



Hymn of the Month

JULY

Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave, and follow Thee;
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
Thou, from hence, my all shall be;
Perish ev'ry fond ambition,
All I've sought or hoped or known;
Yet how rich is my condition:
God and heav'n are still my own!

Let the world despise and leave me,
They have left my Savior, too;
Human hearts and looks deceive me,
Thou art not, like man, untrue;
And, while Thou shalt smile upon me,
God of wisdom, love, and might,
Foes may hate, and friends may shun me;
Show Thy face, and all is bright.

Haste thee on from grace to glory,
Armed by faith, and winged by prayer;
Heav'n's eternal days before thee,
God's own hand shall guide thee there;
Soon shall close thy earthly mission,
Swift shall pass thy pilgrim days;
Hope shall change to glad fruition,
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.

AUGUST

Close to Thee

Thou my everlasting portion,
More than friend or life to me,
All along my pilgrim journey,
Savior, let me walk with Thee.
Close to Thee, close to Thee,
Close to Thee, close to Thee;
All along my pilgrim journey,
Savior, let me walk with Thee.

Not for ease or worldly pleasure,
Nor for fame my prayer shall be;
Gladly will I toil and suffer,
Only let me walk with Thee.
Close to Thee, close to Thee,
Close to Thee, close to Thee;
Gladly will I toil and suffer,
Only let me walk with Thee.

Lead me through the vale of shadows,
Bear me o'er life's fitful sea;
Then the gate of life eternal
May I enter, Lord, with Thee.
Close to Thee, close to Thee,
Close to Thee, close to Thee;
Then the gate of life eternal
May I enter, Lord, with Thee.

FEELING WORDS



MAD

bothered
ruffled
irritated
displeased
annoyed
steamed
irked
perturbed
frustrated
angry
fed up
disgusted
indignant
ticked off
bristling
fuming
explosive
enraged
irate
incensed
burned up
livid
outraged
furious



SAD

down
blue
somber
low
glum
lonely
disappointed
worn out
melancholy
downhearted
unhappy
dissatisfied
gloomy
mournful
grieved
depressed
lousy
crushed
defeated
dejected
empty
wretched
despairing
devastated



GLAD

at ease
secure
comfortable
optimistic
satisfied
refreshed
stimulated
pleased
warm
snug
happy
encouraged
tickled
proud
cheerful
thrilled
delighted
joyful
elated
exhilarated
overjoyed
ecstatic
relaxed
content



AFRAID

uneasy
apprehensive
careful
cautious
hesitant
tense
anxious
nervous
edgy
distressed
scared
frightened
repulsed
agitated
shocked
alarmed
overwhelmed
frantic
panicked
stricken
horrified
petrified
terrified
numb



CONFUSED

curious
uncertain
ambivalent
doubtful
unsettled
hesitant
perplexed
puzzled
muddled
distracted
flustered
jumbled
unfocused
fragmented
dismayed
insecure
dazed
bewildered
lost
stunned
chaotic
torn
baffled
dumbfounded



ASHAMED

guilty
uncomfortable
awkward
self-conscious
disconcerted
chagrined
abashed
humiliated
embarrassed
flustered
sorry
apologetic
sheepish
regretful
remorseful
belittled
violated
mortified
defiled
degraded
clumsy
jumbled



LONELY

out of place
left out
unheeded
lonesome
disconnected
remote
invisible
unwelcome
cut-off
excluded
insignificant
ignored
neglected
separated
removed
detached
isolated
unwanted
rejected
deserted
outcast
abandoned
desolate
forsaken



BAD

burdened
heavy-hearted
stressed
weighed down
upset
disturbed
worried
apathetic
avoidant
self-pitying
dumb
lame
bitter
resentful
down
lousy
awkward
envious
diminished
restless
bored
bitter

a guide to

SELF-REFLECTION



From *C201, Holiness of God: Habits to Form*

Self-reflection is one of the habits we need to form as a way to locate ourselves accurately against the backdrop of God's holiness.

But a Christian is a man who has **seen himself and seen what he has done**. He has seen his transgression, his iniquity, his sin. He realizes **the meaning of his actions**. He realizes he has **sinned against God**; and he has seen that his actual nature is itself sinful. I would call that "the sinner awakening," facing himself and realizing the initial truths about himself. ¹

- Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Out of the Depths* (emphasis added)

As soon as we are alone, ...inner chaos opens up in us. This chaos can be so disturbing and so confusing that we can hardly wait to get busy again. Entering a private room and shutting the door, therefore, does not mean that we immediately shut out all our inner doubts, anxieties, fears, bad memories, unresolved conflicts, angry feelings and impulsive desires. On the contrary, when we have removed our outer distractions, we often find that our inner distractions manifest themselves to us in full force. We often use the outer distractions to shield ourselves from the interior noises...

This makes the discipline of solitude all the more important. ²

- Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New*

Self-reflection should be a written record of a period of disciplined thinking about some incident, or even a passing moment, that seems significant.

SOME TIPS TO HELP OBSERVE AND REFLECT UPON THE SELF

STEP #1 – LIST THE FACTS

Go through facts utilizing the 5W's - Who, What, When, Where, Why

This is where you want to review what happened with as much accuracy as possible. You can list out basic facts of the situation in chronological order. Focusing on facts halts rationalizing and self-justifying emotions. For example, rather than saying, "I felt like he was attacking me with his words so I responded in this way," just state the objective facts: "I yelled at my roommate."

STEP #2 – EXPLORE

Based on some facts, you can begin to explore some questions to help you think, such as:

- Why did I say that? Why did I do that?
- What was I feeling when I did that?
- What was going through my mind?
- What were some events leading up to this incident?

STEP #3 – ASK, WHAT DOES THIS REVEAL ABOUT ME?

After reviewing the facts and exploring why you reacted or felt as you did, now you can ask yourself the question, "What does this reveal about me?" Here are some questions that might be helpful:

¹ Lloyd-Jones, David Martin. *Out of the Depths: Restoring Fellowship with God*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books. 1995. p.49.

² Nouwen, Henri. *Making All Things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life*. New York, New York: HarperSanFrancisco. 1981. pp. 70-71.

