



KINGDOM PURPOSE

Part Two

Forty Daily Devotions
from the Book of Acts
(Based on the NKJV)

Introduction

Acts is a book about the church and the work of the church! I cannot imagine being without it. As we read the second half of this exciting history, we will meet more new believers and follow their ministries. We will see more mighty things done by common people as they were energized by the power of the Holy Spirit. We will watch as many followers are forced to endure hardships and persecutions. Because the Holy Spirit does not withhold any necessary information from us, we will see the church at its best and its worst. We will see conflict between believers. We will witness believers filled with pride and lying to the church and God. Sometimes it is not a pretty picture, but neither is life in the world in which we have been called to be witnesses ourselves. We will laugh and we will cry, but in the end, we will praise God because we know more about the church and its **Kingdom Purpose**.

Daily Reading Schedule

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
1	Acts 14:16-28	08/25/24
2	Acts 15:1-12	08/26/24
3	Acts 15:13-24	08/27/24
4	Acts 15:25-37	08/28/24
5	Acts 15:38-16:8	08/29/24
6	Acts 16:9-22	08/30/24
7	Acts 16:23-34	08/31/24
8	Acts 16:35-17:7	09/01/24
9	Acts 17:8-19	09/02/24
10	Acts 17:20-32	09/03/24
11	Acts 17:33-18:10	09/04/24
12	Acts 18:11-23	09/05/24
13	Acts 18:24-19:9	09/06/24
14	Acts 19:10-22	09/07/24
15	Acts 19:23-34	09/08/24
16	Acts 19:35-20:6	09/09/24
17	Acts 20:7-20	09/10/24
18	Acts 20:21-31	09/11/24
19	Acts 20:32-21:5	09/12/24
20	Acts 21:6-18	09/13/24

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
21	Acts 21:19-30	09/14/24
22	Acts 21:31-22:3	09/15/24
23	Acts 22:4-16	09/16/24
24	Acts 22:17-28	09/17/24
25	Acts 22:29-23:10	09/18/24
26	Acts 23:11-22	09/19/24
27	Acts 23:23-35	09/20/24
28	Acts 24:1-13	09/21/24
29	Acts 24:14-25	09/22/24
30	Acts 24:26-25:10	09/23/24
31	Acts 25:11-22	09/24/24
32	Acts 25:23-26:8	09/25/24
33	Acts 26:9-20	09/26/24
34	Acts 26:21-32	09/27/24
35	Acts 27:1-12	09/28/24
36	Acts 27:13-25	09/29/24
37	Acts 27:26-37	09/30/24
38	Acts 27:38-28:5	10/01/24
39	Acts 28:6-16	10/02/24
40	Acts 28:17-31	10/03/24

Day 1: Acts 14:16-28

“Then Jews...stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.” (Acts 14:19-20)

“The Next Day”

Paul and Barnabas preached to the Gentiles more directly than to the Jews. The short sermon recorded here is obviously different than the one preached earlier to the Jews. Speaking of the Jews, they soon followed the preachers to Lystra and incited the crowd against Paul and Barnabas. We are not told what befell Barnabas, but we do know that they stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, leaving him for dead. This is a rather shocking turn of events when we consider that some of these same people were just saying that the two missionaries were gods and had to be restrained from “sacrificing to them.” However, the Bible says that Paul, “Rose up and went into the city,” and on “the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe,” where they preached the gospel and won many to Christ. Derbe was the farthest point east on this first missionary journey and the group now turned back toward home. They went through the cities preaching the gospel to the lost and encouraging the disciples to remain true to the faith. How could you not love or listen to a man like Paul? One day he is attacked, stoned, and left for dead and the next day he is back on the road speaking to believers, warning them that they “must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God” (v. 22).

Prayer Emphasis: What we do on *the next day* is vitally important. We must **commit** ourselves to **continue** faithfully for God no matter the results or circumstances. **Pledge** to make every day a new day in your **Kingdom Purpose** and let the past be exactly that – the past!

Day 2: Acts 15:1-12

“And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’” (Acts 15:1)

What a Meeting!

Some men came down to Antioch and began to preach to the new believers that they could not be saved without observing the Law of Moses concerning circumcision. Paul and Barnabas stood against this false teaching and there was obvious division in the church. A group was appointed to go to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles and elders about the matter. The group preached its way to Jerusalem, sharing about the work of the Lord as they travelled. Finally, they reached Jerusalem and met with the apostles and elders. We are provided with only some of the comments from that meeting, but it is a blessing to read the “minutes” that the Holy Spirit took for us on that day! First Peter spoke to the assembly. Barnabas and Paul also spoke and gave a report on the miracles and wonders that God performed in their travels. Today’s reading will add the fact that James, the half-brother of Jesus, seemed to close out the conference with his speech. He apparently became the leader of the church in Jerusalem and would eventually author the Book of James.

Prayer Emphasis: Today would be a good time to remember to **pray** for the leadership in our church. It might be a great encouragement to someone if you **let them know** that you prayed for them today. It is also a good time to **praise God** for all that He is doing to encourage believers today, and to especially **thank Him** for what He does for you.

Day 3: Acts 15:13-24

“...after they had become silent, James answered, saying, ‘Men and brethren, listen to me.’” (Acts 15:13)

The Wisdom of James

James would later say in his epistle, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God” (James 1:5). James might have had this very day in mind when he wrote those words! I am sure he asked God to help him know what to say to close out this important conference in Jerusalem. He wisely began at the beginning, declaring how God had “at the first” (v. 14) shown his love to the Gentiles. Peter had already told the group that the matter of God’s love for the Gentiles had been settled long before Paul and Barnabas even departed on their first missionary journey. So, James began his address by wisely referring to historical matters. He then began to quote from the Scriptures (Amos 9:12) where God had much earlier spoken of “Gentiles” who “are called by My name” (v. 17). James wanted the people to understand that what was happening in the church was in full agreement with the Word of God. James was a wise man indeed! Soon a letter of comfort and direction was on its way to assist the Gentile believers as they continued to discover their own **Kingdom Purpose**.

Prayer Emphasis: **Pray** for a church other than your own today. **Pray** for its pastor and leadership. **Ask** God to give that church, and all churches, unity, and harmony as they fulfill their **Kingdom Purpose**. If you know someone in that church, **let them know** that you prayed for their church today.

