

August 16: Psalms 103-104 and Romans 14

Psalms 103 rejoices in God's forgiveness. He forgives sins, heals diseases and plucks us out of the Pit. The LORD gives righteous acts and justice. His love is great and tremendous. As human beings, we are fallible. We will fall into sin from time to time. God sent His Son Jesus to atone for our sins. There is no sin too big or too deep that God cannot forgive. What a merciful God we serve! Let us shout our praises to Him!

Psalms 104 speaks more of God's splendor and majesty. He is the One that made the earth and established it on its foundations. He covered it with water, then made the land. He made the mountains and the boundaries. God gave us this wonderful and beautiful creation to enjoy and care for.

In the New Testament reading, Paul urges the believers not to quarrel over doubtful issues. In this instance, Paul is referring to the eating of meat sacrificed to idols. For some folks, this served as a stumbling block for them. It might not be a stumbling block for someone else, but if it is a problem for another believer, it is best to abstain for the benefit of the struggling brother.

Paul writes, "Do not tear down the work of God because of food." The argument might seem kind of silly, but there are these little arguments that happen throughout churches today. It might not be over food, but it can be over a litany of things. One church I belonged to had an expectation that people would show up in fancy dresses or suits for Sunday worship. Seldom did I ever come dressed up. The way I see it, God wants us to come and worship. If I were to put on a fancy suit and then go to church and act prim and proper, then am I really worshipping or putting on a show? It was an argument I was willing to have with the people confronting me about it every Sunday. Though I chose to stay, I wonder how many other folks that group drove out of the church because they did not dress the way they wanted them to. Taking a little poetic license, we can say "Do not tear down the work of God because of clothes."

August 17: Psalms 105-106 and Romans 15: 1-20

Psalms 105 is about trusting The LORD. The Israelites were a small band of people compared to the other nations. Despite how small they were, God set Joseph up to become the second in command in Egypt. Joseph used the power God gave him to help the nations survive the terrible famine. The Israelites settled in Egypt, but they became big and the Pharaoh feared them. He imposed harsh work standards on them and oppressed them. God set Moses apart to free them. During their time in the wilderness, God provided for their needs. God takes care of His people.

Psalms 106 is about Israel's unfaithfulness to God even though He had done all of those wonderful things for them. They had forgotten the blessings that He had heaped on them. Instead, they became jealous of Aaron and Moses. They wished to be back in Egypt where at least their bellies were full. They did not believe God's promise of the pleasant land. They moaned and grumbled in their tents. They let their hearts stray to idolatry, forsaking the One that had brought them so far.

Instead of remembering all the wonderful things that God had done in the history of the Israelites, they looked to the other nations. When things are going rough and we are having troubles, it is best to remember all of the wonderful things God has done for us.

In the New Testament reading, Paul explains that the believers must bear the weaknesses of those without strength. Faith is not about pleasing ourselves. To bolster his argument, Paul cites Jesus Himself as the example of not pleasing the self. Jesus asked that the Father remove the cup of judgment from Him while praying in Gethsemane. Despite that request, Jesus also proclaimed “His will be done.” Paul calls the people (and us) to harmony with one another. He encourages us to glorify God together.

Paul also writes about his evangelical aims. He is looking to spread the message of Christ in areas where His name has not been heard. Paul wants to ensure that every nation knows about Jesus.

August 18: Psalms 107-108 and Romans 15: 21-33

Psalms 107 gives thanks to God for deliverance. The first verse speaks of God’s faithful love, reinforcing that God’s love is unconditional. Verse four speaks of wandering in the wilderness. Generally, when we read wilderness, it refers to Israel’s time of wandering the desert between leaving Egypt and arriving at the promised land. However, in this psalm, it is more of a generic term. The fact is that all of us wander through wilderness at some point in our lives. Thankfully, God plucks us up out of the wilderness and makes us His.