- What does this show about what drives me?
- What does this show about what's going on inside of me?
- What does this show about my view towards... (others, God, myself)?
- What does this reveal about what is important to me?

Don't use a lot of jargon and try not to be overly dramatic in language (e.g., "I feel like I don't deserve the cross of Jesus!"). Try to use plain speech as much as possible.

STEP #4 – WORD OF GOD

- What about the gospel addresses me at this point?
- What is true and real according to God's word?
- How does the word of God bring reproof and correction (2 Timothy 3:16) to you regarding this situation?

Often, people either go into a downward spiral of self-flagellation, or they might be satisfied with merely identifying what they did wrong and end there. If you don't go through this step, you can leave God entirely out of your struggle. Sometimes in people's reflections and repentance, they commit to never doing something again in a very self-driven way, without going through the full process of seeing themselves and their own sinfulness in light of who God is. They end up missing out on God's grace and his forgiveness pronounced through his words.

Truth may hurt, but it is always best to face the truth. God's word will be relevant and powerful when there is proper admission of and discovery of truth. By default, we have layers of self-deception, denial, rationalization, justification, etc. Writing self-reflections can slice through all of that and help you get to the truth of who you are. And of course what we want is the truth about ourselves! It's something many people do not have; nor do they treasure it.

Above all, be honest. God wants to dialogue with us.

ISAIAH 1:18 (ESV)

**"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool."**

Ultimately God wants to dialogue in truth so that we can be healed and so we can be as white as snow.

There is freedom when you know you have properly acknowledged, repented of and fully processed the junk inside. There is self-knowledge and, with it, a growing appreciation of the holy love and grace of God.

Let me ask a simple question at this point: "Have you faced yourself?" Forget everybody else. Hold up a mirror before yourself, look back across your life, look at the things you have thought and done and said, look at the kind of life you are living...The first call to man by God is to be honest, to stop arguing and to face himself. Let him examine himself...There is no hope for a man who does not do that, and the truth about the modern world is that people are running away from just this...[doing] anything to fill up their lives and keep them from thinking. **I say that you have to fight for your life and you have to fight for your soul.** The world will do everything to prevent you facing yourself. My dear friend, let me appeal to you. Look at yourself. Forget everybody and everything else. It is the first step in the knowledge of God and in the experience of His glorious salvation.³

- Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Out of the Depths* (emphasis added)

³ Lloyd-Jones, David Martin. *Out of the Depths: Restoring Fellowship with God*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books. 1995. pp.24-25.

“

True prayer depends on an undivided heart.

- Andrew Murray -

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Prayer of Gratitude

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Prayer of Supplication



Hymn of July

Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
 All to leave, and follow Thee;
 Destitute, despised, forsaken,
 Thou, from hence, my all shall be;
 Perish ev'ry fond ambition,
 All I've sought or hoped or known;
 Yet how rich is my condition:
 God and heav'n are still my own!

Let the world despise and leave me,
 They have left my Savior, too;
 Human hearts and looks deceive me,
 Thou art not, like man, untrue;
 And, while Thou shalt smile upon me,
 God of wisdom, love, and might,
 Foes may hate, and friends may shun me;
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Haste thee on from grace to glory,
 Armed by faith, and winged by prayer;
 Heav'n's eternal days before thee,
 God's own hand shall guide thee there;
 Soon shall close thy earthly mission,
 Swift shall pass thy pilgrim days;
 Hope shall change to glad fruition,
 Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.



Journal

Please use one of the prompts below to get your journaling started.

- Explore your fears and what's behind them.
- Write about a relational conflict you are experiencing.
- List out all that you are grateful for.
- Recall a significant reaction, conversation or event.

A series of horizontal dotted lines providing a space for journaling.

Commentary

CHAPTER 20 COMMENTARY

“Luke now narrates how Paul left Ephesus (20:1), having spent the best part of three years there during his third missionary expedition. And then traveled from place to place until at last he reached Jerusalem (21:17). True, Luke has let us into the secret that Paul was intending after visiting Jerusalem to make for Rome (19:21). Nevertheless, it was Jerusalem which filled his vision at this stage.

“In fact, it is hard to resist the conclusion that Luke sees a parallel between Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem [...] Of course the resemblance is far from being exact, and the mission of Jesus was unique; yet the correspondence between the two journeys seems too close to be a coincidence. (i) Like Jesus Paul traveled to Jerusalem with a group of his disciples (20:4ff). (ii) Like Jesus he was opposed by hostile Jews who plotted against his life (20:3, 19). (iii) Like Jesus he made or received three successive predictions of his ‘passion’ or sufferings (20:22-23; 21:4,11) including his being handed over to the Gentiles (21:11). (iv) Like Jesus he declared his readiness to lay down his life (20:24; 21:13). (v) Like Jesus he was determined to complete his ministry and not be deflected from it (20:24; 21:13). (vi) Like Jesus he expressed his abandonment to the will of God (21:14). Even if some of these details are not to be pressed, Luke surely intends his readers to envisage Paul as following in his Master’s footsteps when he ‘steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.’”¹

“This chapter records the conclusion of Paul’s third missionary journey. Paul was heading for Jerusalem, intending to arrive before Pentecost. On the way, he took time in Troas to encourage the believers, then he had a tearful farewell with the elders of the church in Ephesus.



¹ Stott, *The Message of Acts, The Bible Speaks Today Series*, 315.

Paul may have wanted to go to Jerusalem in time for the Passover. He was about to sail from Corinth on a ship bound for Syria, which possibly carried Jewish pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem for their feast. But he found out about a plot against him, possibly by some of the people traveling on this ship (v.3). As a result, he decided to take the long route on foot through Macedonia, traveling north instead of east. He spent Passover in Philippi (v.6), a city that had had such a small Jewish population that it did not even have a synagogue. According to his revised plan, he hoped to be in Jerusalem in time for the next feast, Pentecost (v.16)”²

v.4: “These men who were traveling with Paul represented churches that Paul had started in Asia. Each man was carrying an offering from his home church to be given to the believers in Jerusalem. By having each man deliver the gift, the gifts had a personal touch, and the unity of the believers was strengthened. This was also an effective way to teach the church about giving because the men were able to report back to their churches the way God was working through their giving. Paul discussed this gift in one of his letters to the Corinthian church.”³

vv.18-27: “The first and most prominent theme of the speech is Paul’s example- an element typical of farewell addresses. He says he was an example in four things.