Day 4: Acts 15:25-37

“So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.” (Acts 15:30)

The Letter to Antioch

After the church in Jerusalem heard of the efforts of some of the Jews trying to impose certain aspects of the law upon the lives of the new Gentile believers, they met together and decided to send men to Antioch with a letter to help alleviate the mounting tensions there. The letter was short and to the point – to three main points, actually – and was written to clarify and finally settle some matters. Although the three main points of the letter may not be as easily understood to us today as it was to those who received them at that time, we can certainly understand why the Holy Spirit led the church to send “chosen” men to deliver it. The phrase “chosen men” (v. 22) is a much stronger translation than just “choose some men.” The word is the one used to describe how Jesus “chose” his apostles from a larger group of disciples. It indicates that these men were selected from the church body to do a specific job at a specific time of need. They were not simply “chosen,” but they were “chosen men,” or “chosen people.” It may be that God has been trying to choose you lately for some specific task. It is easy to find enough distractions in this world to drown out the haunting words of the calling of God’s Spirit. However, God does not give up on us easily. In fact, God does not ever give up on us! Wouldn’t you like to be one of the chosen who stands *up* and stands *out* for God?

Prayer Emphasis: **Ask** yourself how much you would be missed if you were not a part of the church, God’s working body. If you have no place of service, then you are missing what the Christian life is all about. **Consider** that Jesus said He was among us as one who served. **Seek** out a place of service in God’s church today. **Choose** to be chosen. Like Isaiah, **say** to the Lord, “Here I am! Send me!”

Day 5: Acts 15:38-16:8

“Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another...” (Acts 15:39)

Contention

At the end of yesterday’s reading, we saw that chosen men are not always perfect men, and that things do not always run smoothly or perfectly in the church. Paul was ready to get back to the mission field, as was Barnabas. But Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them. Paul did not think this to be a good idea since John Mark accompanied them on their first mission trip only to leave prior to the mission’s completion. Paul spoke his mind about the matter and Barnabas did the same. Their “sharp...contention” resulted in their parting company. Note that they parted company from one another but realize they did not “part company” from the church or its work! There is never a good enough reason for any believer to quit the church or to quit serving the Lord. It may be that we cannot serve in the same capacity as another, or even that we do not feel led to serve in the same ministry with someone else, but the option is never to quit serving altogether! The results of this contention were that Barnabas took John Mark and headed off to the mission field while Paul chose Silas and did the same. Instead of the contention leaving no one serving the Lord, we see the contention resulting in even more people being involved in God’s **Kingdom Purpose!** The Holy Spirit found a way for even a “contention” to result in God’s glory!

Prayer Emphasis: Let go of any grudges that you have toward anyone. Ask God to use even our disagreements to bring honor and glory to His name. Commit now to never allow anyone or anything to prohibit you from fulfilling your personal **Kingdom Purpose!**

Day 6: Acts 16:9-22

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’” (Acts 16:9)

“Down to Troas”

The last three words of yesterday’s reading found Paul and company heading “down to Troas” (16:28). They previously tried to do ministry in Asia, but the Holy Spirit did not allow that to happen. They then set their sights on Bithynia, but the Spirit would not allow them to go there either. So, what happened? They wound up going “down” to Troas. Note that they went down to Troas, but they were not “down” while in Troas. The word down is used there for directional purposes and in no way describes the condition of Paul’s spirit! Not getting what he wanted or planned, did not bring Paul to a place of despair or discouragement, but simply to another place of service! We need to see that God sometimes uses *disappointments* to help us meet *His* appointments. God had plans for Paul in Troas. It was there that he met Luke who became a life-long ministry partner to the great apostle. Near the end of his life, Paul would write, “Only Luke is with me” (2 Timothy 4:11). It was in Troas that Paul received what we now know as The Macedonian Call to begin some of the most fascinating years of his personal ministry and to open a new chapter in his finding and fulfilling his own **Kingdom Purpose.**

Prayer Emphasis: Decide now to never allow disappointments to discourage you to the point of not fulfilling your **Kingdom Purpose.** Confirm with God that His purposes are more important than your own and His appointments are all that really matter in life. Commit to serving God wherever He places you and never allow Satan to use personal disappointments to defeat you!

Day 7: Acts 16:23-34

“And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison...” (Acts 16:23)

Paul and Silas

One must wonder if Paul could have ever imagined that his willingness to follow God’s call into Macedonia would result in him and his ministry partner being whipped and in prison. They were “severely flogged” (NIV) and had “many stripes laid on them” (KJV). The word “stripes” comes from a Greek word that is translated “plague” 12 times elsewhere in some translations of the Bible. In this, we see the severity of the beating that was administered to these preachers simply because they were Christian men, living Christian lives, and delivering God’s message to the world around them. After the beatings, they were cast into a dark prison cell, placed in chains, and set under guard. At midnight, the two men were praying – and praying led to praising! All who were within the prison heard the two men singing praises to God! Praise was only one of many choices available to these two men that night. They could have chosen to moan, groan, and complain, but they did not do so. The path chosen that night was chosen because they were “chosen” men! God put these men in a place where their abundant *suffering* led to a time of abundant *sharing*. Soon they were in the home of the jail keeper himself and sharing the gospel with his entire family!

Prayer Emphasis: Sing! I don’t care if you are good at it or not. Just **sing** praises to God today. If not aloud, at least within your heart! Don’t be a part of Satan’s orchestra – lifting up strains and refrains of doubt and displeasure. **Join in** with the heavenly chorus of those who have decided to praise God despite any circumstances faced while striving to fulfill their **Kingdom Purpose!**

Day 8: Acts 16:35-17:7

“And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, ‘Let those men go.’” (Acts 16:35)

An Amazing Turn of Events!

Yesterday’s reading found Paul and Silas singing “at midnight” while today’s reading begins with the dawning of a new day. What an amazing “morning after” this must have been. One moment they were in prison and the next they were winning souls to Christ! Only God could make so much happen in so little time! Never doubt God’s ability to change things in your own life! Most of us want Him to change our circumstances or situations when what we really need is for God to change us. Now, rather than having to face chains, prison, and possibly execution, Paul and Silas face their accusers and demand a public release and escort out of the prison. Those who imprisoned the preachers not only escorted them from the prison, but out of the city at the same time! When we think that we are at the end of our rope, we simply need to hang on and do what God would have us do. God can change things! And He can do it much better than we could ever imagine. Note that after Paul and Silas were released from the prison, they went to Lydia’s house where they met with the church and encouraged them! Amen!

