

Reading For September 2018

Sunday September 2nd 2018

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9

Moses said:

Israel, listen to these laws and teachings! If you obey them, you will live, and you will go in and take the land that the LORD is giving you. He is the God your ancestors worshiped, and now he is your God. I am telling you everything he has commanded, so don't add anything or take anything away.

No other nation has laws that are as fair as the ones the Lord my God told me to give you. If you faithfully obey them when you enter the land, you will show other nations how wise you are. In fact, everyone that hears about your laws will say, "That great nation certainly is wise!" And what makes us greater than other nations? We have a God who is close to us and answers our prayers.

You must be very careful not to forget the things you have seen God do for you. Keep reminding yourselves, and tell your children and grandchildren as well.

James 1:17-27

Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father who created all the lights in the heavens. He is always the same and never makes dark shadows by changing. He wanted us to be his own special people, and so he sent the true message to give us new birth.

My dear friends, you should be quick to listen and slow to speak or to get angry. If you are angry, you cannot do any of the good things that God

wants done. You must stop doing anything immoral or evil. Instead be humble and accept the message that is planted in you to save you.

Obey God's message! Don't fool yourselves by just listening to it. If you hear the message and don't obey it, you are like people who stare at themselves in a mirror and forget what they look like as soon as they leave. But you must never stop looking at the perfect law that sets you free. God will bless you in everything you do, if you listen and obey, and don't just hear and forget.

If you think you are being religious, but can't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and everything you do is useless. Religion that pleases God the Father must be pure and spotless. You must help needy orphans and widows and not let this world make you evil.

Mark 7:1-8 ,14-15,21-23

Some Pharisees and several teachers of the Law of Moses from Jerusalem came and gathered around Jesus. They noticed that some of his disciples ate without first washing their hands.

The Pharisees and many other Jewish people obey the teachings of their ancestors. They always wash their hands in the proper way before eating. None of them will eat anything they buy in the market until it is washed. They also follow a lot of other teachings, such as washing cups, pitchers, and bowls.

The Pharisees and teachers asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples obey what our ancestors taught us to do? Why do they eat without washing their hands?"

Jesus replied:

You are nothing but show-offs! The prophet Isaiah was right when he wrote that God had said,

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"All of you praise me
with your words,
but you never really
think about me.
It is useless for you
to worship me,
when you teach rules
made up by humans."

You disobey God's commands in order to obey what humans have taught. Jesus called the crowd together again and said, "Pay attention and try to understand what I mean. The food that you put into your mouth doesn't make you unclean and unfit to worship God. The bad words that come out of your mouth are what make you unclean."

Out of your heart come evil thoughts, vulgar deeds, stealing, murder, unfaithfulness in marriage, greed, meanness, deceit, indecency, envy, insults, pride, and foolishness. All of these come from your heart, and they are what make you unfit to worship God.

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Sunday 9th September 2018

Proverbs 22:1-2,8-9,22-23

A good reputation and respect
are worth much more
than silver and gold.

The rich and the poor
are all created
by the LORD.

Troublemakers get in trouble,
and their terrible anger
will get them nowhere.

The LORD blesses everyone
who freely gives food
to the poor.

Don't take advantage
of the poor
or cheat them in court.

The LORD is their defender,
and what you do to them,
he will do to you.

James 2:1-10 14-17

My friends, if you have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, you won't treat some people better than others. Suppose a rich person wearing fancy clothes and a gold ring comes to one of your meetings. And suppose a poor person dressed in worn-out clothes also comes. You must

not give the best seat to the one in fancy clothes and tell the one who is poor to stand at the side or sit on the floor. That is the same as saying that some people are better than others, and you would be acting like a crooked judge.

My dear friends, pay attention. God has given a lot of faith to the poor people in this world. He has also promised them a share in his kingdom that he will give to everyone who loves him. You mistreat the poor. But isn't it the rich who boss you around and drag you off to court? Aren't they the ones who make fun of your Lord?

You will do all right, if you obey the most important law in the Scriptures. It is the law that commands us to love others as much as we love ourselves. But if you treat some people better than others, you have done wrong, and the Scriptures teach that you have sinned.

If you obey every law except one, you are still guilty of breaking them all. My friends, what good is it to say you have faith, when you don't do anything to show that you really do have faith? Can that kind of faith save you? If you know someone who doesn't have any clothes or food, you shouldn't just say, "I hope all goes well for you. I hope you will be warm and have plenty to eat." What good is it to say this, unless you do something to help? Faith that doesn't lead us to do good deeds is all alone and dead!

Mark 7:24-37

Jesus left and went to the region near the city of Tyre, where he stayed in someone's home. He did not want people to know he was there, but they found out anyway. A woman whose daughter had an evil spirit in her heard where Jesus was. And right away she came and knelt down at his feet. The woman was Greek and had been born in the part of Syria known as Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to force the demon out of her

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daughter. But Jesus said, "The children must first be fed! It isn't right to take away their food and feed it to dogs."