(1) He identified with the people, living among them (v.18), serving God with humility and tears (v.19), and going from house to house (v.20). This enabled him to know what they needed to hear, so that he was able to preach everything that was helpful to them [...]

(2) Paul was a teacher. He taught the Ephesians everything that was helpful to them, and did so publicly and from house to house (v.20). His teaching was relevant to their needs.

(3) Paul was a witness to the gospel (v.21). Paul uses the word *diamartyromai*, translated ‘declared’ here. This word conveys the idea that evangelism is a serious responsibility as it calls people to repentance and faith. Later Paul says that the preaching was comprehensive in that he did not hesitate ‘to proclaim to (them) the whole will of God’ (v.27). Because of that he was able to declare that he was innocent of their blood (v.26). Verses 21, 26-27 remind us the call to be a watchman, with a responsibility to warn people adequately as described in Ezekiel 3:16-21; 33; 1-9.

² Fernando, *Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series*, 529-530.

³ *Life Application Study Bible, study notes*, 2003.



Bible Text

Acts 20:1-16 (ESV)

(4) Paul's commitment to evangelism is closely tied in with the fourth area where he was an example: Paul suffered because of obedience. In verses 22-23 he attributes two actions to the Holy Spirit; a compulsion that is now driving him now to Jerusalem and a regular warning (diamartyromai) that he will suffer if he goes to Jerusalem. Verse 24 explains how these two seemingly contradictory messages can be reconciled; the goal of life is not to preserve our lives but to be faithful to our calling to testify to the gospel. If such faithfulness involves suffering and imprisonment, then such experiences will be taken on willingly."⁴

vv.17-38: "It is important to note that in Acts 20 Paul presents his willingness to suffer for the gospel as part of his attempt to encourage the Ephesian elders to be faithful to their task. This is a common theme with Paul. He often appeals to his own sufferings when he wants to influence his readers about something important (see 1 and 2 Corinthians, Gal. 6:17, Eph 4:1). Note also what Hebrews says: After writing how Jesus, 'for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God,' the author goes on: 'Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart': (Heb 12:2-3) leaders who suffer encourage others to take on suffering themselves.

"In summary, then, this passage teaches us three things about suffering. (1) Christians take on suffering that they can easily avoid because of their commitment to the glorious gospel of Christ, a cause that makes such suffering worthwhile. (2) People will be motivated to suffer for the gospel when they see their leaders suffer for it. (3) Leaders not only suffer for the gospel they suffer for those whom they lead."⁵

vv.28-31: "The third section of Paul's address continues with an exhortation to the Ephesian elders in light of what Paul sees will soon take place in the church. He warns regarding persecution from outside and apostasy within (cf. 1 Tim 1:19-20; 4:1-5; 2 Tim 1:15; 2:17-18; 3:1-9, which tell of a later widespread revolt against Paul's teaching in Asia, and Rev 2:1-7, which says that the Ephesian church abandoned its first love). So he gives the elders the solemn imperative of v. 28."⁶

¹ After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. ² When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. ³ There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. ⁴ Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. ⁵ These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, ⁶ but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

⁷ On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

⁸ There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. ⁹ And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. ¹⁰ But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." ¹¹ And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. ¹² And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.

¹³ But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land. ¹⁴ And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene. ¹⁵ And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and the day after that we went to Miletus. ¹⁶ For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

⁴ Fernando, Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series, 531,532.

⁵ Fernando, Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series, 537,538.

⁶ Gaebelein, Gen. Ed. Expositor's Bible Commentary CD, notes for vv.28-31.



Go Deeper

Questions to help us go deeper

Acts 20:7-11

- Knowing he had one last night with the believers at Troas, Apostle Paul stayed up all night teaching them, even after a rather traumatic event. What does this reveal about Apostle Paul, and how does this challenge me?

Tuesday, July 19, 2022



Prayer



Bible Text

Acts 20:17-24 (ESV)

¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them:

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.



Go Deeper

Questions to help us go deeper

Acts 20:17-24

- Write down striking aspects of Apostle Paul’s ministry as he recalls how he was while he was among them. What am I most challenged by?
- What would it have been like to be on the receiving end of Apostle Paul’s ministry in Ephesus for three years?
- Reflect on v. 24 as a sort of life mantra for Apostle Paul. What would it take to make my life mantra the same?

Wednesday, July 20, 2022



Prayer



Journal

Please use one of the prompts below to get your journaling started.

- Explore your fears and what’s behind them.
- Write about a relational conflict you are experiencing.
- List out all that you are grateful for.
- Recall a significant reaction, conversation or event.

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Bible Text

Acts 20:25-38 (ESV)

²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸ being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.



Go Deeper

Questions to help us go deeper

Acts 20:28-32

- Note Apostle Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders. What would it look like for me personally and us as a church to heed this warning today?

Acts 20:32-35

- How did Apostle Paul describe his conduct while ministering at Ephesus? How am I challenged, as I consider how others would describe my conduct, whether at work, home and at church?

Acts 20:36-38

- What can be said about Apostle Paul's relationship with the Ephesian elders in this description of their parting, as well as in this passage overall? Who are the people in my life that I have deep affection and gratitude for because of the gospel?

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Thursday, July 21, 2022



Prayer

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Prayer is the exercise of drawing on the grace of God.

- Oswald Chambers -

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Prayer of Gratitude

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing.



Prayer of Supplication



Hymn of July

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Thou, from hence, my all shall be;
Perish ev'ry fond ambition,
All I've sought or hoped or known;
Yet how rich is my condition:
God and heav'n are still my own!

Let the world despise and leave me,
They have left my Savior, too;
Human hearts and looks deceive me,
Thou art not, like man, untrue;
And, while Thou shalt smile upon me,
God of wisdom, love, and might,
Foes may hate, and friends may shun me;
Show Thy face, and all is bright.