Prayer Emphasis: Encourage someone who the Spirit lays on your heart today. **Help** them to hang on and trust in God despite any situation or circumstance. **Share** a testimony with someone of how God has seen you through some difficult time in your life. Helping someone else is one of the greatest opportunities that we may meet along the way to fulfilling our **Kingdom Purpose!**

Day 9: Acts 17:8-19

“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.” (Acts 17:16)

What to do While You Wait

Paul and Silas continued their journey and eventually came to Thessalonica where they were again confronted by the enemies of the church and forced to move on to another location. Satan may have claimed some short-term victories in these events, but the real winners were those who continued to do God’s work wherever they happened to be. The church thought it best to send Paul and Silas safely to Berea under cover of night. On arriving there, Paul and Silas went immediately to the Jewish synagogue. This time, there were no beatings or riots. These people received the Word with great eagerness, and they examined God’s Word daily. In this environment, many of the Jews and prominent Greek citizens in that city believed in Jesus. The unbelieving Jews heard of the ministry at Berea and decided to come and continue their personal war against the church. Paul was, once again, forced to be on the move, this time to Athens. While Paul was “waiting” for Silas and Timothy to join him there, he began to meet with the people in the synagogue and marketplaces and share the message of the gospel. One thing led to another and soon Paul was invited to the city council where he had the opportunity to preach a sermon to them! What a good example of what can be done while we are waiting on the next thing that God has for us!

Prayer Emphasis: Pay attention to your “wait” times today. Use those moments to **observe** where God has you and then **pay careful attention** to why He may have you there. **Take the time** to really **notice people** and situations around you. It may be that you can accomplish something incredibly positive for God while you are simply waiting somewhere today.

Day 10: Acts 17:20-32

“For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean.” (Acts 17:20)

Some Strange Ideas

The scholars with whom Paul met stated to him that he was bringing “some strange things” to their discussions, and they desired to know more about the things of which he was speaking. These people were fascinated with learning and loved to discuss philosophies and innovative ideas. Learning was especially important to them, and they liked to be well-schooled in the latest things. Paul was more than ready to accommodate their request! He referenced the fact that he noticed among their many altars an altar addressed to “The Unknown God” (v. 23). Paul stated that he believed he might know something about this “Unknown God.” The preacher used this opportunity to speak to them about the God who made the world and everything therein. He then went on to speak of Jesus, including His resurrection from the dead. Some scoffed at the idea of the resurrection, but others wanted to know more about it. The fact that some are not interested should not stop us from sharing the good news with those who are!

Prayer Emphasis: **Think** of creative ways to introduce the idea of God to people who may at first seem disinterested. Many people are deeply religious, but still have no real understanding about God. Many more have no real, personal relationship with Him at all. **Take advantage** of your next opportunity to **speak up** for Jesus! **Believe** that your “strange ideas” about God and faith may be just what they need to hear at that very moment in their life!

Day 11: Acts 17:33-18:10

“So Paul departed from among them.” (Acts 17:33)

You Gotta Know When to Fold ‘Em

After facing the sneers of the philosophical listeners in Athens, Paul decided to move on to more fertile fields. We are told that a few people did believe Paul’s message about Christ and the resurrection. However, there is no record of a church being founded at that time in Athens. Many might consider Paul’s efforts there to be a failure, but we can never fail if we are obedient to what God has called us to do. We can, however, know when it is best to move on to another ministry opportunity. So, that is exactly what we find Paul doing when he departed from Athens and went to Corinth, a city located approximately 50 miles from Athens. You could not possibly visit any two cities so different one from the other. Athens was a city of educated, culture-focused people while Corinth was a seaport filled with common, commercial-focused people. Paul began working as a tentmaker with a couple there and spent his spare time teaching and preaching in the synagogue every Sabbath. Some speculate that Paul’s first connection with this couple was in the business world and that, possibly, Paul won them to Christ while collaborating with them. We do know they became faithful servants of the Lord. When Silas and Timothy joined Paul in Corinth, they continued to preach Christ and the resurrection. When more opposition arose, Paul once again moved on to preach to the Gentiles.

Prayer Emphasis: Continue your faithful witness to the world around you, especially the people with whom you work. **Look** for another door to open each time one seems to close. **Pray** for wisdom to know when to move on to other ministry opportunities.

Day 12: Acts 18:11-23

“So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him...” (Acts 18:18)

Some New Helpers

Paul continued to minister to the people of Corinth for a year and a half, faithfully teaching the Word of God to them during that time. Once again trouble was soon to come, and Paul and his ministry team were forced to sail to Syria. However, the ministry team had grown by at least two people by that time. Our reading today discloses that when Paul left Corinth, Priscilla and Aquila “were with him” and obviously now a part of Paul’s ministry team. This couple became strong members of the Christian community. Paul would later close his letter to the believers at Rome by saying, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles” (Romans 16:3-4). We learn later (1 Cor. 16:19) that this couple obviously had a church that met at their home. We see from the latter verses of our reading that Paul left this couple in Ephesus to continue ministering there while he headed back to Jerusalem, strengthening the churches in all the cities through which he passed along the way.

Prayer Emphasis: How long has it been since you made a new friend within our church? **Seek** out someone new to our fellowship and welcome them. **Thank** someone who has recently ventured into a new ministry area with us. **Make sure** people know that we love and appreciate them.

Day 13: Acts 18:24-19:9

“Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.” (Acts 18:24)

Meet Apollos

There is much good to be said about Apollos. We know he was a Jew who was very eloquent in speech and mighty in Scriptures. He was from Alexandria, but he was now in Ephesus. He was a fiery preacher of God’s Word and was faithful to diligently preach and teach the things of the Lord. He preached boldly in the synagogue and Aquila and Priscilla heard him there. They later spent time with this good man, inviting him to their home and helping him to understand the way of God more completely. He then continued on his way to Achaia with a letter from the Ephesian believers encouraging others to be blessed by the ministry of this faithful preacher. After his arrival in Achaia, Apollos “greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” (18:27-28). Later we find Apollos ministering with Paul in Ephesus. Of all the noble things God shares with us about this Spirit-filled preacher, perhaps the fact that he was humble enough to learn from others stands out the most.

Prayer Emphasis: Ask God to remove any prideful attitudes from your heart and life. Allow every learning opportunity to be as fruitful as possible in your life. **Humble yourself** before God and He will then be able to exalt you among your fellow man!

Day 14: Acts 19:10-22

“And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” (Acts 19:10)

Amazing Results!

Take a moment and read the words of our focus verse again. “All who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” Many prominent Bible scholars believe that it was during this time of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus that all seven of the churches mentioned in Revelation were founded. We do know for sure that the churches of Colosse and Laodicea were founded during these years. It was also during this time that God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul. When the sick could not come to him, or he could not get to them, clothing items he had touched were taken to the sick and they were healed. Some saw this as an opportunity for personal profit. Some still do the same today. However, God’s Spirit made quick work of such bad ideas. Many of the Christians who had become involved in sorcery confessed their evil deeds and burned their sorcery books. The revived church continued to grow, and the Word of the Lord spread widely and powerfully. Paul, though, was sensing a call to Rome but wanted to go through Jerusalem first. On his way to Jerusalem, he visited the churches of Macedonia and Achaia. Paul’s commitment to the work of the Lord is nothing short of amazing. But our amazing God of amazing grace deserves nothing more than an amazing response from those who believe in Him!

