

Readings for September 2019

Sunday 1st September

Jeremiah 2:4-13

Listen, people of Israel,
and I, the LORD, will speak.
I was never unfair
to your ancestors,
but they left me
and became worthless
by following worthless idols.
Your ancestors refused
to ask for my help,
though I had rescued them
from Egypt
and led them through
a treacherous, barren desert,
where no one lives
or dares to travel.

I brought you here to my land,
where food is abundant,
but you made my land filthy
with your sins.
The priests who teach my laws
don't care to know me.
Your leaders rebel against me;
your prophets
give messages from Baal
and worship false gods.

I will take you to court
and accuse you

and your descendants
of a crime that no nation
has ever committed before.
Just ask anyone, anywhere,
from the eastern deserts
to the islands in the west.
You will find that no nation
has ever abandoned its gods
even though they were false.
I am the true and glorious God,
but you have rejected me
to worship idols.
Tell the heavens
to tremble with fear!
You, my people, have sinned
in two ways—
you have rejected me,
the source
of life-giving water,
and you've tried to collect water
in cracked and leaking pits
dug in the ground.

Hebrews 12:1-8,15-16

Such a large crowd of witnesses is all around us! So we must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially the sin that just won't let go. And we must be determined to run the race that is ahead of us. We must keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete. He endured the shame of being nailed to a cross, because he knew that later on he would be glad he did. Now he is seated at the right side of God's throne! So keep your mind on Jesus, who put up with many insults from sinners. Then you won't get discouraged and give up.

None of you have yet been hurt in your battle against sin. But you have forgotten that the Scriptures say to God's children,

"When the Lord punishes you,
don't make light of it,
and when he corrects you,
don't be discouraged.

The Lord corrects the people
he loves
and disciplines those
he calls his own."

Be patient when you are being corrected! This is how God treats his children. Don't all parents correct their children? God corrects all of his children, and if he doesn't correct you, then you don't really belong to him.

Make sure that no one misses out on God's wonderful kindness. Don't let anyone become bitter and cause trouble for the rest of you. Watch out for immoral and ungodly people like Esau, who sold his future blessing for only one meal.

Luke 14:7-14

Jesus saw how the guests had tried to take the best seats. So he told them:

When you are invited to a wedding feast, don't sit in the best place. Someone more important may have been invited. Then the one who invited you will come and say, "Give your place to this other guest!" You will be embarrassed and will have to sit in the worst place.

When you are invited to be a guest, go and sit in the worst place. Then the one who invited you may come and say, "My friend, take a better seat!" You will then be honoured in front of all the other guests. If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honoured.

Then Jesus said to the man who had invited him:

When you give a dinner or a banquet, don't invite your friends and family and relatives and rich neighbours. If you do, they will invite you in return, and you will be paid back. When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. They cannot pay you back. But God will bless you and reward you when his people rise from death.

Sunday 8th September

Jeremiah 18:1-11

The LORD told me, "Go to the pottery shop, and when you get there, I will tell you what to say to the people."

I went there and saw the potter making clay pots on his pottery wheel. And whenever the clay would not take the shape he wanted, he would change his mind and form it into some other shape.

Then the LORD told me to say:

People of Israel, I, the LORD, have power over you, just as a potter has power over clay. If I threaten to uproot and shatter an evil nation and that nation turns from its evil, I will change my mind.

If I promise to make a nation strong, but its people start disobeying me and doing evil, then I will change my mind and not help them at all.

So listen to me, people of Judah and Jerusalem! I have decided to strike you with disaster, and I won't change my mind unless you stop sinning and start living right.

Philemon

From Paul, who is in jail for serving Christ Jesus, and from Timothy, who is like a brother because of our faith.

Philemon, you work with us and are very dear to us. This letter is to you and to the church that meets in your home. It is also to our dear friend Apphia and to Archippus, who serves the Lord as we do.

I pray that God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ will be kind to you and will bless you with peace!