Haste thee on from grace to glory,
Armed by faith, and winged by prayer;
Heav'n's eternal days before thee,
God's own hand shall guide thee there;
Soon shall close thy earthly mission,
Swift shall pass thy pilgrim days;
Hope shall change to glad fruition,
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.

“

He must set his heart to conquer by prayer,
and that will mean that he must first conquer his own flesh,
for it is the flesh that hinders prayer always.

- A.W. Tozer -

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Prayer of Gratitude

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Prayer of Supplication



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Commentary

CHAPTER 21 COMMENTARY

vv.3-4: “The traveling group makes contact with the church in Tyre (v.4)-a church probably founded by Christians who ‘had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen...’ Paul is not acquainted with this church, for the word translated ‘finding’ means ‘to learn the location of something by intentional searching.’”¹

vv.4, 11-12: “Did Paul disobey the Holy Spirit? No. Paul was compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem (20:22). The people, out of concern for him because of what they had learned through the Spirit, urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. The prophecy, however, did not tell Paul not to go; it was simply a warning to let him know that would happen when he did go. All agreed on the meaning of the prophecy, but they disagreed about the correct response.”²

vv.7-9: “Much has happened since Philip founded the Samaritan church and settled in Caesarea to raise a family, including ‘four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy’. In particular, Luke’s careful titling of Philip as both ‘evangelist’ and ‘one of the seven’ and a companion of Stephen (Acts 6:3-6) recalls the chain of circumstance following Stephen’s death that led Paul to persecute Philip and commit other Hellenist believers to prison. It was Paul who ultimately drove them beyond Jerusalem and to Caesarea to plant and cultivate these very congregations he now visits. Paul’s personal reversal takes an ironic twist when he stays with Philip, shortly before making his return to Jerusalem to be persecuted and imprisoned himself as a Hellenist believer! ‘By enmeshing Paul with Philip, Luke reminds the reader that Paul and the narrative are completing a full circle. His trip to Jerusalem is not simply a trip to a geographical place but a return to a narrative ‘place’ that is, for Paul filled with memories and possibilities of conflict.’ In fact, Paul will soon face hostile Jews similar to those who brought Stephen to trial, and the accusations they will level against Paul are like those brought against Stephen.”³

vv.20-26: “When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he presented the church with a problem. The leaders accepted him and

¹ David E. Garland, *Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996) 551.

² *Quest Study Bible, study*, 1537.

³ Pheme Perkins, “Acts,” *New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. VIII (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995) 288-289.

saw God’s hand in his work; but rumors had been spread that he had encouraged Jews to forsake their ancestral faith. This Paul had never done. True, he had insisted that the Jewish Law was irrelevant for the Gentile; but he had never sought to draw the Jew away from the customs of his fathers.”⁴

“The sensitive nature of what the believers tell Paul is evidenced by the tone in which they introduce their point (vv.20b, 22b). For the sake of the many Christians who are zealous of the Jewish law, they think it a good idea for him to dispel misrepresentations about his stand on the law by showing a willingness to submit to the law publicly. He can do this by paying for the expenses of four fellow Christians who have taken a vow.”⁵

vv.21, 24: “Why did the Jewish believers still follow Old Testament customs? The Law of Moses guided Jewish Christians in their social and family lives. They didn’t shed their cultural practices when they followed Christ. Looking to the law, then, to order their lives would have been natural, not just to confirm its fulfillment in Christ but to structure society as well. Their Jewish customs were not quickly dismissed.”⁶

v.26: “Is Paul being inconsistent here? We must remember that Paul himself took a vow a few years before (18:18), so we know that he was convinced about the value of vows for Christians. But what about his opposition that works were necessary for salvation? He himself was not opposed to the law per se. We must not forget what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:20: ‘To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.’ His actions in Jerusalem are consistent with the approach expressed in this verse.”⁷

vv.27-29: “As Paul was coming to the end of his responsibilities regarding the vows, some Jews from Asia saw him in the temple. They had earlier seen Paul in the city with Trophimus (20:4), a Gentile companion from Asia, and they assumed that he was also in the temple. Had this been true, it would have desecrated the temple, for Gentiles could go only up to the outer court of the temple (‘Court of the Gentiles’). They incited the Jewish people to attack

⁴ Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles, Daily Study Bible Series*, Rev. ed., 155.

⁵ Fernando, *Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series*, 553.

⁶ *Quest Study Bible, study notes*, 1538.

⁷ Fernando, *Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series*, 553-554.

Paul (vv.27-29).

“Bruce explains the seriousness of their charge: ‘The Roman authorities were so conciliatory of Jewish religious scruples in this regard that they authorized the death sentence for this trespass even when the offenders were Roman citizens.’ Citing evidence from Josephus and Philo, Bruce says that notices in Latin and Greek were fixed to the barrier between the inner and outer courts, warning Gentiles that death was the penalty for going any further. ‘The whole city was aroused’ (v.30a), and the people dragged Paul out of the temple. The gates of the temple were shut (v.30b), possibly to avoid defiling the temple from the chaos.

“The rioters began beating Paul to death. The timely intervention of the Roman commander and some of his soldiers prevented this from happening (vv.31-32). The crowd kept shouting, ‘Away with him’ (v.36). Luke must surely have felt the significance of the fact that some twenty-seven years earlier, another crowd had shouted, ‘Away with this man!’ at a spot nearby (Luke 23:18).”⁸

vv.37-40: “Lysias’s persona stands in stark contrast to the crowd, which shouts ‘one thing, some another’ (v.34a) – an atmosphere of confusion that prevents the more rational Lysias from ‘learning the facts.’ Ironically, peace is found in the barracks of pagan soldiers rather than in a synagogue of pious Jews!”⁹

v.40: “How many languages did Paul speak? At the very least, Paul knew Hebrew (his native language), Aramaic (a Hebrew dialect popular among Jerusalem Jews) and Greek (the trade language used throughout the Roman world.)”¹⁰



Bible Text

Acts 21:1-26 (ESV)

¹ And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. ² And having found a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. ³ When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo. ⁴ And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. ⁵ When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey, and they all, with wives and children, accompanied us until we were outside the city. And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed ⁶ and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

⁷ When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day. ⁸ On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. ⁹ He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied. ¹⁰ While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ And coming to us, he took Paul’s belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” ¹² When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” ¹⁴ And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, “Let the will of the Lord be done.”