Prayer Emphasis: Recall some of the mighty things God has done for you. As opportunities arise, share with someone about the amazing power of God and how it has influenced your life for good. **Commit** to being busier than ever in God’s **Kingdom Purpose**.

Day 15: Acts 19:23-34

“And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.” (Acts 19:23)

Gentile Opposition

Today’s reading includes the story of a second time that the Gentiles opposed Paul and his ministry. The first time was in Acts 16:16–24. Both times the opposition was a result of Paul’s preaching having a negative impact on somebody’s wallet! Here we see some craftsmen who made statues of an Ephesian goddess losing business because the newly born Christians no longer sensed a need for their idols. A leader among the silversmiths assembled the other craftsmen together and incited them against Paul. Soon the assembly became a riot and some of the local Christians were seized and dragged into the middle of the meeting. Paul was ready to come before the assembly and defend the gospel to these money-hungry hypocrites, but the believers there would not let him do so. The meeting was filled with confusion and the Holy Spirit even reveals that some took part in the battle against the Bible without really even understanding what they were fighting against (see v. 32). It seems that intolerance for Christianity is not something new to our age today!

Prayer Emphasis: **Pray** for our national leaders. **Ask** God to change the hearts of government officials. **Seek** the courage to **fight** for our religious liberties, if necessary. **Encourage** a fellow Christian soldier today. In these times there are many who are in desperate need of an encouraging word.

Day 16: Acts 19:35-20:6

“And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: ‘Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus?’” (Acts 19:35)

The City Clerk

The title, “City Clerk,” conjures up memories of faithful civil servants whose images have been stamped on our hearts and minds! However, the man that is quoted in today’s focus verse was no insignificant citizen in Ephesus. This man was a chief officer of the city. Note that the people were willing to listen to him when he arrived on the scene. This man bravely used reason to help free Gaius and Aristarchus from the grip of the angry mob. He pointed out that these type matters should be settled in the courts and not by mob rule. Eventually, God would use this unnamed, unknown man to help clear Paul of any charges against him and thereby allow him to continue in his ministry by heading back to Macedonia where he exhorted the believers there. Then it was on to Greece and other areas of opportunity. But for one brave and willing city clerk, who knows how differently this story might have ended. While we can be certain that God would have found a way to assist and protect His ministers, we can also be certain that this one man made a significant difference in the lives of Paul and his ministry partners! We never know who God is going to use to assist us in our **Kingdom Purpose!**

Prayer Emphasis: Take some time to **thank** God for all the blessings of which you may not even be aware. **Praise** Him for His unknown acts of providential care for His church. **Believe** that God is always working on your behalf!

Day 17: Acts 20:7-20

“Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.” (Acts 20:7)

“The First Day of the Week”

While there are several places in the New Testament that clearly indicate that the early church met on the first day of the week (Sunday), it is perhaps most clearly stated here in today’s focus verse. Two particularly good reasons for the church beginning to honor Sunday as their day of worship might have been that Jesus was resurrected on a Sunday morning and the Day of Pentecost fell on a Sunday. It may be that the church met at night since this was not the Sabbath and most believers probably worked on the first day of the week (Sunday) in those times. Perhaps it was because Paul knew he was going to soon depart to minister in other cities that this service went on until midnight! The room where the church met that night was probably crowded and cramped, and the oxygen in the room was probably consumed by the flames of oil lamps. A young man first fell into a deep sleep and then fell from a third-floor loft while Paul was busy preaching. We can only imagine the shock that went through the crowd when the young man was pronounced dead! The young man’s name was Eutychus. The name means “fortunate,” and it surely applies in this situation. After Paul prayed for the young man, life returned to his body and the service continued until the next morning. Soon Paul was heading toward Jerusalem in the hope of arriving there before the Day of Pentecost, ministering in several places along the way.

Prayer Emphasis: **Prayerfully consider** truly making Sunday the Lord’s Day. **Commit** to faithful attendance to worship services. **Make** church a priority in your life! You never know what you may miss!

Day 18: Acts 20:21-31

“Testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Acts 20:21)

Repentance and Faith

Paul stressed the fact that the message to the Jews and Gentiles was the same and repentance and faith were key factors in establishing a personal relationship with God. Repentance means to turn from our unbelief to a faith-filled belief in Jesus Christ as our Savior. After faithfully delivering that message to the people of Ephesus, Paul had to tell them that he was being told by the Spirit to return to Jerusalem. It is obvious that the Holy Spirit sensed no need to explain the purpose of this visit to Paul because Paul stated he had no idea what would happen to him there. Apparently, Paul had been warned by the Spirit that prison and other hardships were awaiting him along the way. In spite of all of this, Paul remained a determined preacher of the gospel and never refused any opportunity to minister in any city or to any people. Paul’s focus was on finishing his course and completing the work that God had given him to do. You cannot help but hear the sorrow in his voice as he tells the Ephesian believers that he is certain they will never see him again.

Prayer Emphasis: **Pray** for someone in ministry today. Especially **pray** for preachers of the gospel all around the world. **Ask** God to strengthen them for the work as they labor for Him. **Encourage** someone today and **express** Christian love to them.

Day 19: Acts 20:32-21:5

“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” (Acts 20:32)

“The Word of His Grace”

Paul left a strong message with his beloved Ephesians when he told them what the Word of God’s grace could do for them. Comments on the first verse of today’s reading alone can fill the allotted space for this devotion. Notice that the Word of grace *strengthens* us. Paul says that it is able to “build you up.” He goes on to say that this same Word of grace provides *security* or “an inheritance.” The Word of grace also *sanctifies* us or sets us apart as special people to God. There is still more! Verse 33 tells us that, from Paul’s own personal testimony, the Word of grace *satisfies* us. Paul went on to explain that he had not coveted any other man’s place or possessions and he worked hard to not be a burden on his fellow believers. Last, we must see that the Word of grace defeats *selfishness* within us and promotes *sharing* with others. Paul learned from the Lord himself that, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (20:35). Although this exact quote from the Lord is not found in any of the gospels, Paul attributes the quote to Jesus. Perhaps this is one of those things that John spoke of that could help fill the libraries of books that could contain the full record of all that Jesus said and did while He walked as a man among us.

