

Reading Together
New Testament Bible Reading
March 15 - 28

Monday, March 21 – 1 Corinthians 1: 1 – 17

Corinth was located in southern Greece and the church in Corinth was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey. This was a church that seemed to have every problem you could imagine, and Paul's letters were written to correct and help the church know how to deal with these problems. This letter is relevant to us today because we suffer from many of the same problems.

After Paul's greeting in verses 1 – 3, Paul tells the Corinthians how thankful he is for the work God is doing in their lives and in their church. Notice in verses 4 – 9 that Paul makes a point of telling them that it is God who is doing it all: verse 4 it's God's grace, verses 5 – 8 it's God who gives them the spiritual gifts to persevere to the end, and then Paul reminds them in verse 9 that God is faithful to do everything that needs to be done regarding their salvation.

In verses 10 - 17 you can see the start of some of the issues that Paul is going to deal with in this letter. There are divisions and factions in the church, apparently based on who it was that brought people to faith in Christ. In these opening verses Paul reminds them that it is Christ who was crucified for them, and in Christ they should be as one.

Tuesday, March 22 – 1 Corinthians 1: 18 - 2: 5

In today's passage Paul makes a point of telling his readers just how astounding the message of the cross is. Stop and think about what Paul is saying in these verses. The cross seems absolutely foolish at first glance. Why would the creator God come to his creation and allow his creatures to crucify him on the cross so that the creatures' sins could be forgiven? It

doesn't sound like a logical plan does it? It does sound foolish doesn't it? The thing is it must be true, because nobody would ever dream up anything like this, because it just doesn't make sense. The cross sounds foolish to those who reject it, but it is the wisdom of God because it is the only way we can be made right in God's eyes.

In 1: 26 – 2: 5 Paul says that the foolishness continues because God uses weak people like us to bring the message of the Gospel to the world around us. In our weakness the wisdom and power of God are displayed for the world to see. Our weakness means the message isn't about us and how well we speak, it's about the "Spirit's power."

Wednesday, March 23 – 1 Corinthians 2: 6 – 16

In these verses Paul stresses the point that spiritual things remain a mystery to us until God reveals them to us by his Holy Spirit. That is the point of verse 7 when Paul refers to God's plan of salvation as a mystery or secret wisdom. Up until the time that Jesus came and died on the cross, God's plan of salvation was a mystery that little by little was being revealed through the events in the Old Testament. But in verse 10 Paul tells us that God has now revealed the mystery to us by his Spirit. The Jews didn't understand the mystery, because if they did they wouldn't have killed Jesus. Even though they were looking for the messiah they missed him completely. Do you understand the mystery? Do you understand that you are a sinner but God, in his grace, has sent Jesus to pay the debt for your sin? Do you understand that Jesus lived the perfect life you should have lived and through the cross his righteousness has become your righteousness? If you do, then you are starting to understand the mystery Paul is talking about here.

Thursday, March 24 – 1 Corinthians 3: 1 – 23

Here, in chapter 3, Paul gets back to dealing directly with the divisions that are plaguing the Corinthian Church. Notice that

Paul first points out that the divisions are caused by a lack of spiritual maturity and thinking like the world thinks. Notice how Paul points out that he and his co-workers are just tools that God is using. Ultimately God is the one who causes people to be made alive spiritually; people are just the tools he uses to make things happen.

In verses 10 – 15 Paul points out that whatever we do to try to build the kingdom of Jesus Christ has to be done on the foundation of Christ. Without that, whatever we are building will not stand the test of time. In verses 16 and 17 Paul completes the building analogy by pointing out that we are being built into the temple of God and God's Spirit dwells in us.

Finally, Paul tells us the way to really become wise is to become a fool by the world's standards. What Paul means is that as we surrender our lives to Christ we also surrender to each other. Rather than looking out for ourselves we look out for each other. Rather than being self-centered we become other centered. In the world's eyes this is foolishness.

Friday, March 25 – 1 Corinthians 4: 1 – 21

In chapter 4 Paul uses sarcasm to make his point. He starts by saying that what people think about him or even what he thinks about himself doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is what God thinks about him. God is the ultimate judge of our lives and of our hearts.

Verse 8 is where the sarcasm starts. The Corinthians apparently had a very high opinion of themselves and their spiritual knowledge. Look at verse 10. Paul says that he and his co-workers are weak fools for Christ, but they are sooooo strong and wise! The Corinthian Church is smug and comfortable while Paul and his friends are living miserable lives as they seek to serve Christ.

Saturday, March 26 – 1 Corinthians 5: 1 - 13

In chapter 5 Paul addresses a serious matter of immorality that has arisen in the church; there is a man who is committing adultery with his father's wife. Paul is urging the church to deal with this brother by expelling him from the church (when we get to 2 Corinthians we will see that they did just that, and the man repented, so Paul tells them to welcome the man back into the church). In verse 12, Paul makes a point of telling us not to judge those outside the church because God will deal with them. But we must judge those inside the church for the good of the church and the good of the one who sins so that they can see the seriousness of their sin and repent of it.

Sunday, March 27 – 1 Corinthians 6: 1 – 20

In chapter 6 Paul gives some very practical advice for how we are to resolve differences inside the church. Differences among believers are to be settled in the church, not in the courts. Pay careful attention to Paul's words in verse 7, "why not rather be wronged." When we are willing to be wronged we are behaving like Jesus, who was wronged for our sakes.

Verses 9 – 11 are very instructive, because in these verses Paul reminds us that only righteous people inherit the kingdom of God. However, Paul also reminds us that we have all been wicked in our lives and that's why we so desperately need Jesus.

It may sound funny but because we have been washed in the blood of Christ everything is permissible for us. Jesus has given us permission to be free because we are no longer trying to earn our righteousness. But Paul wants to make sure we understand that just because something is permissible for us to do, it may not be beneficial for us to do it. Our freedom isn't a license to sin. We belong to Christ, because he has bought us with his blood.