

Reading Schedule for September 11-17, 2017

You will notice that by Thursday of this week we will launch into the Book of Romans. This might seem confusing to you because we are also studying Romans on Sunday mornings. However, I have found it is very important to have an overview of the whole book as I look at each individual part and apply it to my life. That is what I want you to do with Romans. In the next three weeks, we will read through the Book of Romans during our daily reading time, and it will help us to more deeply appreciate and apply this book to our lives.

September 11 – Colossians 3:12-17: “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” (v.12) There is a very important principle behind this verse. The Apostle Paul expresses our identity in Christ. We are chosen, loved and clothed by the Holy Spirit with these internal qualities. We cannot produce these on our own. But this is something that God gives us, and we then are equipped to share them with others. I am very certain that this repetitive principle in the Bible is essential to our strength and stability in Christ. We must know our identity before we can fulfill our sense of destiny. To be a person of purpose means that I must be assured of my position in Christ. Otherwise, I will find my identity on how well I am doing in fulfilling my purpose. How do you respond to this principle?

September 12 – Colossians 3:18-4:6: “Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.” (v.4) I have tried to apply this teaching to my life. As I pray for the spiritual needs of people I know, I care for them in ways that would express the love of Christ, and I share the message of Jesus so that they might be saved and have the kind of life our Lord offers. Do you see that outlined? It begins with prayer, followed by care and then share the message. If you apply this simple outline to your relationships in the workplace or in your neighborhood, I think you will begin to see some spiritual movement in the lives of those you are praying for. Obviously, there is the reality of hard hearts and the spiritual opposition of the enemy, but Paul applied this process to his life, and you can too. How do you respond to this pathway to helping people respond to Christ?

September 13 – Colossians 4:7-18: “He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.” (v.9) If you are interested in the background for this statement about Onesimus, you can read the Book of Philemon. Onesimus was a runaway slave and he was liberated to faith in Jesus Christ. Philemon had trouble forgiving him for his abandonment, but the Apostle Paul encouraged him to do so. You see many references to individuals in these closing verses. The Apostle Paul was connected to people, and that was the key to his effective ministry. He did not do it alone, but affirmed the contribution of many. I encourage you to reflect on those who have made a difference in your life. How have other believers encouraged you? How might you affirm them to others, as Paul does?

September 14 – Romans 1:1-17: “That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.” (v.15) These 17 verses were the focus of our sermon this last Sunday. There is no way that I could highlight every part of these 17 verses. I am sure that I will skip verse 15 and yet it has a point of application for us. He wanted to preach the Gospel to people in Rome, and yet, those he is writing to are already believers. Why would Paul want to preach the Gospel to people who are already saved? I think it has to do with spiritual encouragement. When we fully understand

what Christ has done for us, and what he offers to others, we are motivated to preach the Gospel. The Gospel is life-giving to believers, as well as the pathway to salvation for unbelievers. Do you fully understand the Gospel? What is the meaning of the good news for you? The Apostle Paul said he was not ashamed of the Gospel because it was the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes (v.16) What will that look like in your life? What stirs you to want to make a difference for Jesus Christ in this world?

September 15 – Romans 1:18-32: “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness . . .” (v.18) This verse launches the whole section because it refers to the wrath of God. As John 3:36 says, the wrath of God rests on those who reject the truth. The Apostle Paul uses similar phrasing when he says, “suppress the truth.” To respond in faith is to receive the truth. As long as people suppress the truth, the decline is sure and the self-centered life becomes more persuasive and consuming with each step. You can easily see the devastating effect of sin and selfishness as people become filled with all kinds of evil and wickedness. God’s wrath rests upon them. How do you respond to these sobering words of humanities decline apart from Christ?

September 16 – Romans 2:1-16: “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?” (v.4) I have always appreciated this verse. The Lord could bring intense judgment because of sin and selfishness. In his kindness, God holds back his judgment, giving people time to repent. We can sometimes think that God’s patience means approval for the wrong way we might be living. You do not want to respond to God’s truth with stubbornness or ignore his conviction of sin. Do not have an unrepentant heart. His kindness is patiently offering you an opportunity to return. You might notice something else in this reading that points to one’s conscience. (verse 15) This refers to the fact that even people who do not know the Bible have an inkling towards right and wrong. They will be judged according to this internal sense of conscience that points them to the standards of God. How do you respond to this message about God’s judgment?

September 17 – Romans 2:17-29: “No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.” (v.29) I will appreciate the time I plan to give to the study of these verses. In a way they seem complicated, and yet they are affirming the fact that external adherence does not make one right before God. In a similar way, coming to church, being baptized or accepted as a member is not enough; just as submitting to the law was not enough for the Jews. God desires our heartfelt devotion and faith in him. The adherence to the law that was so common among the Jews could be empty and legalistic. One’s standing before God is based on our internal relationship with him. What do you learn from these verses? How do you understand them?

Prayers: Pray for our community outreach. The After School Program begins this week, as well as our Food Bank on Saturday. Also pray for Hallman Elementary as they launch into the new school year.