Prayer Emphasis: **Trust** God enough to give regularly to His work and to others. **Experience** the blessedness of which Jesus spoke when He commanded us to **give** with a cheerful heart. **Allow** the Word of grace to bring forth all its abundant fruit in your life.

Day 20: Acts 21:6-18

“When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home.” (Acts 21:6)

Love One Another

Yesterday’s reading found Paul saying goodbye to the believers in Ephesus. Today we see him saying goodbye to the believers he met in Tyre, and we see it brought him great sorrow to have to leave them. Even though Paul had only ministered in Tyre for one week, he obviously felt a bond of Christian love with them and hated to leave them. When it was time to depart from there, the disciples walked with Paul outside the city and then knelt and prayed with him on the beach. Verse six records their sad goodbyes. God can form a strong bond of love between His people in a very short time. Soon Paul is found visiting the home of Philip, the evangelist, who was one of the original seven first chosen to serve tables for the widows in the church in Jerusalem. While in that home, Paul was warned by a prophet that much harm was waiting for him in Jerusalem. Upon hearing this, the people pleaded with Paul not to go there. Again, we see love shared and spoken easily and readily among God’s people. However, Paul loved the Lord more than anyone or anything else, and he felt compelled to do what God wanted in his life even in the face of persecution and death. We need to heed the command of Christ to love one another, and we need to do it now more than ever.

Prayer Emphasis: **Remember** that to *love* one another is a command and that to *like* one another is an option. **Never forget** that we are in a war and not a cakewalk! Spend some time **appreciating** some fellow believer in your prayer time today. Such love will always bring joy to our father’s heart!

Day 21: Acts 21:19-30

“Therefore do what we tell you...” (Acts 21:23)

Constructive Criticism

When Paul arrived in Jerusalem he met with James and all the elders of the church there. This was, no doubt, James the half-brother of Jesus who had obviously risen to a place of leadership in the church. Paul gave these church leaders a full report of his ministry activities. The news of all that God had done among the Gentiles resulted in a time of praise among the church leaders. However, they did have one concern and one recommendation. Their concern was based on reports that Paul was teaching the Jews who lived among the Gentile converts that they no longer had to deal with keeping the ceremonial laws, specifically the circumcision of their sons. They suggested a compromise by asking Paul to join with four other men who had taken a purification vow. They not only wanted Paul’s verbal support of the customs and teachings of the law, but they also desired that he even pay the expenses of his four Jewish brothers! Perhaps this is what Paul was referring to when he said, “To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those that are under the law” (See 1 Cor. 9:20.) Paul learned to compromise his preferences while at the same time he was always more than willing to die for his convictions.

Prayer Emphasis: Learn to love your critics and **listen** to them! Sometimes they will be more honest with us than even our best friends. **Know** the difference between a preference and a Bible-based conviction. **Commit** to doing all that you can to **promote** and sustain harmony in the church.

Day 22: Acts 21:31-22:3

“Now as they were seeking to kill him...” (Acts 21:31)

A Lasting Impression

Paul’s efforts to pacify the Jews outside the church did not bring the desired results. He was accosted *in* the temple by some of the legalistic Jews and then dragged *from* the temple. Immediately, the doors were shut to protect against Paul returning to the temple, and even more specifically, to prevent him from bringing any of his Gentile converts in with him. Since “officers” (Centurions) were men who were over 100 soldiers each, the use of the plural form of the title indicates that at least 200 armed men were present to try to stop Paul’s preaching! Imagine the impact that Paul must have been making in his ministry for Christ. Satan certainly seemed to go to great extremes to silence him! What a sight it must have been when such a large group of soldiers rushed in to arrest one simple preacher who had done everything possible to compromise with the senseless demands of the Jewish religious leaders! The shouts, “Away with him” (21:36) were the same words shouted by the accusers of Jesus. Paul was finally allowed to speak a word in defense. When compared to the words spoken by Stephen just before his death (Acts 7), you will see that Paul borrowed some of the language that Stephen used on that day. Remember Paul was there when Stephen died and he was a part of the crowd that stoned Stephen for simply preaching the Word of God. It seems like Stephen made an impression on a young Saul of Tarsus!

Prayer Emphasis: Recall this story the next time something doesn’t bring your desired results. **Remember** that men like Paul and Stephen experienced the same kind of rejection. **Know** that Jesus Himself was often misunderstood, misquoted, and mistreated. Are we greater than our Master?

Day 23: Acts 22:4-16

“For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.” (Acts 22:15)

Testify!

Today’s verses begin with Paul giving his personal testimony to his Jewish accusers. It is difficult today to get believers to stand and testify even among fellow believers; how much more difficult would it have been to testify before people who were filled with hatred toward you simply because you were a Christian! Paul’s testimony was brief and to the point. He spoke of his life before meeting Christ (Acts 22:1-5). He then told the story of the day he actually met Christ and provided detailed information of his conversion experience (Acts 22:6-16). He went on to share what Christ had done in his life since that time and to testify as to the things that God had called him to do (Acts 22:17-21). Giving one’s personal testimony really is that simple. This is how my life was before Christ. This is how I came to meet Christ. This is what I believe that Christ desires from me from this day forward. Notice that Paul said Jesus spoke of things that he had been “assigned” to do. Paul’s testimony was not just about meeting a Savior. His testimony was about meeting One who was to become his Savior *and* Lord!

Prayer Emphasis: Write out your own personal testimony. **Practice** giving it in about three minutes. **Watch** for opportunities to share your personal testimony with others soon! Be ready to **stand and testify** the next time people are invited to testify in one of our church services.

Day 24: Acts 22:17-28

“Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, “Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.”” (Acts 22:17-18)

Rejection

Perhaps Paul thought the legalistic Jews in Jerusalem would respond more positively to his testimony. After all, he had once been one of them and felt just as they felt now. He even persecuted the church and taken the lives of believers. He even reminded them that he was with them when they killed Stephen and was “consenting to his death” (v. 20). We are told that the Jews “listened to him” until Paul mentioned his call to preach to the Gentiles. At that point, the Jews became filled with hatred and declared he was “not fit to live” (v. 22). Never forget that personal prejudice is one of the most powerful tools in Satan’s arsenal. It can move even believers in Christ to say and do some very ungodly things. The people in this crowd were so filled with hatred that they demanded Paul’s life. It seems that the Jews in Jerusalem had made a firm decision to reject the gospel and anyone who preached it. Less than 20 years later, Jerusalem was left in ruins by invading armies. The self-righteous Jews reaped exactly what they had sown. They chose to reject God and His servants, so they themselves were soon rejected by God.

