to keep him from becoming conceited. We don't know what the thorn was but clearly Paul wanted it out of his life. In fact, the Greek word that is translated as thorn in our Bibles actually means a stake. Paul is not just being pricked, he is being impaled by whatever this is! In his wisdom, God allowed the thorn to remain to keep Paul dependant on him. Paul closes this chapter by reminding the Corinthians that he has not exploited them in any way, and he fears what he might find when he comes to visit them.