

Reading Schedule for January 28-February 3, 2019

Reading the letter to the Ephesians is such an encouragement to our Christian lives. I like it so much that I thought we should continue with a similar letter to believers in Philippi. Philippians is one of the most cherished New Testament letters that Paul wrote. I am sure it will uplift your heart and fan your joy. I am looking forward to the next two weeks.

January 28 – Ephesians 6:18-24: “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.” (v.18) Many suggest that this aspect of our spiritual warfare is the most important – that’s why the Apostle Paul concludes with it. Do you think prayer is our most powerful resource? Did you notice how often he uses the words “all” or “always”? I think the aspect of prayer can be intimidating because we think of it wrongly. We believe that we have to pray at a certain time, in a certain place, when in actuality, the invitation to pray is continuous -- all occasions - with all kinds of prayers - always lifting up each other. You can even be praying for people when you are with them. I remember Nehemiah praying to God, even as he met with the king. This makes complete sense and shows how significant prayer can be, as God is available 24/7 to hear our prayers and answer them.

January 29 – Philippians 1:1-11: “. . . being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (v.6) It is easy to see that this verse jumps off the page with the promise that the Lord will never let go. His faithfulness promises us that Jesus will be with us as his followers until he returns, which means either we will die and be with him forever, or he will return and take us to be with him forever. This reminds me of John 10:28, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.” These are red letters, and they represent Jesus’ promise to never let go. How does this encourage you? What stands out to you from these first eleven verses of this uplifting letter?

January 30 – Philippians 1:12-30: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (v.21) This short verse is a summary of the theme that Paul addresses concerning the length of his life. He is going through many difficulties, and at this moment, as he writing, he is in prison. He wonders if he will die in the near future, but he knows that there is much for him to do. Dying would be his gain, but then he would no longer have opportunity to spread the Word of God. I appreciate the honesty of Paul and his willingness to sacrifice for the kingdom amidst intense opposition. The whole time he remains joyful because of the privilege of representing Jesus. Do you believe these words? Are you ready to face the Lord in heaven? I imagine the Lord has many more opportunities for you, and I want you to dedicate yourself to serving God until you breathe your last breath. What is your response to this reading today?

January 31 – Philippians 2:1-4: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves . . .” (v.3) I preached this text on the very first Sunday of my first pastorate as the Lead Pastor at age 30. I’ve always believed that unity was so essential to the body of Christ. It is so easy for us to become self-absorbed in what we want to see happen and emphasize

our own preferences. Selfishness can ruin a church. I believe the people of God are to be the most humble people on the face of the earth. I am reminded that Moses was the most humble man at that time, which shows that he was someone God could use. Isn’t it a powerful statement to consider others interests as important as your own? These are challenging words, and that’s why I only wanted us to read a short paragraph, so that we could contemplate their meaning and apply it to our lives. How does this challenge you?

February 1 – Philippians 2:5-11: “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.” (v.5) Everything that the Apostle Paul writes after this first statement is pointing to Jesus being our example. He was willing to get very low, and even lose his life for the wellbeing of others. And because of that, God exalted him to the highest place. Some believe that verses 6-11 were a hymn in the early church. There are many profound phrases in this hymn that are worth contemplating. What does it mean to you that Jesus took on the form of a servant? I see this principle in these verses, “Humble yourselves before God and he will lift you up in due time.” What does this teach you about living as a follower of Christ?

February 2 – Philippians 2:12-18: “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling . . .” (v.12) The phrase “work out your salvation” has always been thought provoking for me. The idea seems to be to not look back, but continue to move forward. He will mention this in chapter 3, as he says forget what is behind and press on towards what is ahead. He reminds them that it is God that has worked in their lives, not self-effort. It is so great to know that God’s power is the source of us working out our salvation. This definitely points to obedience and the right priorities, but it is not self-determination. It actually refers to surrender to God and keep your eyes on Christ. How do you respond to this challenge to work out your salvation? What else did you notice in this short reading today?

February 3– Philippians 2:19-30: “But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.” (v.22) I appreciate the description the Apostle Paul gives to their relationship. Timothy was like a dear son to him. Timothy was utilizing the direction that Paul was giving him to become a man of God. Just as a skilled workman trains an apprentice, Paul was preparing Timothy to carry on the ministry in his absence. Paul encourages younger Christians to learn, to observe, to help, and then to lead. This is really on my heart as well, because it is so important that the older help the younger succeed. The kind of relationship that is portrayed is a very close relationship. Build a relationship of love, and that will be the best way to influence someone else to grow in their maturity with Christ. Do you agree? What do you learn from Timothy and Paul’s relationship as outlined in this passage?

PRAYER: Pray for fear to shrink and hope to increase as each one deepens their connection to Christ.