Psalms 108 is credited to David. This psalm is a combination of Psalms 57:7-11 and Psalm 60: 5-12. The psalmist is asking for victory. There are enemies around him. However, the psalmist knows that God will rescue him.

In the New Testament reading, Paul explains that his missionary efforts have prevented him from visiting. He believes that his work is done in the provinces, so he is confident he can stop in and be assisted by them on his way to Spain. At the time of the writing, he is on his way to Jerusalem to serve the believers there. Paul closes this chapter asking that they pray for him. He asks that they pray for his protection and that the mission is successful.

As believers, do we regularly pray for our family, friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, and the missionaries taking the Gospel to the lost?

August 19: Psalms 109-111 and Romans 16

Psalms 109 is another Davidic psalm. The author asks that God would make the days of his enemies few. Many have come to mock him and repay his love with evil. Notice that he has not taken matters into his own hands. Instead, he is asking God to intervene for him and curse his enemies. The psalmist gives a list of offenses of his enemy. The enemy exploited the afflicted, poor, and broken-hearted. The enemy did not delight in blessing people, but he did delight in cursing people.

Psalm 110 gives royal messianic implications culminating in Christ. The psalm recounts God's promise to David that he would have an heir on the throne forever.

Psalm 111 is a psalm of praise. The author will praise the Lord with all his heart. Do we praise God with all our hearts? His works are good and everything He does is majestic and splendid. He is gracious and compassionate. Truly He is worthy of all praise and adoration!

In the New Testament reading, Paul closes out Romans by commending Phoebe. She was most likely the individual bringing the letter to the people. Paul also thanks Prisca and Aquila for literally risking their necks to save Paul. They also had churches in their homes and instructed Apollos. Paul advises that they not allow any divisive people into their midst. They should not be taken in by folks that do not serve the LORD, but only serve themselves. They use flattering words and smooth talk to get what they want. Unfortunately, we see that happen today. There are some that will twist Scripture to manipulate people. That is not right. The best way we can protect ourselves from that is knowing the Scriptures ourselves.

Tertius closes the letter out with a greeting. Tertius was the scribe that recorded all that Paul had to say in this letter.

August 20: Psalms 112-115 and 1 Corinthians 1

Psalm 112 gives insight into true happiness. A happy person is one that fears the Lord and takes delight in His commands. Do the LORD's commands bring us joy? I hope and pray that they do. They are given for our benefit. The psalm also talks about the believer lending generously, being compassionate, gracious, and righteous. He or she does not fear bad news, because their hearts are confident in the LORD. Do we have that confidence?

Psalm 113 gives praise to God while Psalm 114 recounts the time that God delivered the Israelites. The sea and the Jordan retreated because of The LORD. Rock turned to water by God's power. He has done and continues to do some amazing things in our world today.

Psalm 115 sings of giving glory only to God. God is the One that is worthy of worship and praise. My hope and prayer is that we will spend a good amount of time each day giving Him praises and thanking Him for what He has done for us. The psalm warns against idolatry. The pagans bow down to these little statues that have eyes, but cannot see. They have ears that cannot hear and hands that cannot feel. The statues are dead. God Almighty is the living God. Praise should go to Him, not a statue, not another person, money, fame, or anything else. God alone deserves the praise.

We start on 1 Corinthians. I am a huge fan of this book because Paul uses hyperbole, rhetorical questions, and a variety of other methods to convince his audience of the truth of Jesus. The overall point of this book was to communicate to the Corinthians the necessity of accepting the Lord's authority over their lives. Paul begins the letter with a general greeting and expressing his thanks to God for them. He will strengthen them to the end and they will be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Despite the blessings that have heaped upon the church, there are some issues of division. There are some that think they are better than others because they were

baptized by Apollos while others were baptized by Paul or Cephas. For some reason, the people thought that the person baptizing them gave some level of power. Paul quickly puts that notion to bed. The only important thing about being baptized is that they are baptized in Christ. They are baptized in the ultimate authority. They should not boast in anything, but Christ.

