

Reading Schedule for October 2-8, 2017

Welcome to the month of October. This is one of my favorite months because we have pleasant weather, but the signs of fall became more evident. Plus, I don't have to start raking leaves until November. We will focus on Romans 9-11 this week, which is primarily focused on Israel and the need for Jews to come to faith. At one point, Paul says that he'd give up his own salvation if they would come to faith. But these words could easily be translated into many people that you know. Who do you have a burden for that needs Christ? This can help you apply these words to your ministry of reaching people through your life and your words as you share the Gospel.

October 2 – Romans 9:1-29: “For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race . . .” (v.3) This is the verse I am referring to in my introduction. Paul was willing to sacrifice himself for others, just like Jesus did. He obviously could not die for the spiritual needs of Israel because he was a mere human being. But this principle is one that launches us into several days of reading about our concern for those who are unsaved. Ask yourself this question: Are you willing to sacrifice your time, money, energy, comfort and safety to see people come to faith in Jesus? That is the principle behind Paul's travail.

October 3 – Romans 9:30-10:13: “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (v.9) About a week ago I referenced something called the Roman Road. This verse is the culmination of that progressive outline of the Gospel. Let me remind you that it begins with Romans 3:23, followed by Romans 6:23, then remembering Romans 5:8, and then culminating with this verse. I have memorized this verse because it shows that confession with my mouth is not enough; I need to have a sincerity of belief in my heart. I have been conscious of behaving like a religious person, which performs on the outside that which looks spiritual, but on the inside is not genuine. We call that a hypocrite. I sometimes wonder how many people say out loud they are a Christian, but in their heart they have reserved the place of affection for themselves alone. Faith in Jesus has to do with believing who he is and what he did, and then receiving him into your life. Those who received him into their lives believe on his name. That is what faith means. Confession is important, just like Baptism is important, but the main aspect of faith is belief in your heart. How is your faith these days? What do you learn about sharing your faith with others in these verses?

October 4 – Romans 10:14-21: “And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” (v.15) I enjoy this verse because it references one of my favorite Old Testament prophecies about sharing the good news with the world in need. I told you that these verses would apply to our endeavor to reach people who need Christ. It definitely applies to that. It is pleasing to the Lord when we launch out to make a difference for Christ. How can anyone believe if they have not heard? And how will they hear – through our lives and our message. Think of one person who needs to hear the good news and think of something you could do to help him/her through it. This is the call on the life of the believer. If you do not have a burden for those who are outside of Christ, your heart is shrinking because the closer you are with Jesus, the more you want others to know him. Do you agree? How do you respond to this challenge?

October 5 – Romans 11:1-24: “Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond

recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.” (v.11) This is such an interesting chapter about the church. Paul had a vision that the church would be for Jewish and Gentile believers united under the love and message of Jesus Christ. We know clearly that a New Testament person's ethnic background and social status are irrelevant to the Gospel. There is neither male nor female, Jew or Gentile, and so on. Christ supersedes all those distinctions. God's influence on the globe was limited by the Jewish approach to evangelism. Evangelism means sharing the good news. They kept it to themselves and were critical of those around them. The Gospel took root in the Gentile world, and the fruitfulness of it was to share it across the lines of nation and race. Even now, we wait for the Jewish people to see the light and put their faith in the Messiah Jesus Christ. What stands out to you in this reading today?

October 6 – Romans 11:25-36: “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!” (v.33) I've always been a fan of doxologies that elevate the Lord and offer blessing to others. This doxology is a prayer of praise to God, who is beyond our understanding yet offers us relationship through his son Jesus Christ. It is important to have a high view of God. These words declare an all-wise and powerful God who deserves our praise and worship. He is the source of all things, including the very life we live . . . the breathe in our nostrils. How big is your God? Or, as one author put it, is your God too small?

October 7 – Romans 12:1 & 2: These words are so significant that I wanted you to meditate on them today. You know them if you are familiar with God's Word, and these key phrases, like “living sacrifice,” “conformed to this world,” “transformed by the renewing of your mind,” and so on. For 11 chapters we have learned about the marvel of the Gospel, and the significance of our Christian faith. Because of God's mercy and all that he has done for us, what should be our response? These words tell us. The Apostle Paul challenges us to offer ourselves to God so that we are at his disposal to do what he wants us to do. Out of gratitude for our sins being forgiven and having relationship with the living God, we want to serve him wholeheartedly. I am sure there is something in these two verses that will challenge you today and remind you of the call to be “all in.” How do you respond to this message today?

October 8 – Romans 12:3-8: “We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith . . .” (v.6) By choosing this verse, I wasn't meaning to emphasize prophecy, compared to the fact that we all have gifts. I noticed that I hadn't mentioned much about spiritual gifts in my teaching recently, but I believe wholeheartedly in the way the Holy Spirit works in us uniquely so that together we can make the strongest impact. These gifts are to build up the church of Jesus Christ. Everyone has at least one gift. These may be consistent with our personality, but they are spiritual in nature. They are bestowed on us when we receive Christ as our Savior. They may also come later because God calls us to a special focus of service. Again, with the idea of a living sacrifice, let us willingly offer our gifts wholeheartedly to the ministry of the church and the endeavor of the Gospel. Which of these gifts listed here resonates with your heart the most? Are you using it?

Prayers: Pray for the month of October and the opportunities that God will give us to influence others and to grow in him.