Prayer Emphasis: Retrace your steps today and see what kind of seed was sown along the path that you walked in your **Kingdom Purpose**. It is not too late to make some contacts and **reclaim** some seeds that you do not want to see growing someday in your own garden. **Apologize** where needed – and do it now.

Day 25: Acts 22:29-23:10

“...dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided.” (Acts 23:7)

Divide and Conquer

After learning that Paul was a Roman citizen, the commander was aware that he had violated Roman law by having him chained and flogged. The centurion probably did not challenge Paul's claim to citizenship because he knew that anyone guilty of falsely claiming to be a Roman citizen would be tried and sentenced to death. Therefore, he immediately sensed Paul's claim to be true. The commander called for a meeting of the chief priests, forcing the Sanhedrin and Paul to stand before them. As Paul began to speak in his own defense, the high priest ordered those near him to strike him on the mouth. Paul verbally struck back at the one who had given the order. His words were quick and cutting. The amazed listeners were shocked at Paul's bold words toward the high priest and told him so. Paul responded that he had not realized it was the high priest who had given the order for him to be slapped. Perhaps Paul did not recognize the high priest because of the often-mentioned vision problem that remained with him since his encounter with the blinding light on the road to Damascus. Maybe he did not clearly see him because the room was crowded and busy. We are not told why Paul did not recognize his accuser, but we are told how Paul managed to escape this desperate situation. Knowing that some among the Sanhedrin were Pharisees and some Sadducees, Paul used their differing opinions on the resurrection to instigate an argument between them. Soon he was escorted out of the room to live and fight another day.

Prayer Emphasis: Prepare your heart for facing persecution if you are going to stand boldly for Christ in this world. **Pray** for the many believers who suffer severe persecution for their stand for Christ. **Encourage** a hurting brother or sister today.

Day 26: Acts 23:11-22

“But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, ‘Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.’” (Acts 23:11)

Comforting Words

Amid what must have been some terribly confusing and challenging times, the Lord himself stood near Paul and told him to, “Be of good cheer.” He assured Paul that his days of testifying for Him were not over and he was soon going to have the opportunity to testify for Him in Rome. Our adversary, the devil, put it in the hearts of some 40 or so men to take an oath not to eat or drink anything until they had killed Paul. They laid out a plan to gain the cooperation of the Sanhedrin so that they might accomplish their evil goal. When such evil comes against us, we must always remember that when our *adversary* goes to work *against* us, our *Advocate* goes to work *for* us! Paul's nephew got word of this plot and told the imprisoned preacher what he heard. Paul convinced one of the centurions to take his nephew to the commander, and soon a plan was put in place to spare the life of God's servant. Do you ever wonder how much weight those plotting persecutors lost before they finally gave up and had another meal?

Prayer Emphasis: Believe that Jesus has promised to never leave or forsake us. **Look** to Him in times of trial and **listen** for His words of comfort. If someone who is facing adversity comes to your mind today, **call** them and **encourage** them to “be of good cheer!”

Day 27: Acts 23:23-35

*“When they came to Caesarea and had delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him.”
(Acts 23:33)*

Off to Caesarea

The commander was used by God to get Paul out of a tough situation and on the road to the next place that God wanted His servant to be. God provides the details of how carefully this commander was to get Paul safely to where he needed to minister. What we know about the Roman army and its rankings leads us to understand that there were probably more than 470 people soon involved in seeing to the protection of a simple preacher! Soon Paul was standing before Governor Felix with a letter from the commander explaining the charges brought against him. Did you notice that the commander painted himself in a rather good light in the letter? He spoke of his “rescuing” Paul and, depending on which translation you read from today, he used the personal pronoun “I” anywhere between five and eight times! This proud man had no idea just how much of a servant he had been in this situation!

Prayer Emphasis: Know that God can use anyone to help us fulfill our **Kingdom Purpose**. Exercise **patience** when it comes to facing demanding situations and **do not be surprised** at the amazing ways God uses people to assist His servants in the accomplishing of His will.

Day 28: Acts 24:1-13

“Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul.” (Acts 24:1)

A Day in Court

The high priest, Ananias, along with some of the elders and an attorney, appeared before Felix to bring charges against Paul. Soon Paul was ushered in, and the lawyer presented the case against the trouble-making preacher. You have to laugh as you read his introductory remarks and see how the attorney attempted to schmooze up to the governor. We can only imagine the syrupy words of Tertullus as he said things like, “Through *you* (emphasis is mine) *we* enjoy great peace and prosperity.” He went on to tell Felix that he believed the aforementioned “peace and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight” (v. 2). However, when he moved on to the actual accusations against Paul, there was only harshness and hatred in his words as he began to deliver a verbal barrage of charges against Paul. It is not hard to imagine the governor taking a hard look at Paul as he heard him being referred to as a troublemaker who had been stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world! This “ringleader” even tried to desecrate the temple. The Jews formed an “Amen” section and supported everything the lawyer had to say. You have to laugh as you listen to Paul suggest that all the charges against him be dropped for lack of evidence! Wouldn’t you have loved to be a member of that jury? There will be more to come on this tomorrow.

Prayer Emphasis: Never be surprised at the extremes the enemy will go to in order to stop the work of the church. Be prepared to stand strong in the face of opposition. Pray for your fellow believers today, asking God to fill us with the courage and faith necessary to succeed in our **Kingdom Purpose**.

Day 29: Acts 24:14-25

“*But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.*” (Acts 24:14)

A Full Confession

When it was time for the defense to plead its case, Paul started with a full confession. He readily admitted that he worshiped the God of his Fathers as a follower to the Way. The Way was a term used by some to describe those who were followers of Jesus. He went on to say that, to him, Christianity was an outgrowth or continuation of the Old Testament teachings. He was basically repeating what Jesus had said earlier. Jesus had stated that He did not come to do away with the Law or the teachings of the prophets, but to fulfill them. There are still those today who cannot see the two mixing. Although I do not know who to credit, I once heard it said that the Old Testament was the New Testament *concealed* and the New Testament was the Old Testament *revealed*. This was obviously not the first time that Felix heard about the Way. He wisely adjourned the meeting and called for Paul at a later time to hear more from the preacher. The decision about Paul was not all that Felix wanted to put off until a later time. The closing verse of our reading finds him putting off making a personal decision about Christ until a “more convenient” time.

Prayer Emphasis: **Pray** that our relationship to the Lord is more about *commitment* than *convenience*. **Do something sacrificial** for the Lord today. **Avoid** putting off any decisions for Christ. Let today be a day of total obedience to Him.