August 21: Psalms 116-118 and 1 Corinthians 2

Psalm 116 is a praise for deliverance. God has made the psalmist's soul happy because He has delivered him from his enemies. God has blessed him tremendously and there is no way that he can repay The LORD for His goodness. The author promises to make a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of Yahweh.

Psalm 117 is a universal call to praise. All nations are called to give Him glory. Can you imagine what the world would look like if every person in every nation called upon The LORD and gave Him praise?

Psalm 118 gives thanks for victory. God answered the psalmist in his distress. Man could not help him, only God could. Rather than look to nobles or other people for help, the author looks to The LORD. Everyone else will disappoint or fail, God never fails. His love endures forever.

In the New Testament reading, Paul proclaims that he came to the Corinthians in weakness. He did not have persuasive speech or words of wisdom. However, he came with a powerful demonstration by the Spirit. Paul writes about God's hidden wisdom in a mystery and a wisdom God predestined before the ages for our glory. The secret he refers to here is the secret of the Gospel message. In my estimation, the predestination that Paul speaks about here has less to do with predestining those that will come to faith in The LORD. Instead, it refers to the fact that even before the foundations of the universe had been laid, the plan of salvation was already there. The Father had predestined the Son to bring salvation to the earth.

August 22: Psalm 119:1-48 and 1 Corinthians 3

Psalm 119 is by far the longest psalm in the Bible. The psalm begins with the proclamation that those who live according to the LORD's instruction are happy. Those who seek His decrees are happy! I think this is one issue that we have in showing people who Christ is. Outsiders looking in see Christianity and following God as a set of rules and regulations. Perhaps one of the problems is that some folks on the inside of Christianity do not communicate what a blessing it is to have these marching orders from The LORD? When my kids were younger, I made the mistake of saying before dinner, "Wait, we have to pray." After a while, my kids started saying that they had to pray. So, I worked to change the phrasing to, "Before we eat, we get to pray." It is a privilege, not a burden to follow God's commands.

In the New Testament reading, Paul admonishes the people for not being spiritually mature. They are still arguing on who they belong to, whether it is Apollos or Paul. They miss the point because they belong to Christ. Apollos and Paul are merely God's servants. The Corinthians should be working to building themselves up in The LORD. Christ is the foundation and as they build on that foundation, the work will one day disclose itself.

Since you are reading this, I think we would agree that a person cannot expect to develop spiritual maturity if they only devote one hour of their weeks to studying God's word. If we want to develop a strong relationship with Him, we have to put in the work. If I were to only talk to Dania for an hour every week, everyone would probably guess that our relationship is weak. I dare say that it would be weak if she and I only spoke once a week for an hour. If folks want to develop a deeper relationship with God Almighty, intentional and daily work needs to happen. A weightlifter would not expect to get stronger by only lifting weights one day a week. Why would our faith get stronger if we only use it one day a week?

August 23: Psalm 119: 49-104 and 1 Corinthians 4

The psalmist declares that he receives hope from God's word. As believers, God's word can be a source of comfort to us, even during times of trial. The psalmist proclaims that he has kept God's ordinances, seeking God's favor with all of his heart. He identifies that God has treated him well, The LORD is good and what He does is good. A lot of these verses relay the importance of maintaining God's commands. They also show the deep relationship that the psalmist has with The LORD. As His people, we can have a deep relationship with Him as well.

In the New Testament reading, Paul is reminding the Corinthians of their need to be humble. Some folks have become arrogant. From what we can gather in the letter, there are some that want to evaluate Paul. However, he will not take it from them. The One that evaluates him is God Almighty.

Things have gotten pretty rough in Corinth. There is no one there to set the example, so Paul has sent his protege Timothy to them. The point of sending Timothy there was so that he could show the Corinthians how to act.