Philemon, each time I mention you in my prayers, I thank God. I hear about your faith in our Lord Jesus and about your love for all of God's people. As you share your faith with others, I pray that they may come to know all the blessings Christ has given us. My friend, your love has made me happy and has greatly encouraged me. It has also cheered the hearts of God's people.

Christ gives me the courage to tell you what to do. But I would rather ask you to do it simply because of love. Yes, as someone in jail for Christ, I beg you to help Onesimus! He is like a son to me because I led him to Christ here in jail. Before this, he was useless to you, but now he is useful both to you and to me.

Sending Onesimus back to you makes me very sad. I would like to keep him here with me, where he could take your place in helping me while I am here in prison for preaching the good news. But I won't do anything unless you agree to it first. I want your act of kindness to come from your heart, and not be something you feel forced to do.

Perhaps Onesimus was taken from you for a little while so that you could have him back for good, but not as a slave. Onesimus is much more than a slave. To me he is a dear friend, but to you he is even more, both as a person and as a follower of the Lord.

If you consider me a friend because of Christ, then welcome Onesimus as you would welcome me. If he has cheated you or owes you anything, charge it to my account. With my own hand I write: I, PAUL, WILL PAY YOU BACK. But don't forget that you owe me your life. My dear friend and follower of Christ our Lord, please cheer me up by doing this for me.

I am sure you will do all I have asked, and even more. Please get a room ready for me. I hope your prayers will be answered, and I can visit you.

Epaphras is also here in jail for being a follower of Christ Jesus. He sends his greetings, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, who work together with me.

I pray that the Lord Jesus Christ will be kind to you!

Luke 14:25-33

Large crowds were walking along with Jesus, when he turned and said: You cannot be my disciple, unless you love me more than you love your father and mother, your wife and children, and your brothers and sisters. You cannot come with me unless you love me more than you love your own life.

You cannot be my disciple unless you carry your own cross and come with me.

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. What is the first thing you will do? Won't you sit down and figure out how much it will cost and if you have enough money to pay for it? Otherwise, you will start building the tower, but not be able to finish. Then everyone who sees what is happening will laugh at you. They will say, "You started building, but could not finish the job."

What will a king do if he has only ten thousand soldiers to defend himself against a king who is about to attack him with twenty thousand soldiers? Before he goes out to battle, won't he first sit down and decide if he can win? If he thinks he won't be able to defend himself, he will send messengers and ask for peace while the other king is still a long way off. So then, you cannot be my disciple unless you give away everything you own.

Sunday 15th September

Jeremiah 4:11-12 ,22-28

When disaster comes, the LORD will tell you people of Jerusalem,

“I am sending a windstorm
from the desert—
not a welcome breeze.
And it will sweep you away
as punishment for your sins.

I heard the LORD say,
“My people ignore me.
They are foolish children
who do not understand
that they will be punished.
All they know is how to sin.”

After this, I looked around.
The earth was barren,
with no form of life.
The sun, moon, and stars
had disappeared.
The mountains were shaking;
no people could be seen,
and all the birds
had flown away.
Farmland had become a desert,
and towns were in ruins.
The LORD’s fierce anger
had done all of this.
The LORD said:

I have made my decision,
and I won’t change my mind.
This land will be destroyed,

although not completely.
The sky will turn dark,
and the earth will mourn.

1 Timothy 1:12-17

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord. He has given me the strength for my work because he knew that he could trust me. I used to say terrible and insulting things about him, and I was cruel. But he had mercy on me because I didn't know what I was doing, and I had not yet put my faith in him. Christ Jesus our Lord was very kind to me. He has greatly blessed my life with faith and love just like his own.

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." This saying is true, and it can be trusted. I was the worst sinner of all! But since I was worse than anyone else, God had mercy on me and let me be an example of the endless patience of Christ Jesus. He did this so that others would put their faith in Christ and have eternal life. I pray that honor and glory will always be given to the only God, who lives forever and is the invisible and eternal King! Amen.