The woman replied, "Lord, even dogs eat the crumbs that children drop from the table."

Jesus answered, "That's true! You may go now. The demon has left your daughter." When the woman got back home, she found her child lying on the bed. The demon had gone.

Jesus left the region around Tyre and went by way of Sidon toward Lake Galilee. He went through the land near the ten cities known as Decapolis. Some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk. They begged Jesus just to touch him.

After Jesus had taken him aside from the crowd, he stuck his fingers in the man's ears. Then he spit and put it on the man's tongue. Jesus looked up toward heaven, and with a groan he said, "Effatha!" which means "Open up!" At once the man could hear, and he had no more trouble talking clearly.

Jesus told the people not to say anything about what he had done. But the more he told them, the more they talked about it. They were completely amazed and said, "Everything he does is good! He even heals people who cannot hear or talk."

Sunday 16th September 2018

Proverbs 1:20-33

Wisdom shouts in the streets
 wherever crowds gather.
She shouts in the marketplaces
and near the city gates
 as she says to the people,
"How much longer
will you enjoy
 being stupid fools?
Won't you ever stop sneering
 and laughing at knowledge?
Listen as I correct you
 and tell you what I think.
You completely ignored me
 and refused to listen;
you rejected my advice
and paid no attention
 when I warned you.

"So when you are struck
 by some terrible disaster,
or when trouble and distress
surround you like a whirlwind,
 I will laugh and make fun.
You will ask for my help,
 but I won't listen;
you will search,
 but you won't find me.
No, you would not learn,
 and you refused
 to respect the LORD.
You rejected my advice

and paid no attention
when I warned you.

“Now you will eat the fruit
of what you have done,
until you are stuffed full
with your own schemes.
Sin and self-satisfaction
bring destruction and death
to stupid fools.
But if you listen to me,
you will be safe and secure
without fear of disaster.”

James 3:1-12

My friends, we should not all try to become teachers. In fact, teachers will be judged more strictly than others. All of us do many wrong things. But if you can control your tongue, you are mature and able to control your whole body.

By putting a bit into the mouth of a horse, we can turn the horse in different directions. It takes strong winds to move a large sailing ship, but the captain uses only a small rudder to make it go in any direction. Our tongues are small too, and yet they brag about big things.

It takes only a spark to start a forest fire! The tongue is like a spark. It is an evil power that dirties the rest of the body and sets a person's entire life on fire with flames that come from hell itself. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and sea creatures can be tamed and have been tamed. But our tongues get out of control. They are restless and evil, and always spreading deadly poison.

My dear friends, with our tongues we speak both praises and curses. We praise our Lord and Father, and we curse people who were created to be like God, and this isn't right. Can clean water and dirty water both flow from the same spring? Can a fig tree produce olives or a grapevine produce figs? Does fresh water come from a well full of salt water?

Mark 8:27-38

Jesus and his disciples went to the villages near the town of Caesarea Philippi. As they were walking along, he asked them, "What do people say about me?"

The disciples answered, "Some say you are John the Baptist or maybe Elijah. Others say you are one of the prophets."

Then Jesus asked them, "But who do you say I am?"

"You are the Messiah!" Peter replied.

Jesus warned the disciples not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus began telling his disciples what would happen to him. He said, "The nation's leaders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law of Moses will make the Son of Man suffer terribly. He will be rejected and killed, but three days later he will rise to life." Then Jesus explained clearly what he meant.

Peter took Jesus aside and told him to stop talking like that. But when Jesus turned and saw the disciples, he corrected Peter. He said to him, "Satan, get away from me! You are thinking like everyone else and not like God."

Jesus then told the crowd and the disciples to come closer, and he said:

If any of you want to be my followers, you must forget about yourself. You must take up your cross and follow me. If you want to save your life, you will destroy it. But if you give up your life for me and for the good news, you will save it. What will you gain, if you own the whole world but destroy yourself? What could you give to get back your soul?

Don't be ashamed of me and my message among these unfaithful and sinful people! If you are, the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Sunday 23rd 2018

Proverbs 31:10-31

A truly good wife
is the most precious treasure
a man can find!

Her husband depends on her,
and she never
lets him down.

She is good to him
every day of her life,
and with her own hands
she gladly makes clothes.

She is like a sailing ship
that brings food
from across the sea.

She gets up before daylight
to prepare food
for her family
and for her servants.

She knows how to buy land
and how to plant a vineyard,
and she always works hard.

She knows when to buy or sell,
and she stays busy
until late at night.

She spins her own cloth,
and she helps the poor
and the needy.

Her family has warm clothing,
and so she doesn't worry
when it snows.

She does her own sewing,
and everything she wears
is beautiful.

Her husband is a well-known
and respected leader
in the city.

She makes clothes to sell
to the shop owners.

She is strong and graceful,
as well as cheerful
about the future.