¹⁵ After these days we got ready and went up to Jerusalem.

¹⁶ And some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us, bringing us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge.

¹⁷ When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. ¹⁸ On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ After greeting

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Robert W. Wall, “Acts,” *New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol.X (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002) 297-298.

¹⁰ *Quest Study Bible*, study notes, 1539.

them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, “You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law, ²¹ and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs. ²² What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. ²³ Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow;²⁴ take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law. ²⁵ But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality.” ²⁶ Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for each one of them.



Go Deeper

Questions to help us go deeper

Acts 21:1-26

- What aspects emerge of Apostle Paul’s relationships and the relationships among the people of the early church across many cities?
- Evaluate my relationships. Do I have people who are precious to me because of Christ and our common bond as fellow kingdom workers?

Acts 21:10-13

- The Holy Spirit repeatedly warned Apostle Paul that he would encounter persecution in Jerusalem. What was Apostle Paul’s response to this warning? Are there ways in which the potential for hardship or suffering affect my obedience to God?



Journal

Please use one of the prompts below to get your journaling started.

- Explore your fears and what's behind them.
- Write about a relational conflict you are experiencing.
- List out all that you are grateful for.
- Recall a significant reaction, conversation or event.

A series of horizontal dotted lines providing a space for journaling.



Bible Text

Acts 21:27-40 (ESV)

²⁷ When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, ²⁸ crying out, “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.” ²⁹ For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. ³⁰ Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut. ³¹ And as they were seeking to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. ³² He at once took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. And when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³ Then the tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He inquired who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ Some in the crowd were shouting one thing, some another. And as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. ³⁵ And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd, ³⁶ for the mob of the people followed, crying out, “Away with him!”

³⁷ As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, “May I say something to you?” And he said, “Do you know Greek? ³⁸ Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?” ³⁹ Paul replied, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city. I beg you, permit me to speak to the people.” ⁴⁰ And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great hush, he addressed them in the Hebrew language, saying:



Go Deeper

Questions to help us go deeper

Acts 21:30-32

- Consider the cost of Apostle Paul’s obedience to God to go to Jerusalem. What are some costs that I may have to incur in order to serve God, and how am I challenged by Apostle Paul’s attitude (Acts 20:22-24)?

Acts 21:33

- “Ordered him to be bound with two chains.” Apostle Paul mentions in several of his letters about being in chains for the sake of the gospel (Phil. 1:7, 13-14, 17; Col. 4:3,18; 2 Tim. 1:16; Phm. 10,13). How does “being in chains” serve as an apt metaphor for what is entailed in following Christ? What “chains” have I submitted to for the sake of the gospel?

Wednesday, July 27, 2022

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing.

Wednesday, July 27, 2022



Prayer



Journal

Please use one of the prompts below to get your journaling started.

- Explore your fears and what's behind them.
- Write about a relational conflict you are experiencing.
- List out all that you are grateful for.
- Recall a significant reaction, conversation or event.

A series of horizontal dotted lines providing a template for journaling.

Commentary

CHAPTER 22 COMMENTARY

v.2: “Why did the Aramaic language quiet the howling mob? Aramaic was their common language. Hearing Paul speak it caught them by surprise. The unruly crowd immediately identified him as one of their own. That a Jew not from Palestine could speak Aramaic, as well as Greek, impressed them.”¹

vv.1-9: “Paul began his address respectfully, calling his audience ‘brothers and fathers,’ just as Stephen had addressed a similar audience (7:2). Paul’s first point demonstrated his excellent Jewish credentials: ‘educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strictness of the ancestral law;’ that is, he had a thorough training as a Pharisee under the most revered teacher of the era. The description of his activity as a persecutor of Christians opened the way for him to describe his conversion.”²

“Paul’s defense to the mob who is out for his blood is not to argue but to relate a personal experience; and a personal experience is the most unanswerable argument on earth.”³

v.10: “Verse 10 parallels 9:6 with the difference that in Paul’s account he referred to Jesus as “the Lord” when relating the command to rise and go into Damascus. Paul made his confession known before his Jewish audience. At the outset of his vision he may not have known whom he was addressing as Lord (v. 8). Now he knew that it was Jesus, the risen Lord. Up to this point in his speech, Paul had identified closely with his Jewish listeners. In every way he had shown himself to be as Jewish as they were. Now he began to draw the line that differentiated himself from them. On the Damascus road he had seen the risen Jesus. Now he confessed Jesus as Lord. He surely wished the same for them. It was not inappropriate for a faithful Jew to confess Jesus as Lord. He was himself a living witness to that.”⁴

“Paul is stressing the fact that he had not come to destroy the ancestral faith but to fulfill it.”⁵

vv.12-16: “Paul introduced Ananias as a pious Jew, a strict observer of the Torah, and a person held in high esteem by the Jewish community in Damascus...Ananias’ devotion to Judaism was stressed. Paul wished to make the same

point about Ananias he had been making about himself—that his Christian faith in no way detracted from his loyalty to Judaism. This emphasis continues throughout Paul’s account of Ananias, where he is consistently portrayed as very Jewish...Ananias’ words to Paul have a strong Jewish flavor. ‘God of our fathers’ is strong Old Testament language. The ‘Righteous One’ is a Jewish messianic title, found earlier in the speeches of Peter and of Stephen to Jews (3:14; 7:52).”⁶

vv.17-21: “Another new point in this account is Paul’s description of a vision he had while praying in the temple some later time, where God told him to leave Jerusalem (22:17-21). Paul had expressed to God his personal desire to stay in Jerusalem and witness to the Jews, considering his unique background. There is probably a hint that the Jews listening to Paul now should have accepted the validity of his message but would not because of the stubbornness of their hearts.”⁷

