

## Reading Schedule for September 4-10, 2017

Even though I think Philippians is one of the most uplifting books, I find Colossians helpful in strengthening my walk with the Lord. We will almost finish the whole Book of Colossians this week. I am praying that it will shape your heart and strengthen your connection to Christ.

**September 4 – Philippians 4:10-23:** “And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”(v.19) As the Apostle Paul concludes his letter in Philippians, he talked to them about their generosity. They had displayed their faith through generous giving. There is an interesting phrase in here that says “credited to your account.” It is always interesting to me that God knows all things and he takes into account how we distribute his resources for his kingdom. We have learned previously that we are called to give a portion of what he has given to us, which is called the tithe. The promise behind generous giving is that God will continue to supply our needs according to his riches in our Savior Jesus. That is a very hopeful promise. How do you respond to this message about giving? How did God inspire you through Philippians?

**September 5 – Colossians 1:1-14:** “. . . so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God . . .” (v.10) This is another prayer in Paul’s letters. We learn how to pray through these words. We can pray that people will bear fruit for the Kingdom of God. We can pray that people will grow in their knowledge of Jesus Christ. We can pray that they will be strengthened with power that comes through the Holy Spirit. These are similar words that we read in Ephesians. Sometimes people tell me they don’t know what to pray. I think praying verses 10-12 would be a fantastic way to lift up others. There is intercession, prayers of gratitude and also prayers for the advancement of God’s Kingdom. How are you inspired by this first reading in Colossians?

**September 6 – Colossians 1:15-23:** “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.” (v.15) These also are marvelous words about the identity of Christ. I am drawn to the word “supremacy.” You know that the root word for this word is supreme. Because Christ is spiritually supreme in the universe, surely we should give him first place in our thoughts and activities. He has earned the right for us to give him full allegiance. The more Christ has of you, the more he will shape your life. I am inspired by these powerful words about Jesus Christ. What aspect of this paragraph stirs your heart? What do you learn about Christ from Paul’s words in these verses?

**September 7 – Colossians 1:24-29:** “He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.” (v.28) This verse causes me to pause as I think about my role as a Pastor. I think that is why I sometimes experience stress and frustration. I believe this statement and I try to live by it. I want everybody to be complete in Christ. That means to be mature. I work like an athlete to be able to help people experience all that God wants them to know and to have in their relationship with the Lord. But there is also the reality that we never reach completion. Only in heaven will we be absolutely complete. You just have to

remember that your sanctification (becoming more like Christ) is actually your decision in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. I will try to fan you in every way that God leads me to, but I have to let this goal rest on your heart and mind. May you be stimulated to be all that Christ wants you to be. How do you respond to this challenge?

**September 8 – Colossians 2:1-15:** “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him.” (v.6) I picked the first verse because there are so many intriguing statements in this reading. I thought of verse 14, which says the written record that would penalize you has been cancelled. I thought of the spiritual attack that is highlighted in verse 15. But the whole key is setting Christ apart as Lord of your life. To be the Lord of your life means that he will lead your life. This means to commit your life to his will. This means to seek him daily as your primary focus. This means to surrender to the Holy Spirit on a daily basis. It can mean more than that, but those are the ideas that spill out of this text that reminds us that the Lordship of Christ is putting Christ on the throne of your life. Do you agree? What does it mean to you to have Christ as Lord of your life?

**September 9 – Colossians 2:16-23:** “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.” (v.16) If traditions and ceremonies were the primary focus on one’s faith, they would be shallow within. Paul calls these laws, holidays and feasts as a shadow of the reality. That means they point to Christ . . . our need for Christ. When Christ came, he dispelled the shadow. If we have Christ, we have what we need to know to please God. I have been inspired by the principle of the Sabbath. I have been resting on Sundays and avoiding making a list of things to do. I take the day as it comes. But the Sabbath does not make me more pleasing to God, but rather an opportunity to be nourished by the Lord. Let me remind you that man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was made for man. The Sabbath is a gift. It is more than an outward observance; it is an inward nourishment of closeness with God, fellowship with others and rest in Him. How do you respond to this reading today?

**September 10 – Colossians 3:1-11:** “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” (v.1) Both the phrase, “set your hearts” and “set your minds” on the things above gets my attention. Setting our minds on things above means concentrating on the eternal, rather than the temporary. I am reminded of Philippians 4:8 when it told us to dwell on what is lovely, true and noble. I am reminded in Hebrews when it says to fix your eyes on Jesus. We will read tomorrow that we are to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, I think that is the idea. I know that when I have my eyes on Jesus, I am sustained in his strength and more resilient against the deception of the enemy. What does it mean to you to fix your eyes on Jesus? What will you do to honor this principle?

**Prayers: It is time to pray for the launch of our new school year. I know that the summer went quickly, but please pray for our children and young people who are reentering school, as well as the educators of our city . . . we have many in our church.**

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