

Reading Together
New Testament Bible Reading
March 28 – April 3

Monday, March 28 – 1 Corinthians 7: 1 – 40

Apparently, one of the questions that the Corinthian Church had written to Paul about was a question concerning marriage. It is easy to misunderstand what Paul is saying here. In these verses Paul is making the argument that it is easier to serve the Lord if you are not married, because you only have to worry about yourself. However, Paul goes on to point out that many people have a need to get married, and that need is nothing to be ashamed of. God created us with that need. Paul goes on to tell them that if someone is married to a non-believer, and the non-believer is willing to stay faithfully married to them, they must not divorce. However, Paul says that if the non-believer walks away from the marriage then the believer is free to remarry.

Furthermore, Paul tells the church that just because somebody becomes a Christian, it doesn't mean that their place in life has to change. This doesn't just apply to your marriage, it also applies to your ethnic customs (circumcision) and your work (slave or free), as long as none of the things that are part of your life go against the commands of God (verse 19).

Tuesday, March 29 – 1 Corinthians 8: 1 – 13

The next question the Corinthian Church had for Paul dealt with the subject of eating food that had been previously sacrificed to idols. Some thought eating this meat was sinful, others thought it was okay. Even though we don't struggle with this issue in our society, we have other issues of Christian liberty that we have to deal with. The principal Paul gives us in these verses is that if what we are doing doesn't violate God's law or our conscience or someone else's conscience then it is okay for us to do it. For some people eating the food that had been sacrificed to an idol reminded them of the idolatry they once were part of, for others it didn't bother them at all. One of the key things that Paul points out in these verses is in verse 12. He tells us that if our actions

hurt the conscience of a weaker brother we are sinning against Christ, even if it doesn't bother our conscience.

Wednesday, March 30 – 1 Corinthians 9: 1 – 27

In a lot of ways chapter 9 shows how Paul put the principles he wrote in chapter 8 into practice. Paul says as an apostle of Jesus Christ he should have the same freedoms that any other Christians have. He has the right to marry and even earn a living from his ministry. But for the sake of the gospel he has willingly given up those rights (verse 12). In verses 16 and 17, Paul tells us that all he lives for is to preach the gospel and he is willing to be a slave (give up his freedoms) to win people to Christ. In verses 20 - 23 Paul says that he is willing to do whatever he needs to do (as long as it does not violate God's word) to win people to Christ. Paul closes this chapter in verses 24 – 27 by telling us that the gospel means so much to him that he has no choice but to give himself completely to the task of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Thursday, March 31 – 1 Corinthians 10: 1 – 13

Here in these verses Paul explains exactly what he meant in 9:27 when he said he did not want to be disqualified for the prize. To make his point Paul gives an example from Old Testament Israel. All of the Israelites came out of Egypt together, led by God in the pillar of fire and smoke across the Red Sea (verses 1 and 2) (see Exodus 13 and 14 for more information on this). In verse 3, Paul points out that all of the Israelites ate the manna that God provided everyday and they drank water from the rock that Moses struck with his staff. But Paul tells us in verse 5 that, even though all of the Israelites enjoyed the same benefits and provision by God, not all of them got to enter the Promised Land because of their idolatry and sin. Paul tells us that all of this happened to them to be an example for us.

The truths that Paul teaches in verses 12 – 13 are very important for us. First, Paul tells us that the times we think we are standing firm in our faith are the times we are most likely to fall, because in those times we go back to relying on ourselves. Second, Paul tells us that God never allows temptation to come into our lives

that is beyond what we are able to bear, and God will always provide us with a way out of temptation if we will just look to him.

Friday, April 01 – 1 Corinthians 10: 14 – 11: 1

While Paul has told the Corinthians that they can eat meat that was sacrificed to idols, as long as they have a clear conscience, they must not participate in the sacrifice. By participating they are becoming part of the worship of the idol, which Paul says is really demon worship (10: 20).

Next, Paul again lays out the freedom that we have in Christ. Look at verse 23, but it is freedom that must be used wisely. There are things that we are free to do, but they are not good for us to do, because they don't build up our faith.

In verses 25 – 30 Paul is teaching us something very important. In verse 26 Paul reminds us that God created everything, so therefore everything is good. What makes things evil is what we do and think about the things God has created. We don't have to ask a lot of questions and try to make ourselves feel guilty about things we don't need to feel guilty about. Going back to the previous discussion about meat that has been offered to idols, Paul tells his readers not to ask too many questions, because the less they know the clearer their conscience can be.

In verses 31-33, Paul urges the Corinthians and us to do everything we do: first, for the glory of God; second, to not cause others to stumble; and third, to seek the good of others instead of our own.

Finally, pay careful attention to 11:1 where Paul tells us to follow his example as he follows Christ. How is your example? Could you tell others to follow you as you follow Jesus?

Saturday, April 02 – 1 Corinthians 11: 2 – 16

This is a very difficult passage of Scripture that has caused a great deal of recent controversy in the church. In these verses, Paul does not say that women are inferior to men. What Paul is saying is that men are to submit to Christ, and women are to submit to men. I know that this is very controversial, so let me try to explain it in the following way. Jesus was equal to God,

but laid that equality aside so that he could fulfill the necessary role of being our savior. In laying aside his equality, Jesus allowed himself to come under the authority of the Father (Philippians 2). In the same way women are equal to men, but they are called to lay that equality aside to fulfill the role they were created to fill.

Much of this passage does deal with cultural things, and so sometimes people want to dismiss it all for that reason. The problem is the argument Paul makes in verses 8-9, and that is that the roles of men and women were ordained by God at creation. Man was created first and woman was created from man to be a helper to man and thereby complete man.

Look at verses 11 and 12. Paul makes the point that women and men are dependent on one another, and we are all accountable to God.

Sunday, April 03 – 1 Corinthians 11: 17 – 34

In this passage Paul deals with questions about the Lord's Supper. To understand this passage, we have to understand how the Lord's Supper was being celebrated in the early church. At first it was a beautiful thing. After worship people would gather for a fellowship meal and then celebrate the Lord's Supper. The problem was that people were not doing this as the body of Christ, but as individuals. They were just eating and drinking to indulge themselves. Look at verses 20 – 22. People were thinking only of themselves and not those who were gathered with them.

Verses 27 – 32 are very important to understand as we come to celebrate communion together. If we partake in the supper without trusting in Christ as our savior, or if we come to the table harboring sin in our hearts, then we are coming to the table in an unworthy manner, and by doing so we are "sinning against the body and blood of the Lord." Therefore, it is important that we examine our hearts before we come to the table.