

THE ONE YEAR BIBLE Reading For August 9:

Ezra 8:21-9:15:

After returning to Jerusalem with a second wave of people (8:21-36), Ezra finds out that many Jews (especially leaders) have married non-Jews, an action absolutely forbidden by God since it could turn their hearts from Him (1-2 [see Deuteronomy 7:3-4]). In response, Ezra tore his clothes, pulled his hair (signs of great grief) and then sat until the time of evening sacrifice with others who literally were shaking from fear because of the Word of God and how people had ignored it (3-4). Finally, Ezra prayed to the LORD (5-15). The essence of his prayer is that he acknowledges God's grace to His people to restore them and give them a chance after their long years of great sin. Yet, now they are terribly unfaithful to Him and have forsaken His commandments in spite of His grace. It is noteworthy that Ezra affirms though the Israelites are returning to their land, there is still a sense in which their slavery continues (8-9). Clearly this is a humble confession of sin—God has been good and righteous in returning exiles to the land, yet they are guilty before Him (15).

In this reading we see a man who has saturated himself with the Word of God (7:6, 10) and, as a result, has great reverence for the LORD and understands the consequence of sin. Ezra and the godly remnant of Israel set a pattern for us. We are to be both people of the Word and people who are sensitive to God, viewing our sin the same way He does, grieving and hating it (1 John 1:8-9). Also, the pattern in the Old Testament against believers in the true God marrying those who do not know Him is continued and driven home once again for us (2 Corinthians 6:14). What is more, we see God's faithfulness in bringing the remnant back to Jerusalem and providing for His people. He is continuing to carry out his plan of redemption which will culminate in Messiah coming out of a godly remnant in Israel.

1 Corinthians 5:1-13:

With chapter 5 we find out that division is not the only problem the church in Corinth had. They had also looked the other way and ignored it when a professing Christian in their midst committed the sexual immorality of incest (1). Paul accuses the church in Corinth of being arrogant and then exhorts them to remove this man from their assembly (2-5). They must remember Christ has died for them which not only brings forgiveness, but also should bring changed lives—resulting in a willingness to practice discipline toward those in their midst who are sinning (6-8). Paul reminds them of former teaching from him not to associate with sexually immoral people and then clarifies that what he meant was those who profess to be brothers (9-13). We have a calling and an obligation from God to deal with such persons. Paul makes it clear in verse 5 that when we ask someone to leave our fellowship because they will not repent of such heinous sin, it is to get their attention and eventually to bring them to repentance. Later on, Paul also teaches that such action toward a fellow believer is indicative of how family members treat each other (2 Thessalonians 3:15). The text here in 1 Corinthians 5 also suggests that such removal of unrepentant professing persons also helps to preserve the Church and protect it from coming to think that sin is not a big deal (see verses 8-13).

Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and courage not to overlook a fellow Christian who is in sin and also that He would give your church the wisdom and courage to restore people in sin and to discipline those who persist in that sin. After all, family members who love each other do not look the other way when those they love are self-destructing and/or when the family is being hurt.

Psalm 31:1-8:

In this psalm David faces enemies and places his trust wholeheartedly in the LORD whom he knows has been and will be faithful to him. As such, David sets forth a pattern for how the ultimate David, the ultimate anointed one, Jesus Christ, will face the ultimate enemy and hardship on the cross (compare verse 5 and Luke 23:46). Jesus Christ trusted absolutely in the Father in the midst of bearing the sins of the world and, as such, not only succeeded in His redemptive work, but also enhanced that much more the pattern of how we are to face trials—by trusting in the LORD!

Proverbs 21:1-2:

In verse 1 we are reminded our God is the Sovereign, the King over all the world and over all kings. Not only are the king's decisions ultimately under the sovereignty of God (he cannot decide or do anything unless allowed or caused by God), God is also able to change the heart of that king. Part of the implication is that if God can do this with the highest of human authorities, He can and does do it with all. In verse 2 we are reminded that most often a man thinks his actions are fine. Yet, God looks at and weighs man's heart (the implication is that he weighs his motives). This is meant to be a motivation to ask God to search our heart (see Psalm 139:23-24).