Day 30: Acts 24:26-25:10

“*Meanwhile he (Felix) also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.*” (Acts 24:26-27)

Meet Festus

Today’s reading closes with a darker, sadder side to Felix. We learn that his private meetings with Paul were not just about what he could get from the preacher’s knowledge about Christ. We see that he hoped Paul might offer him a bribe for his release. No doubt Felix had heard about Paul coming to Jerusalem with an offering for the church and he hoped he might get some of that money for his own use. Paul no longer had the money, and I am sure that he would not have given any of it to Felix or use it in any way for his personal benefit, even if he still had it. Soon Felix was recalled to Rome and Festus was ruling in his place. The Jews asked Festus to have Paul transferred to their city so that they could set an ambush and kill him. Maybe these were some of the same men who had taken the vow to kill Paul earlier. Remember them? Those guys who were not going to eat or drink anything until Paul was dead? Their case was a little too “thin” (pardon my pun) for Festus and he refused to grant their request.

Prayer Emphasis: **Ask** God to mark your life with sincerity. **Be genuine** in your motivations for serving Christ. **Pray** that your commitment will be stronger than any selfish thoughts or deeds. **Encourage** a fellow believer who might be struggling today!

Day 31: Acts 25:11-22

“For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.’ Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, ‘You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!’” (Acts 25:11-12)

Off to Rome!

I do not think the reference to death that Paul makes in verse 11 is necessarily related to the charges brought against him by the Jews. Insurrection was cause enough for a death sentence, but Paul realized he had been tried and condemned already and he would probably never make it to Jerusalem alive. Back in Acts 23:11, Jesus stood near Paul and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.” I am sure Paul never imagined just how the Lord planned to get him to Rome! He had probably not thought that he would be sent there as a prisoner! God has a way of getting His willing servants wherever He needs them to be! In today’s Bible reading, we find God using Festus and his council to provide Brother Paul with an all-expense paid trip to the big city! God surely does work in mysterious ways!

Prayer Emphasis: **Look** for God to be working in your circumstances today. **Believe** He is always near, encouraging and strengthening you as you follow your **Kingdom Purpose**. **Recall** ways that God has used circumstances to help you be more obedient to Him in the past and **thank Him** for it.

Day 32: Acts 25:23-26:8

“So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city...Paul was brought in.” (Acts 25:23)

A Good Question

The word “pomp” in our focus verse presents the idea that King Agrippa and his sister Bernice got decked out in their best outfits for their meeting with Paul. After all, they were in the presence of some “prominent men of the city.” Festus was probably feeling pretty powerful himself when he commanded that Paul be brought in. The room in which they met is described as an “auditorium,” so it was probably more suited for social functions than a judgment hall. After some preliminary comments by Festus, Agrippa granted Paul permission to speak. The words “Paul stretched out his hand” (26:1) probably describes some type of motion that showed submission and appreciation. Paul continued with some introductory remarks that were complimentary towards Agrippa and the royal assembly to which he had been invited as guest of honor. He went on to speak of his early life and involvement in Judaism and his former zeal for persecuting the church. All of this led to his personal testimony about the day of his conversion and his life of ministry that followed. Paul concludes by stating that the real reason he was on trial was because of his belief in the resurrection. As he begins to close his testimony, he asks an exceptionally good question. The question was, “Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?”

Prayer Emphasis: **Realize** that a personal testimony is one of the most powerful tools a Christian can possess. **Look** for opportunities to **share** your testimony today. .

Day 33: Acts 26:9-20

“Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth...and many of the saints I shut up in prison...and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme...” (Acts 26:9-11)

At the Foot of the Cross

Paul tells his audience that he, too, was once opposed to all that was being done in the name of Jesus. He admitted to putting many of the Christians in prison and agreeing with many of them being put to death. This same man who was now guilty of going from city to city preaching the gospel admitted that he had once been guilty of going from synagogue to synagogue punishing Christians and trying to get them to blaspheme and deny Christ. He even admitted to going to foreign cities to persecute Christians. No doubt, the witness of many dying for their personal faith had a powerful impact on Paul and prepared him for his soon-coming encounter with Christ. And then, he gets to tell the amazing story of his salvation experience on the Damascus Road for the last recorded time in Acts. Notice that Paul begins where his listeners are – lost and undone without Christ. He is not the high and mighty preacher looking down on others. He lets them know that we all stand equally tall (or short) at the foot of the cross.

Prayer Emphasis: Although we do not find glory in our past sins, we can **help others** by letting them know that we once stood right where they are today. **Be humble and compassionate** in your opportunities to witness to others. **Let people see** the love of Christ in you as you share with them in your **Kingdom Purpose**.

Day 34: Acts 26:21-32

“Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come – that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.” (Acts 26:22-23)

A Rude Interruption

Paul continued to preach and was concluding his message when Festus loudly interrupted him saying, “Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!” Some translations use the word “insane” here rather than “mad.” However it is translated in your Bible, I am sure you have a pretty good idea of what Festus was saying. I am not sure what Paul expected in the way of a reaction to his message, but I am quite sure he may not have expected this. Paul remained polite in his response. He showed respect for Festus’ position and then drew Agrippa into the conversation by stating that he was sure the king was familiar with all the teachings of the Scriptures and that none of these things had escaped his notice. Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.” Unfortunately, almost was not good enough for King Agrippa, and it is not good enough for anyone else! We are either saved or we are lost. There is no middle ground for anyone. Paul let the ruler know that he desired that not only the king, but that all who were listening would come to a saving knowledge of Christ.

Prayer Emphasis: **Anticipate** interruptions and opposition along the way as you strive to fulfill your **Kingdom Purpose**. **React** in a polite but firm manner. Fishing requires great patience. Fishing for men requires the same!

Day 35: Acts 27:1-12

“And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment.” (Acts 27:1)

The Journey to Rome

Notice the “we” in the first verse of our reading and understand that Luke is still with Paul and, because Paul is going to Rome, Luke is going there, too. We are not told anything about the other prisoners mentioned in the story, but we are introduced to Julius who was obviously given the responsibility of seeing that Paul arrived in Rome for trial. We know little about this man, but we are told of his kindness in allowing Paul to visit with friends in Sidon while they were in port there. Since it was the beginning of the storm season, the travel was slow and dangerous. Luke’s account speaks of “difficulty” and “much time” being lost. Paul tried to warn his escorts of pending danger and even disaster, but it was to no avail. The majority decided to ignore Paul’s warnings and sail on. Here is a case where “majority rule” led to a major mistake!

Prayer Emphasis: When it seems that nothing is going right, **remember** that we are serving a Master that never fails. **Endure** hardships and difficulties. Paul never forgot that Jesus said he would testify in Rome. Even though he did not know all he would encounter along the way, Paul knew he would eventually stand and speak for the Lord in Rome, just as he had been told.