“...Paul protested against the order to leave (v. 19-20). Such protests are a common feature of biblical commissioning narratives...Paul’s protest was that he had a convincing testimony to bear. All Jerusalem knew of his former reputation as a persecutor of Christians, even to the point of participation in Stephen’s martyrdom (cf. 7:58b; 8:1a). They would know that something dramatic must have happened to reverse his direction. Still the Lord insisted that Paul go from Jerusalem (v. 21). He had another task for him—to witness to the Gentiles. Paul’s Gentile mission was thus connected closely to the refusal of the Jews to accept his witness to Christ.”⁸

“Aside from the theme of the mission to the Gentiles being of divine initiative, this section also suggests reflection upon the question of *tradition versus traditionalism*. The mob sought to kill Paul because of their zealous adherence to ‘tradition.’ But Paul’s defense was that he was the real adherent to tradition, because he attempted faithfully to be obedient to God’s leading—even when the leading led him into areas of surprising divine graciousness, such as to the Gentiles. To be a faithful member of Israel, Paul’s speech suggests, is to be willing to be surprised, to be led into strange areas of God’s grace. This is the *tradition* worth defending, worth living out in our day, as opposed to the dry and often dead *traditionalism* which merely appeals to blind obedience to what we have always done.”⁹

¹ Quest Study Bible, study notes, 1539.

² Fernando, Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series, 564.

³ Barclay, The Acts of the Apostles, Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed., 159.

⁴ Pohill, The New American Commentary: Acts, vol.26, 460.

⁵ Barclay, The Acts of the Apostles, Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed., 161.

⁶ Pohill, The New American Commentary: Acts, vol.26, 461.

⁷ Fernando, Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series, 565.

⁸ Pohill, The New American Commentary: Acts, vol.26, 462-463.

⁹ William H. Willimon, Acts: Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press,

vv.22-23: "...the reference to the Gentiles led to an immediate fulfillment of Jesus' warning that the people would not accept his testimony. This was certainly true of the temple crowd listening to Paul. With the mention of the Gentiles, the silence ceased, the mob mentality resumed, and Paul was cut off...Paul should have known better than to refer to his Gentile witness. It was ultimately Paul's openness to Gentiles that got him in trouble with the crowd. (21:29). In those days of rising Jewish nationalism, Paul's law-free Gentile mission seemed to be disloyal to all that was Jewish (cf. 21:21)." ¹⁰

"It was not that the Jews objected to the preaching to the Gentiles; what they objected to was that the Gentiles were being offered privileges before they first accepted circumcision and the Law. If Paul had preached the yoke of Judaism to the Gentiles all would have been well; it was because he preached the grace of Christianity to them that the Jews were enraged." ¹¹

"It was tantamount to saying that Jews and Gentiles were equal, for they both needed to come to God through Christ, and that on identical terms." ¹²

"By now Lysias must have been thoroughly perplexed about Paul...individual purchase of the rights of citizenship would have been looked on askance. There is evidence, however, that under Claudius there was increasing abuse of the privilege; and purchase of citizenship became common. That Lysias purchased his citizenship during this time is highly likely given his name, Claudius Lysias (23:26). One generally took the name of the patron through whom citizenship was obtained. It is possible that Lysias was being a bit sarcastic when he referred to paying a 'big price' for his citizenship, the implication being perhaps that 'now it seems that just anyone can afford it.' If that was so, Paul's response would have been a shocker: no, he did not pay a big price but was born into it." ¹³

v.30: "Paul's appeal to his rights as a citizen should have prompted Claudius Lysias to refer his case to a higher Roman authority. Instead, he commanded the Sanhedrin to meet and had Paul appear before the chief priests and the Sadducees and Pharisees. Reading between the lines, we can speculate that Lysias was probably intrigued by his mysterious prisoner and wanted to know what charge the Jews had against him...What is evident is that Paul was not a

helpless victim. He had come to Jerusalem to preach Christ and he was willing to use every means to be heard. The Lord, not a Roman commander, or even the Sanhedrin, was calling the shots...The picture we get of the Apostle through all the changing circumstances is of a man who is ready to grasp opportunities to reach the center of religious and political power with his witness to Christ." ¹⁴

1988) 168-169.

¹⁰ Pohill, *The New American Commentary: Acts*. vol.26, 463.

¹¹ Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles, Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed.*, 162.

¹² Stott, *The Message of Acts, The Bible Speaks Today Series*, 348.

¹³ Pohill, *The New American Commentary: Acts*. vol.26, 464-465.

¹⁴ Lloyd Ogilvie, *Acts, Communicator's Commentary Series, (Waco: Word Books, 1983)* 314.



Bible Text

Acts 22:1-21 (ESV)

¹ “Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you.”

² And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language,[a] they became even more quiet. And he said:

³ “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel[b] according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day. ⁴ I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, ⁵ as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.

⁶ “As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. ⁷ And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ ⁸ And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ ⁹ Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand[c] the voice of the one who was speaking to me. ¹⁰ And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.’ ¹¹ And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus.

¹² “And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, ¹³ came to me, and standing by me said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. ¹⁴ And he said, ‘The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; ¹⁵ for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’

¹⁷ “When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸ and saw him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’ ¹⁹ And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. ²⁰ And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.’ ²¹ And he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”



Go Deeper

Questions to help us go deeper

Acts 22:1-16

- Apostle Paul recounts his testimony before a Jewish mob. How does his testimony reflect these general features?
 - Life before Jesus
 - Meeting Jesus
 - Repentance and turnaround
 - Receiving a burden and mission
- Recount my own testimony and journey with Christ along the same general features.
- Reflect on Apostle Paul’s heart for his countrymen, from whom he just barely escaped violent death (21:30-31). In what ways has the gospel enabled me to transcend personal grievances?

Acts 22:18-21

- Apostle Paul thought his unique story—zeal for the law, reputation as a persecutor—would suit him for ministry to his fellow Jews, but Jesus had different plans for him. What lessons can I draw from this?

Thursday, July 28, 2022

“

As well could you expect a plant to grow without air and water
as to expect your heart to grow without prayer and faith.

”

- Charles Spurgeon -



Prayer of Gratitude

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing a prayer of gratitude.



Prayer of Supplication



Hymn of July

Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave, and follow Thee;
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
Thou, from hence, my all shall be;
Perish ev'ry fond ambition,
All I've sought or hoped or known;
Yet how rich is my condition:
God and heav'n are still my own!