Luke 15:1-10

Tax collectors and sinners were all crowding around to listen to Jesus. So the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses started grumbling, "This man is friendly with sinners. He even eats with them."

Then Jesus told them this story:

If any of you has a hundred sheep, and one of them gets lost, what will you do? Won't you leave the ninety-nine in the field and go look for the lost sheep until you find it? And when you find it, you will be so glad that you will put it on your shoulder and carry it home. Then you will call in your friends and neighbors and say, "Let's celebrate! I've found my lost sheep."

Jesus said, "In the same way there is more happiness in heaven because of one sinner who turns to God than over ninety-nine good people who don't need to."

Jesus told the people another story:

What will a woman do if she has ten silver coins and loses one of them? Won't she light a lamp, sweep the floor, and look carefully until she finds it? Then she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, "Let's celebrate! I've found the coin I lost."

Jesus said, "In the same way God's angels are happy when even one person turns to him."

Sunday 22nd September

Jeremiah 8:18-22 ,9:1

I'm burdened with sorrow
and feel like giving up.
In a foreign land
my people are crying.
Listen! You'll hear them say,
"Has the LORD deserted Zion?
Is he no longer its king?"

I hear the LORD reply,
"Why did you make me angry
by worshiping useless idols?"

The people complain,
"Spring and summer
have come and gone,
but still the LORD
hasn't rescued us."

My people are crushed,
and so is my heart.
I am horrified and mourn.
If medicine and doctors
may be found in Gilead,
why aren't my people healed?

I wish that my eyes
were fountains of tears,
so I could cry day and night
for my people
who were killed.

1 Timothy 2:1-7

First of all, I ask you to pray for everyone. Ask God to help and bless them all, and tell God how thankful you are for each of them. Pray for kings and others in power, so that we may live quiet and peaceful lives as we worship and honour God. This kind of prayer is good, and it pleases God our Saviour. God wants everyone to be saved and to know the whole truth, which is,

There is only one God,
and Christ Jesus
is the only one
who can bring us
to God.

Jesus was truly human,
and he gave himself
to rescue all of us.
God showed us this
at the right time.

This is why God chose me to be a preacher and an apostle of the good news. I am telling the truth. I am not lying. God sent me to teach the Gentiles about faith and truth.

Luke 16:1-13

Jesus said to his disciples:

A rich man once had a manager to take care of his business. But he was told that his manager was wasting money. So the rich man called him in and said, "What is this I hear about you? Tell me what you have done! You are no longer going to work for me."

The manager said to himself, "What shall I do now that my master is going to fire me? I can't dig ditches, and I'm ashamed to beg. I know what I'll do, so that people will welcome me into their homes after I've lost my job."

Then one by one he called in the people who were in debt to his master. He asked the first one, "How much do you owe my master?"

"A hundred barrels of olive oil," the man answered.

So the manager said, "Take your bill and sit down and quickly write 'fifty'."

The manager asked someone else who was in debt to his master, "How much do you owe?"

"A thousand bushels of wheat," the man replied.

The manager said, "Take your bill and write 'eight hundred'."

The master praised his dishonest manager for looking out for himself so well. That's how it is! The people of this world look out for themselves better than the people who belong to the light.

My disciples, I tell you to use wicked wealth to make friends for yourselves. Then when it is gone, you will be welcomed into an eternal home. Anyone who can be trusted in little matters can also be trusted in important matters. But anyone who is dishonest in little matters will be dishonest in important matters. If you cannot be trusted with this wicked wealth, who will trust you with true wealth? And if you cannot be trusted with what belongs to someone else, who will give you something that will be your own? You cannot be the slave of two masters. You will like one more than the other or be more loyal to one than to the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Sunday 29th September

Jeremiah 32:1-3 ,6-15

The LORD spoke to me in the tenth year that Zedekiah was king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year that Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylonia. At that time, the Babylonian army had surrounded Jerusalem,

and I was in the prison at the courtyard of the palace guards. Zedekiah had ordered me to be held there because I told everyone that the LORD had said:

I am the LORD, and I am about to let the king of Babylonia conquer Jerusalem.