Day 36: Acts 27:13-25

“When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close to Crete. But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose...” (Acts 27:13-14)

The Storm

The words “not long after” should remind us that Satan is neither slowed nor delayed in his efforts to hinder those who are pursuing their own **Kingdom Purpose**. As such, Paul’s ship soon faced “a tempestuous head wind” which was a typhoon-like storm with hurricane force winds. In this case, the storm was coming from a direction which would drive the ship away from its intended route and out to open sea. Smaller boats were often towed behind ships and were sometimes hauled on board to prevent them from becoming destroyed or detached in a storm and lost at sea. The situation was desperate, so desperate measures were taken to protect the integrity of the vessel by wrapping it with ropes in the hope of helping it hold together in the storm. As the ship took on water, the sailors began to throw items overboard to lighten the load. Imagine a storm so dark that neither the sun nor stars would be visible for many days! Again, note the “we” in verse 20. It reads, “Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat upon us, all hope that *we* would be saved was finally given up.” Luke was not ashamed to admit that even he did not think they were going to survive this raging storm. Eventually Paul stood up before the men and shared with them that God had sent a messenger to remind him that he was to stand before Caesar and that meant he could not be lost at sea! Paul affirmed his faith in God despite the storms and urged the others to believe God’s promises.

Prayer Emphasis: **Hold fast** to your faith in God no matter how stormy the seas of life may become. **Believe** the promises of God and allow them to comfort you every day. **Remember** that God will never fail or forsake you.

Day 37: Acts 27:26-37

“And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, ‘Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food, and eaten nothing. Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you.’” (Acts 27:33-34)

A Change in Command

Yesterday we read where God used Paul to share some good news and some bad news. The good news was that no lives were going to be lost. The bad news was that the ship would sink, and they would all wind up on an island. By the 14th night of stormy seas, I am sure that an island seemed like a welcome place to be! Since the sailors sensed they were approaching land, they began to take soundings and found that they were, indeed, moving into more shallow waters. Fearing they might crash into the rocky shoreline of some unknown island, they put out anchors and prayed to survive the night so that they could try to find a safe place to land the ship in the light of the following day. Some tried to lower the lifeboat and escape. At Paul’s word, the soldiers cut the ropes and let the lifeboat fall away. Just before dawn, Paul urged them all to eat so they might be strengthened for the events to come. Paul took some bread and gave thanks to God before them. Then he broke it and began to eat. It sure appears that God had gotten everyone’s attention by now and the control of this ship was now in the hands of Paul.

Prayer Emphasis: Hold on! You may be sailing through your own storms right now, but the daylight is coming, and God’s promises will all prove true! **Remember** His promises and **know** He is with you always!

Day 38: Acts 27:38-28:5

“And the soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land.” (Acts 27:42-43)

Desperate Hours

Encouraged by the words of the preacher, the men ate their fill and then lightened the burden of the ship by throwing the remaining grain overboard and into the sea. At daylight, the men spotted a bay with a sandy beach and decided to try to run the ship aground there. The anchors were cut loose, and they made their desperate run to the beach. The ship struck a sandbar and became stuck fast. The stormy surf pounded against the helpless vessel, and the ship began to disintegrate beneath its passengers. In New Testament times, men who guarded prisoners were bound by a sentence of death if they allowed their prisoners to escape. So, the guards decided to kill the prisoners just in case any of them somehow survived the storm and escaped. The leading officer would have none of this. He gave the command to abandon ship. It was every man for himself as they swam toward shore or floated on pieces of the ship. Just as God promised Paul, everyone reached the shore safely.

Prayer Emphasis: Notice how God used a Roman officer to save Paul’s life. **Believe** that He really does have the whole world in His hands! In your most desperate hours, **hold fast** to the promises of God. **Encourage** someone who may be facing their own storms today.

Day 39: Acts 28:6-16

“And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him.” (Acts 28:8)

What Next?

Yesterday, we saw Paul narrowly escaping death at the hands of his captors or by drowning in the sea only to be bitten by a deadly, poisonous snake! The islanders expected Paul to die from the snake bite, but that just wasn't in God's plans! Remember, Jesus told Paul that he was going to testify for Him in Rome. Drowning at sea, being killed by his guards, or dying from some snake bite wasn't going to prevent that from happening! Soon we find Paul ministering to others on this tiny island and, as usual, miraculous things are happening. But Rome was waiting, so three months later Paul and his companions were back at sea on a ship that had wintered there on the island. The ship they boarded bore a figurehead of “the Twin Brothers.” This term was speaking of Castor and Pollux who were supposed to be the two sons of the Greek god Zeus and the guardian deities of sailors. I am thinking that at least some of these sailors now put less stock in Greek mythology after their recent experiences. Soon Paul was in Rome and was greeted by believers that had heard he was coming. Note that the preacher was encouraged by the welcoming believers. Now it was just a matter of time before an important part of his **Kingdom Purpose** would be fulfilled. He would soon be testifying for Christ in Rome!

Prayer Emphasis: It may sometimes seem like we are forced to take the long and hard way and we may want to ask, “What next?” **Keep your focus** on Christ and His calling in your life despite the circumstances. **Know** that it will all be worth it when we finally see Jesus!

Day 40: Acts 28:17-31

“Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!” (Acts 28:28)

The Beginning

At a time when most books might say, “The End,” this story was just beginning! Paul was indeed finally in Rome – just as the Lord had promised – and he was preaching the gospel in a rented house that was visited daily by people who were eager to hear the gospel. The word that is translated “hear” in our focus verse is translated “listen” in other versions of the Bible. You can be sure that, if people were willing to listen, then Paul was willing to preach! True to his custom, Paul began speaking to the Jews about Jesus first, using the Law of Moses and the writings of the Prophets to try to convince them that He was the Christ – the long-awaited Messiah and Savior. When the Jews would not listen, Paul eventually turned to the more receptive Gentiles. Notice what he said about the Gentiles in verse 28: “And they will hear it!” The “they” is us. Are we willing to listen and truly hear God's call to salvation and service? Can today be the beginning of the best years of our service to Christ? If so, then we are well on our way to fulfilling our **Kingdom Purpose**!

Prayer Emphasis: **Commit** your all to Christ today. **Hold nothing back** from the One who gave His all for you. **Surrender** your will to Him and **serve Him boldly**. The **Kingdom Purpose** is the most true and noble purpose of all! **Contact us** at 850-562-8069 or gary@seminolebc.com if we can pray for you or minister to you and your family in any way.