Let the world despise and leave me,
They have left my Savior, too;
Human hearts and looks deceive me,
Thou art not, like man, untrue;
And, while Thou shalt smile upon me,
God of wisdom, love, and might,
Foes may hate, and friends may shun me;
Show Thy face, and all is bright.

Haste thee on from grace to glory,
Armed by faith, and winged by prayer;
Heav'n's eternal days before thee,
God's own hand shall guide thee there;
Soon shall close thy earthly mission,
Swift shall pass thy pilgrim days;
Hope shall change to glad fruition,
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.



Prayer of Supplication



Hymn of August

Close to Thee

Thou my everlasting portion,
More than friend or life to me,
All along my pilgrim journey,
Savior, let me walk with Thee.
Close to Thee, close to Thee,
Close to Thee, close to Thee;
All along my pilgrim journey,
Savior, let me walk with Thee.

Not for ease or worldly pleasure,
Nor for fame my prayer shall be;
Gladly will I toil and suffer,
Only let me walk with Thee.
Close to Thee, close to Thee,
Close to Thee, close to Thee;
Gladly will I toil and suffer,
Only let me walk with Thee.

Lead me through the vale of shadows,
Bear me o'er life's fitful sea;
Then the gate of life eternal
May I enter, Lord, with Thee.
Close to Thee, close to Thee,
Close to Thee, close to Thee;
Then the gate of life eternal
May I enter, Lord, with Thee.



Journal

Please use one of the prompts below to get your journaling started.

- Explore your fears and what's behind them.
- Write about a relational conflict you are experiencing.
- List out all that you are grateful for.
- Recall a significant reaction, conversation or event.

A large area of the page is filled with horizontal dotted lines, providing a space for journaling.



Bible Text

Acts 22:22-30 (ESV)

²² Up to this word they listened to him. Then they raised their voices and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live.” ²³ And as they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, ²⁴ the tribune ordered him to be brought into the barracks, saying that he should be examined by flogging, to find out why they were shouting against him like this. ²⁵ But when they had stretched him out for the whips, [d] Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?” ²⁶ When the centurion heard this, he went to the tribune and said to him, “What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman citizen.” ²⁷ So the tribune came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” And he said, “Yes.” ²⁸ The tribune answered, “I bought this citizenship for a large sum.” Paul said, “But I am a citizen by birth.” ²⁹ So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him immediately, and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

³⁰ But on the next day, desiring to know the real reason why he was being accused by the Jews, he unbound him and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them.



Go Deeper

Questions to help us go deeper

Acts 22:22

- Reflect on the crowd’s response to Apostle Paul’s testimony. What is at the root of their anger and how is this a reminder to me regarding the message of the gospel?

Acts 22:25-29

- Reflect on Apostle Paul’s character and conduct as he’s about to be flogged. What lessons can I learn, particularly about wisdom regarding the ways of this world, through his bringing up the issue of his citizenship?

Tuesday, August 2, 2022



Prayer



Journal

Please use one of the prompts below to get your journaling started.

- Explore your fears and what's behind them.
- Write about a relational conflict you are experiencing.
- List out all that you are grateful for.
- Recall a significant reaction, conversation or event.

A series of horizontal dotted lines providing space for journaling.

Commentary

CHAPTER 23 COMMENTARY

vv.1-2: “The implication is that he had nothing on his own mind to condemn him, that he had been faithful in his conduct toward God in every respect. Such a remark was itself something of a provocation. If Paul’s life as a Christian left him in complete innocence before God, then the Sanhedrin members who did not share his commitment to Christ were the guilty parties. It is small wonder that the high priest Ananias immediately ordered him to be struck on the mouth for blasphemy (v. 2). His action was completely in character. Josephus depicted him as one of the very worst of the high priests, known for his pro-Roman sentiments, his extreme cruelty, and his greed.”¹

v.3: “Given Ananias’ character, Paul’s angry response is altogether understandable: ‘God will strike you, you whitewashed wall’ (v. 3). His words were prophetic. Less than ten years later, Ananias came to an untimely end at the hand of Jewish freedom fighters. The image of the whitewashed wall was particularly appropriate...His character and his actions belied the outward appearance. Jesus used the same image to depict hypocrisy, referring to the practice of whitewashing tombs as a warning to people that the defilement of dead bones lay within (Matt. 23:27)... Paul saw Ananias’ action in having him struck as in itself a demonstration of the high priest’s hypocrisy. There he sat in his role of judge, and yet he was himself in need of judgment because his striking Paul was clearly against the law (v. 3b). No verdict had been reached, no deliberations even begun, and yet the action of the high priest had already pronounced judgment. This was scarcely Israelite justice (cf. Lev 19:15).”²

vv.4-5: “Since this was not a regular meeting of the Sanhedrin, the high priest was likely not in his usual seat or wearing his robes of office. Also, because Paul had visited Jerusalem only sporadically during the previous twenty years and Ananias had become high priest in A.D. 48, about ten years before these incidents, Paul would not have recognized him.”³

v.6: “As Paul’s first line of reasoning was not going to work, he adopted a new line. The issue at stake here was the

¹ Pohill, *The New American Commentary: Acts*, vol.26, 467-468.

² Pohill, *The New American Commentary: Acts*, vol.26, 468.