Her words are sensible,
and her advice
is thoughtful.

She takes good care
of her family
and is never lazy.

Her children praise her,
and with great pride
her husband says,

“There are many good women,
but you are the best!”

Charm can be deceiving,
and beauty fades away,
but a woman
who honours the LORD
deserves to be praised.

Show her respect—
praise her in public
for what she has done.

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James 3:13-18,4: 3,7-8

Are any of you wise or sensible? Then show it by living right and by being humble and wise in everything you do. But if your heart is full of bitter jealousy and selfishness, don't brag or lie to cover up the truth. That kind of wisdom doesn't come from above. It is earthly and selfish and comes from the devil himself. Whenever people are jealous or selfish, they cause trouble and do all sorts of cruel things. But the wisdom that comes from above leads us to be pure, friendly, gentle, sensible, kind, helpful, genuine, and sincere. When peacemakers plant seeds of peace, they will harvest justice.

Yet even when you do pray, your prayers are not answered, because you pray just for selfish reasons.

Surrender to God! Resist the devil, and he will run from you. Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Clean up your lives, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you people who can't make up your mind.

Mark 9:30-37

Jesus left with his disciples and started through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know about it, because he was teaching the disciples that the Son of Man would be handed over to people who would kill him. But three days later he would rise to life. The disciples did not understand what Jesus meant, and they were afraid to ask.

Jesus and his disciples went to his home in Capernaum. After they were inside the house, Jesus asked them, "What were you arguing about along the way?" They had been arguing about which one of them was the greatest, and so they did not answer.

After Jesus sat down and told the twelve disciples to gather around him, he said, "If you want the place of honor, you must become a slave and serve others!"

Then Jesus had a child stand near him. He put his arm around the child and said, "When you welcome even a child because of me, you welcome me. And when you welcome me, you welcome the one who sent me."

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Sunday 30th September 2018

Esther 7:1-6,9-10,9:20-22

The king and Haman were dining with Esther and drinking wine during the second dinner, when the king again said, "Esther, what can I do for you? Just ask, and I will give you as much as half of my kingdom!"

Esther answered, "Your Majesty, if you really care for me and are willing to help, you can save me and my people. That's what I really want, because a reward has been promised to anyone who kills my people. Your Majesty, if we were merely going to be sold as slaves, I would not have bothered you."

"Who would dare to do such a thing?" the king asked.

Esther replied, "That evil Haman is the one out to get us!"

Haman was terrified, as he looked at the king and the queen.

Then Harbona, one of the king's personal servants, said, "Your Majesty, Haman built a tower seventy-five feet high beside his house, so he could hang Mordecai on it. And Mordecai is the very one who spoke up and saved your life."

"Hang Haman from his own tower!" the king commanded. Right away, Haman was hanged on the tower he had built to hang Mordecai, and the king calmed down.

Mordecai wrote down everything that had happened. Then he sent letters to the Jews everywhere in the provinces and told them:

Each year you must celebrate on both the fourteenth and the fifteenth of Adar, the days when we Jews defeated our enemies. Remember this month as a time when our sorrow was turned to joy, and celebration took the place of crying. Celebrate by having parties and by giving to the poor and by sharing gifts of food with each other.

James 5:13-20

If you are having trouble, you should pray. And if you are feeling good, you should sing praises. If you are sick, ask the church leaders to come and pray for you. Ask them to put olive oil on you in the name of the Lord. If you have faith when you pray for sick people, they will get well. The Lord will heal them, and if they have sinned, he will forgive them.

If you have sinned, you should tell each other what you have done. Then you can pray for one another and be healed. The prayer of an innocent person is powerful, and it can help a lot. Elijah was just as human as we are, and for three and a half years his prayers kept the rain from falling. But when he did pray for rain, it fell from the skies and made the crops grow.

My friends, if any followers have wandered away from the truth, you should try to lead them back. If you turn sinners from the wrong way, you will save them from death, and many of their sins will be forgiven.

Mark 9:38-50

John said, "Teacher, we saw a man using your name to force demons out of people. But he wasn't one of us, and we told him to stop."

Jesus said to his disciples:

Don't stop him! No one who works miracles in my name will soon turn and say something bad about me. Anyone who isn't against us is for us. And anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name, just because you belong to me, will surely be rewarded.

It will be terrible for people who cause even one of my little followers to sin. Those people would be better off thrown into the ocean with a heavy stone tied around their necks. So if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off! You would be better off to go into life crippled than to have two hands and be thrown into the fires of hell that never go out. If your foot causes you to sin, chop it off. You would be better off to go into life lame than to

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have two feet and be thrown into hell. If your eye causes you to sin, get rid of it. You would be better off to go into God's kingdom with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell. The worms there never die, and the fire never stops burning.

Everyone must be salted with fire.

Salt is good. But if it no longer tastes like salt, how can it be made salty again? Have salt among you and live at peace with each other.

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