Later, when I was in prison, the LORD said:

Jeremiah, your cousin Hanamel, the son of your uncle Shallum, will visit you. He must sell his field near the town of Anathoth, and because you are his nearest relative, you have the right and the responsibility to buy it and keep it in the family.

Hanamel came, just as the LORD had promised. And he said, "Please buy my field near Anathoth in the territory of the Benjamin tribe. You have the right to buy it, and if you do, it will stay in our family."

The LORD had told me to buy it from Hanamel, and so I did. The price was seventeen pieces of silver, and I weighed out the full amount on a scale. I had two copies of the bill of sale written out, each containing all the details of our agreement. Some witnesses and I signed the official copy, which was folded and tied, before being sealed shut with hot wax. Then I gave Hanamel the silver. And while he, the witnesses, and all the other Jews sitting in the courtyard were still watching, I gave both copies to Baruch son of Neriah.

I told Baruch that the LORD had said:

Take both copies of this bill of sale, one sealed shut and the other open, and put them in a clay jar so they will last a long time. I am the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, and I promise you that people will once again buy and sell houses, farms, and vineyards in this country.

1 Timothy 6:6-19

And religion does make your life rich, by making you content with what you have. We didn't bring anything into this world, and we won't take anything with us when we leave. So we should be satisfied just to have food and clothes. People who want to be rich fall into all sorts of temptations and traps. They are caught by foolish and harmful desires that drag them down and destroy them. The love of money causes all kinds of trouble. Some people want money so much that they have given up their faith and caused themselves a lot of pain.

Timothy, you belong to God, so keep away from all these evil things. Try your best to please God and to be like him. Be faithful, loving, dependable, and gentle. Fight a good fight for the faith and claim eternal life. God offered it to you when you clearly told about your faith, while so many people listened. Now I ask you to make a promise. Make it in the presence of God, who gives life to all, and in the presence of Jesus Christ, who openly told Pontius Pilate about his faith. Promise to obey completely and fully all that you have been told until our Lord Jesus Christ returns.

The glorious God
is the only Ruler,
the King of kings
and Lord of lords.

At the time that God
has already decided,
he will send Jesus Christ
back again.

Only God lives forever!
And he lives in light
that no one can come near.
No human has ever seen God
or ever can see him.
God will be honored,
and his power
will last forever. Amen.

Warn the rich people of this world not to be proud or to trust in wealth that is easily lost. Tell them to have faith in God, who is rich and blesses

us with everything we need to enjoy life. Instruct them to do as many good deeds as they can and to help everyone. Remind the rich to be generous and share what they have. This will lay a solid foundation for the future, so that they will know what true life is like.

Luke 16:19-31

There was once a rich man who wore expensive clothes and every day ate the best food. But a poor beggar named Lazarus was brought to the gate of the rich man's house. He was happy just to eat the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. His body was covered with sores, and dogs kept coming up to lick them. The poor man died, and angels took him to the place of honour next to Abraham.

The rich man also died and was buried. He went to hell and was suffering terribly. When he looked up and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side, he said to Abraham, "Have pity on me! Send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and touch my tongue. I'm suffering terribly in this fire."

Abraham answered, "My friend, remember that while you lived, you had everything good, and Lazarus had everything bad. Now he is happy, and you are in pain. And besides, there is a deep ditch between us, and no one from either side can cross over."

But the rich man said, "Abraham, then please send Lazarus to my father's home. Let him warn my five brothers, so they won't come to this horrible place."

Abraham answered, "Your brothers can read what Moses and the prophets wrote. They should pay attention to that."

Then the rich man said, "No, that's not enough! If only someone from the dead would go to them, they would listen and turn to God."

So Abraham said, "If they won't pay attention to Moses and the prophets, they won't listen even to someone who comes back from the dead."