

BIBLE READING NOTES FOR SEPTEMBER 2023
Compiled by Rev Dr J Jack for the Congregation of Duddingston Kirk

You will find reading the Bible rewarding and encouraging,
but reading the Bible is not always easy!

These guidelines may help you.

Before you read each passage, ask God to speak to you through His Word.

Set aside a special time each day to read the Bible, and stick to it!

Make use of your Bible index to find readings – every Bible has a contents page.

Pray that what you have read will help you live according to God's wishes.

September 1st 1John 3.11-18

Jesus spoke of loving with all our heart, all our mind, all our strength. So often we think of love as an emotion. But love is an action – above all it is sacrificial action. Christ gave his life for us. So the Christian's life must first of all involve sacrifice. It is not a feeling but a giving, an offering, a yielding.

September 2nd

1John 4.7-21

"God is love". When the great saints thought of God they could only think of love. If they thought of God's power, it was power used in love; if they thought of judgement, it was always tempered by love; no matter how they thought of God love always came into it, and so John came to the simple conclusion – **GOD IS LOVE**. Love is the very atmosphere in which God moves and has God's being. If we would please God, then we must love in our pale reflection of God's perfect love.

September 3rd

Romans 13.8-14

The Ten Commandments in one word – love! As Paul says at the end of v.10 – ***"To love, then, is to obey the whole Law"***.

FAITH

September 4th

Hebrews 11.1-9

A definition of faith is followed by examples of faith. Faith is *"to be certain of the things we cannot see"*. This is quite the opposite of the scientific approach. The scientist does his experiments, collects his evidence, and then from facts so established, makes his/her conclusions. The person of faith comes to their conclusions without evidence – even, sometimes, when the evidence is all against them. Abraham was far advanced in years; his wife was long past her childbearing years – yet Abraham believed without a shadow of doubt that the child God had promised would be born. This is faith; trusting God even in the darkness.

September 5th Matthew 6:24-34

Life can be so complicated! There are so many aspects and opportunities, so many responsibilities and possibilities, that it is impossible for us to cope unless we have some kind of plan or purpose in life. Jesus knew all about all those worries and anxieties which can beset us, and so His direction is clearly given in v.33 – ***'Be concerned above***

everything else with the Kingdom of God, and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things.'

September 6th John 4:27-38

We read these verses last week, but today we study them especially for v.34. Food is perhaps our basic need, but for Christ, and all who would follow Him, the basic need is to obey the will of God and finish the work He has given us to do. Notice that a) God has a will, a plan for us, and b) God has a work, a task, a job for each of us to do.

September 7th John 17.1-5

Verse 4 – *'I have finished the work you gave Me to do.'* There is always a sense of satisfaction when a job of work has been completed – the dishes washed, the lawn cut. How much greater the satisfaction must be when it is the work God has given us to do that has been completed. However, not all of us may be able to see the completed task. Just as different tradesmen co-operate in the completion of a house, so many of us must co-operate in God's work. We may not see the whole work completed, but let each of us at least have the satisfaction that our part of it has been completed as God wants.

September 8th Acts 20:17-24

Paul's life is nearing its close. It had been a hard life. He had known hard times and sad times – v.19. He had often to give stern and unpleasant warnings – v.21. He faces an uncertain future – v.22. He had been warned that trouble lies ahead – v.23. However, in spite of all that, he is quite clear as to his main objective in life – ***'to complete my mission and finish the work that the Lord Jesus gave me to do'*** - v.24. Again we see this declaration that each of us has been given a specific task to do. There is a purpose to the whole of life, and each individual life has its own particular purpose.

September 9th Philippians 3:12-21

There is a purpose for each of us in this earthly life. Happy is the man or woman who sees what that purpose is and who is able to achieve it. But there is also another purpose that lies beyond the limits of this earthly life, look at v.21. There is no greater prize in the whole of life than exchanging our mortal bodies for the spiritual body of glory which Christ alone can give.

September 10th Ephesians 1:1-14

Throughout this week we have been thinking of life's purpose. We have seen over and over again that that purpose is not to be reckoned in terms of material gain or success but in obedience to the will of God. In today's verses Paul tells how God has a secret plan for the whole of creation. Study this whole passage carefully, but especially v.10 – ***'God's plan is to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as head.'*** 'Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

September 11th 1Corinthians 10:14-22

The key verse in today's passage is v.21 – *'You cannot drink from the Lord's cup and also from the cup of demons; you cannot eat at the Lord's table and also at the table of*

demons'. The first stage of spiritual preparation is to decide whether we want to follow the ways of Christ, or the ways of the world, because we cannot do both.

September 12th 2Chronicles 29:15-19

How necessary is a church or place of worship for our spiritual development? It is often said that we don't need church buildings, that our forefathers often had to worship God among the hills. This is true. A beautiful church with a lofty spire, marvelous stained glass and a resounding pipe organ are not essential to worship. Yet it is also true that a beautiful sanctuary can aid worship – the architecture, the music, the colour of glass and the carving of wood can all help to lift the soul to an awe-inspiring sense of the majesty of God. See v.16. That which is ungodly or which disrupts worship must be removed that we may worship in the beauty of holiness.

September 13th Luke 1:11-17

Helpful though buildings may be, the Church is essentially about people – men and women, young and old, who are called into fellowship with Christ. Work within that fellowship takes many forms. Here we see John the Baptist called to three distinct areas of work (see v.17) – (a) reconciliation between fathers and children, (did they have a generation gap in those days as well?); (b) the turning of disobedient people back to righteous ways, and (c) to get the Lord's people ready for Him. Today the Church must continue this great work of reconciliation, reclamation and preparation.

