

The
New
Testament
in a Year

Week 21
2 Corinthians 5-9

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General Questions for Reflection

You might pick one part of each chapter and think about these questions.

- What does this tell me about God (including Jesus and the Holy Spirit)?
- What does this tell me about our world?
- What does it tell me about me?
- What does it say about following Jesus?
- Is there something here I'd like to learn more about?

Why not use these thoughts to shape your prayer today.

Monday

2 Corinthians 5

Paul expresses confidence in facing death. He uses the figures of a "tent" and a "building from God" to speak of death and resurrection. He also expresses his hope that the Lord will come and that he will receive his new body before he has had to put off the old one. Believers, he says, are never "away from the Lord" but as long as they are in the body, they are separated from him to a degree.

Paul and most believers thought that Jesus would return within their lifetime. These thoughts are in answer to the concerns of some of those who were worried about the believers who died before Christ's return. Paul is reassuring them not to worry because they will be with Christ whether they are still "in the body" or not.

He re-iterates the notion that anyone who "lives in Christ" is already a new creation, that the old has passed away. They are to become friends with God because God is already a friend to them through Christ.

When you think about death, are you frightened? Do Paul's words help to allay your fears? If death is not scary for you, what do you think makes the difference?

Pray for those who are terminally ill and facing imminent death, especially those who do not have a supporting faith system.

Tuesday

2 Corinthians 6

The first part of this chapter has Paul expounding on the need for Christians to jump into life fully and with their eyes wide open. In all situations the followers are encouraged to overcome their reticence, accept God's grace in Christ and to do it now. He places the responsibility for their restraint squarely on themselves and absolves himself of any blame.

The ending verses (14-18) and the first verse of chapter 7 are an abrupt change of subject that re-iterates his previous teaching about holiness and the need to remain separate from the pagan world by associating with other believers. Scholars believe that these verses may be part of another letter which has been inadvertently inserted at this point.

What things in your life may contribute to your reticence about serving God? What can you do to convince yourself to jump into life fully?

Pray today for whatever you need to feel free to jump into life fully.

Wednesday

2 Corinthians 7

From verse 2 forward Paul expresses his joy at the restoration of good relations. He had been worried that his previous letter may have stirred up more conflict but is relieved to hear that it led them to change their ways. He refers to someone “who did the wrong” (v12) and commends them on how they handled the situation, whatever it was. The chapter ends with Paul’s glowing praise of the congregation, of his confidence in them and of how he boasts about them to his colleagues.

This chapter has an encouraging tone and one can imagine the effect it would have had on those reading it. Think about how you would feel if a great and founding leader were praising your group after you had been through some troubling times. Wouldn’t it give you a lift?

Think about times when you have been discouraged and a word of praise from someone you admired helped to make you feel better about yourself. OR Think about a time when someone has expressed their gratitude to you for a kind word.

Pray today for those who are discouraged or facing trying times.

Thursday

2 Corinthians 8

Chapters 8-9 are stewardship appeals.

Perhaps the rift between Paul and the Corinthians interrupted the raising of funds there. With the rift now healed, Paul begins his appeal with examples of generosity that he has experienced among “the churches of Macedonia.” They surprised him with their spontaneous gifts and their positive attitude despite the poverty they endured. Will those at Corinth contribute from their abundance? (This group was in better economic condition than some of the other churches.) He assures them that “the brother” he is sending to administer the collection is trustworthy and has the authority to oversee the matter.

Paul asks them to show their love and give him something further to boast about by being generous.

It is obvious that fundraising in the church is not a new thing. What do you think of Paul’s tactics? Is there something for churches today to learn from his methods?

Pray today for those whose job it is to raise funds for churches and charitable organizations that rely on donations to do their good work in the world.

Friday

2 Corinthians 9

As mentioned in yesterday’s guide, it is thought that this chapter is part of an appeal for funds for the church in Jerusalem. Again he appeals to their sense of pride in comparing their good works to the efforts of other churches and he asks them to live up to their reputation as eager followers by being generous in their offerings.

The closing verses reassure the givers that, not only do their gifts help alleviate the immediate needs of the church, but that their giving ways will generate good feelings within themselves and encourage others to pray and offer thanks to God for them.

Sometimes in the church we get upset when we are asked for money or to increase our givings but I wonder how often we think in terms of the rewards that we reap from it. When we give from an attitude of gratitude for what we have been blessed with it can truly be another ‘gift’ to us. Perhaps to be thankful that we are asked to give instead of resenting it and to be grateful that we have something to give is the true blessing.

Pray today for an ‘attitude of gratitude’ to permeate all of your living and giving.