

Reading Together
New Testament Bible Reading
April 25 – May 1

Monday, April 25 – 2 Corinthians 13: 1 – 14

In chapter 13 Paul warns the Corinthians that though they may think he is weak, he will deal with those who question his teaching and refuse to repent of their sin. There is a time for us to be gentle with people, but sometimes it is necessary to also deal harshly with those who continue to sin and cause trouble in the church. He reminds the Corinthians that though Christ seemed weak as he hung on the cross, he will one day return to judge the world. In verse 5, Paul tells them before that happens they should judge themselves to see if they are in Christ or not. Paul's question to them and to us is this, is there any fruit of the Spirit that is coming out of our lives? If there is not it is time for us to question our faith, and take steps to make corrections in our lives.

Tuesday, April 26 – 1 Peter 1: 1 – 12

The book of 1st Peter was written by the Apostle Peter to Christians who were starting to undergo growing persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire. One of the primary themes of Peter's letter is why Christians suffer and how they should handle suffering. This letter was written around 64 AD which was right about the time that Rome burned under Emperor Nero. Many in Rome believed Nero was responsible for the fires, but Nero blamed the Christians.

Peter starts by reminding his readers of the living hope they have in Christ. The hope we have is a living hope because Christ has been raised from the dead. It is an eternal hope that, as Peter describes in verse 4, can never perish, spoil, or fade. In verse 5 Peter reminds his readers that no matter what suffering they may be going through, they are shielded through faith in God's power that is at work in their lives. Then in verse 7 Peter describes why we have times of suffering, it is so that our faith can be refined and proven to be genuine. Knowing Christ, fills the believer's heart with joy even in the midst of suffering. Peter closes this

section by reminding his readers and us that the Old Testament Prophets looked forward to the coming of Christ. Those prophets were always trying to figure out what Christ's coming would mean for their lives, but as they looked forward to Christ's coming they never could fully understand, like we do, as we look back on Christ's coming.

Wednesday, April 27 – 1 Peter 1: 13 - 2: 3

Because of what we have in Christ we have a responsibility to live our lives in a way that is worthy of our calling in Christ. Living differently starts with how we think (verse 13), and changing the way we think leads us to live our lives in a holy way (verses 14-15). Verse 16 reminds us that we are to be holy because God is holy. Peter goes on to remind us in verse 17 that we are to live our lives as strangers here on earth. In other words, we are not to live like citizens of the earth, but as citizens of heaven. This is because we have not been bought out of slavery to sin with money, but with the blood of Christ. In verse 23 Peter again reminds us that we are different. We are born of seed that is imperishable (won't die), because we have heard and understood the Word of God, which is eternal. Verses 1 – 3 of chapter 2 remind us that we are to crave the Word of God, because it is through that word that we grow.

Thursday, April 28 – 1 Peter 2: 4 – 12

These are some of the most powerful and picturesque words in all of Scripture. In these verses Peter compares the believers who make up the church to a living building that has Christ as both its cornerstone (the foundation stone), and capstone (the final stone at the top of the building). In other words, the church is built on Christ and is completed in Christ. What a wonderful picture! Christ, the stone that has been rejected by so many, is God's chosen and precious cornerstone.

Because of Christ we are a chosen people, a people chosen by God to be royal priests. Think about this word image. We have been made princes/princesses in the kingdom of heaven, but as princes we serve God and one another as priests, meaning we offer our lives in service to God and to one another. God has

called us out of darkness into the light of his love through his mercy that was expressed to us in Jesus Christ. Because of that mercy our lives should now be lived in a very different way (verses 11-12). Again Peter reminds us to live in this world as strangers, so different from the way the rest of the world lives that even though the world may hate us they still are forced to glorify God.

Friday, April 29 – 1 Peter 2: 13 - 3:7

Now Peter tells his readers how to live radically different lives in this world. It starts by obeying those in authority over us (verses 13 – 15). The reason Peter gives us for obeying these authorities is because God has placed them in their positions of power. Think about how difficult this would have been for Peter to say and the early Christians to live out as they faced persecution by those in authority over them. In verse 16 Peter reminds us that even though we are free in Christ we are not to use that freedom as an excuse for doing evil.

Even though verses 18 – 25 deal with the subject of slaves and masters there are very good applications for our lives. Peter makes a point that if a slave is punished by a master for doing wrong the punishment they receive is just, but if the slave does good and is still punished Peter says that is commendable before God. Peter goes on to make a connection between the unjust suffering we may have to endure with the unjust suffering that Christ endured for us. As we look at what Christ went through we have no reason or right to complain when we face suffering even if we are suffering for doing good. Christ endured that suffering so that we can be saved.

In chapter 3: 1 – 7, Peter goes on to deal with the subject of husbands and wives and how they are to treat one another. Peter says that wives should live in submission to even their non-believing husbands, because through their submission the husband may become saved. Peter reminds women that what is really important isn't their outer beauty, it is their inner beauty, and he reminds husbands that they too are to submit to their wives (notice the words "in the same way" in verse 7). Furthermore, even though it is not fashionable to think this way anymore, Peter reminds husbands that their wives are partners who share in a

spiritual inheritance with them, and the husband has a responsibility to both help the wife attain that inheritance and also to physically protect and provide for her as well.

Saturday, April 30 – 1 Peter 3: 8 – 22

In these verses Peter again returns to the theme of suffering for doing good. Peter urges us to try to live in harmony with one another, being compassionate and loving to one another even if they treat us wrongly. The logic behind this is because that is exactly what Christ did, even to those who persecuted him and nailed him to the cross. Verse 19 is an interesting verse that needs a little explanation. In talking about Jesus, Peter says that after Jesus was crucified he went and preached to evil spirits who were in prison. I think the meaning of this verse is that after Jesus was crucified Satan and his demons thought that they had won, but then the resurrected Jesus showed up and proved that he had won and they had lost.

Sunday, May 01 – 1 Peter 4: 1 – 19

In these verses Peter reminds his readers that they must no longer live as the pagans live, because a day of judgment is near in which we will have to give an account of our lives to God. Then Peter goes on to tell his readers how they should live self controlled lives so that they can pray (verse 7), loving each other deeply because love pays the cost of sin (verse 8), and then sharing our goods, our gifts, and our lives with each other for the mutual benefit of all believers.

Peter then returns to the subject of suffering for being a Christian (do you see how important this subject is by the emphasis that Peter places on it over and over again.) Peter reminds us that there is no shame in suffering for the cause of Christ, and it is important that we continue to live lives of obedient service even in the face of suffering.

Just a note on verse 18 about what the words “hard for the righteous to be saved,” mean. Think what it took to save even the best of us. Jesus had to come and die on the cross so that we could be saved, it doesn’t get any harder than that does it?