September 14th 2Timothy 2.20-26

Personal cleanliness, personal purity, personal integrity; whatever our status within the Church, we cannot really serve God as we ought unless we are '*dedicated and useful to the Master*' v.21.

September 15th Hosea 10.11-15

The key verse here is v.12 – '*Plough new ground for yourselves, plant righteousness and reap the blessings that your devotion to me will produce.*' In the world of nature, sowing must always come before harvest. In the spiritual life, righteousness must always come before blessing.

September 16th Matthew 18.10-20

There is something thrilling about being part of a vast congregation at some special service – the massed choir, the crescendo of praise, the air of expectancy. But we also have the promise of Christ that He will be where even two or three are gathered in His name. Of course, we want as many as possible to praise God, but quality must always be more important than quantity. Where even a handful of Christian men and women are drawn together – there is the Church in all its holiness and in all its power.

September 17th Luke 24.13-32

How often have you heard someone say after a service of worship, '*I didn't get anything out of that*'. How sad when that happens! Maybe there was something wrong with the preacher that day; maybe there was a spiritual coldness throughout the whole congregation, or maybe the fault lay in the person who didn't get anything. When a

congregation is really gathered together in Christian fellowship and the preacher is sincerely expounding God's Word, then there must be warmth and uplift for every weary soul. See v.32.

September 18th Acts 4:5-13

This week our readings are all about spiritual fellowship. If we are members of a spiritual fellowship then, whether that fellowship be in our own home or in some congregation, there is bound to be some difference in the quality and manner of our life. We cannot avoid taking on something of the nature of Christ if we are in constant fellowship with Him. Note the latter half of v.13.

September 19th 1Corinthians 1:1-9

This passage is chockfull of spiritual fellowship - v.2 – all who are called to be God's holy people...belong to Him in union with Christ...together with all people everywhere; v.5 – in union with Christ; v.7 – you have not failed to receive a single blessing; v.9 – the God who called you to have fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ. Spiritual fellowship exists on two levels. There is first the fellowship that must exist between the individual believer and Christ. Second there is the fellowship that exists between believers in Christ. We cannot have the first without finding ourselves in the second. We cannot know the second without previously knowing the first. They are inseparable.

September 20th 1John 1:1-10

Yesterday we were thinking of two levels of Christian fellowship – a) with Christ, b) with fellow-believers. Today we come to a third dimension of spiritual fellowship – that is, sharing the Good News of Christ with others who have not yet heard it. v.2 – we saw it, so we speak of it; v.3 – what we have seen and heard we announce. The truly Christian Church cannot avoid being a missionary evangelical church.

September 21st Revelation 3:14-22

Now we come to what is almost a fourth level of Christian fellowship! It seems almost paradoxical but the truth is that the more we tell others about our faith and try to win them for the Christian fellowship then, in some curious way, the more we become aware of our own fellowship with Christ being deepened and expanded. We become aware of Christ seeking to come into our lives so that His life and our lives become increasingly intermingled in a glorious fellowship, a fellowship that will one day be the fellowship of Heaven.

OUR HEAVENLY HOME

September 22nd Matthew 6:16-21

We often use the word 'heaven' in our hymns and in our prayers, but what does that word really mean to us? We will never really know on this earth what heaven is really like, yet this week we will be looking at one or two short passages which give us just a little clue or glimpse into the nearer presence of God. Today's 'clue' comes in v.20 – where moths and rust cannot destroy, and robbers cannot break in and steal. A well-known hymn has this life – *'change and decay in all around I see; Oh Thou who changest not abide with me.'* There is nothing in this earthly life which will endure forever.

September 23rd Luke:10:1-12, 17-20

The 'clue' in this passage comes right at the very end – *be glad because your names are written in heaven*. Jesus had sent his disciples out on mission. They *returned 'in great joy'* – the mission had succeeded beyond their wildest hopes – even demons obeyed them. They had so much about which to be excited and overjoyed, but Jesus warned them not to get excited about those things – the really exciting thing was that their names were now written in heaven.

September 24th John 14:1-14

The 'clue' about heaven comes in v.2 – *'there are many rooms in my Father's house'*. It is perhaps natural that we should sometimes remember all the Christians who come from all over the wide world, and all the Christians who have lived in the past – there must be millions and millions of them. How can they all possibly fit into heaven? I have no idea how 'big' heaven really is, but I do know that Jesus said that there are many rooms. He also said *'I would not tell you this if it were not so'*.

September 25th Acts 7:54-60

People often think of heaven in terms of reunion with loved ones that have died before them, but the truth is that our first reaction on entering heaven will not be *'Look there is my loved one!'* but rather *'Look there is Christ!'* Just imagine standing in the presence of the Risen Christ in glory – and Peter and Paul and Abraham and Moses and ... Oh, it is almost unbelievable! But we have God's own Word – and that cannot fail.

September 26th 2Corinthians 4:16-5.5

God will have a house in heaven for us to live in, a home God has made, which will last forever. This spiritual house is for us not for someone else; it is to be lived in and we are not just visitors passing through. It is a home God has made that will last for ever.

September 27th Revelation 7:9-17

Look at the heavenly society. They are from every race, tribe, nation and language v.9; they unite in worship before the throne of God v.12. There is peace in heaven.

September 28th Revelation 22:6-17

Perhaps the gravest heresy of our time is the idea which is popular among so many Church people that we will all, one day, go to heaven, irrespective of our life here on earth. This heresy is called 'Universalism'. You find it in the common expression, *'We're all going the same road anyway'*. Study most carefully vv.14 and 15. We are most definitely not *'all going the same way'*.

September 29th Psalm 23

The Psalmist who knows that struggle through life to end up in God's house.

September 30th Psalm 150

Let us praise God!