³ Ajith Fernando, et al., *Acts, Life Application Bible Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1994) 567.

resurrection of the dead, which the Pharisees accepted but the Sadducees rejected. Was this simply a crafty ploy used by Paul to divide the group? Certainly there is wisdom, possibly even shrewdness, here. But he was also using a strategy that pointed to the heart of the Christian gospel, which was indeed a fulfillment of Pharisaism, so much so that a real Pharisee should actually become a Christian. He even calls himself a Pharisee here (23:6)...”⁴

v.11: “Alone, under detention, the following night Paul had a reassuring vision (v. 11)...To what was it all leading? The Lord’s words assured him that there was a divine purpose in all that had happened to him. As he had borne his witness in Jerusalem, so would he bear it in Rome. Paul had already expressed his own desire to visit Rome (19:21). Now the visit received the Lord’s endorsement. The key word is, of course, ‘testify.’ All Paul’s troubles the past two days had ultimately derived from his testifying to Christ before the Jews. Now his trip to Rome and all of the legal hassle in between also would be testimony. With v. 11 the final portion of Acts is mapped out.”⁵

“At times of special need [in Acts], God appears to his servants in some supernatural way and gives them a glimpse of himself that encourages them to persevere in the task they have been given (4:31; 18:9-10; 27:23). We can call this the comfort of the God of all comfort (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3-4). God knows when we need special help to overcome discouragement and to persevere in a difficult call. And at just the right time he sends us that comfort. The comfort Paul received was in the form of an affirmation of the sovereignty of God. This time of uncertainty eventually resulted in Paul’s fulfilling one of his greatest ambitions: to preach the gospel in Rome.”⁶

vv.16-22: “Little is known of Paul’s family. The present passage is the sole mention of his sister and of her son. Likewise, how Paul’s nephew learned of the plot is anybody’s guess. He seems to have been a young man, perhaps in his late teens. His accessibility to Paul was not unusual. Prisoners of high rank, such as Paul with his Roman citizenship, were often given a great deal of liberty for visits from family and friends. In fact, Paul’s considerable standing with the Romans is indicated by the ease with which he called the centurion over to himself and by the unquestioning compliance the latter gave to his request

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Pohill, *The New American Commentary: Acts*, vol.26, 471.

⁶ Ajith Fernando, et al., *Acts, Life Application Bible Commentary*, 569.

(vv. 17-18).⁷

[...] Beneath the surface of our human analysis of the impossibilities we face, the Lord is arranging things to press us forward to accomplish His will. Luke delights to imply that in his accounts.⁸

“The tribune Claudius Lysias writes a letter to Felix declaring Paul’s innocence as far as Roman law is concerned (23:26-30). The letter enables Luke to reiterate his point that Paul can be accused of no crime for which the State is responsible. Claudius Lysias, Felix (by implication; 24:23, 26, 27), and Festus (25:25) declare Paul’s innocence. The debate about Paul is a matter of theological contention between Jews (23:29; 25:18), a debate about the resurrection (24:15; 26:6-7). Luke’s claim is that Paul is guilty of treason against neither Judaism or Rome. Of course, Paul’s real audience in Acts is neither Roman nor Jewish officials but the church of Theophilus’ day—a church of Jews and Gentiles. First, Luke wants to say, our movement is best understood as a branch of faithful Judaism which, like the Pharisees, believes in the resurrection. Secondly, Luke says, we can work within the Empire to accomplish our purposes.”⁹

v.35: “The seat of Roman government was not in Jerusalem but in Caesarea. The praetorium is the residence of a governor; and the praetorium in Caesarea was a palace which had been built by Herod the Great. [...] The governor to whom Paul was taken was Felix and his name was a byword. [...] He was completely unscrupulous and was capable of hiring thugs to murder his own closest supporters. It was to face a man like that that Paul went to Caesarea.”¹⁰



Bible Text

Acts 23:1-11 (ESV)

¹ And looking intently at the council, Paul said, “Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.”² And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.³ Then Paul said to him, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?”⁴ Those who stood by said, “Would you revile God’s high priest?”⁵ And Paul said, “I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’”

⁶ Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.”⁷ And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.

⁸ For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.⁹ Then a great clamor arose, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees’ party stood up and contended sharply, “We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?”¹⁰ And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him away from among them by force and bring him into the barracks.

¹¹ The following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.”

⁷ Pohill, *The New American Commentary: Acts*, vol.26, 472-473.

⁸ Lloyd Ogilvie, *Acts, Communicator’s Commentary Series*, 322.

⁹ William H. Willimon, *Acts, Interpretation*, 173-174.

¹⁰ Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles, Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed.*, 167-168.



Go Deeper

Questions to help us go deeper

Acts 23:1-11

- What does Apostle Paul's quick and sharply worded rebuke to the high priest's command (23:3) reveal about him? What is required in order to maintain this level of moral clarity under such circumstances?
- Note also how keenly Apostle Paul sizes up the situation and knows what to say. What can I learn from this passage?

A series of horizontal dotted lines providing space for handwritten notes or answers to the questions in the text box.



Prayer



Journal

Please use one of the prompts below to get your journaling started.

- Explore your fears and what's behind them.
- Write about a relational conflict you are experiencing.
- List out all that you are grateful for.
- Recall a significant reaction, conversation or event.

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing.



Bible Text

Acts 23:12-35 (ESV)

¹² When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. ¹³ There were more than forty who made this conspiracy. ¹⁴ They went to the chief priests and elders and said, “We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food till we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ Now therefore you, along with the council, give notice to the tribune to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case more exactly. And we are ready to kill him before he comes near.”

¹⁶ Now the son of Paul’s sister heard of their ambush, so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷ Paul called one of the centurions and said, “Take this young man to the tribune, for he has something to tell him.” ¹⁸ So he took him and brought him to the tribune and said, “Paul the prisoner called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, as he has something to say to you.” ¹⁹ The tribune took him by the hand, and going aside asked him privately, “What is it that you have to tell me?” ²⁰ And he said, “The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more closely about him. ²¹ But do not be persuaded by them, for more than forty of their men are lying in ambush for him, who have bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him. And now they are ready, waiting for your consent.”

²² So the tribune dismissed the young man, charging him, “Tell no one that you have informed me of these things.”

²³ Then he called two of the centurions and said, “Get ready two hundred soldiers, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go as far as Caesarea at the third hour of the night. ²⁴ Also provide mounts for Paul to ride and bring him safely to Felix the governor.”

²⁵ And he wrote a letter to this effect:

²⁶ “Claudius Lysias, to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings. ²⁷ This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen. ²⁸ And desiring to know the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to

their council. ²⁹ I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment. ³⁰ And when it was disclosed to me that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, ordering his accusers also to state before you what they have against him.”

³¹ So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. ³² And on the next day they returned to the barracks, letting the horsemen go on with him. ³³ When they had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him. ³⁴ On reading the letter, he asked what province he was from. And when he learned that he was from Cilicia, ³⁵ he said, “I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive.” And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod’s praetorium.



Go Deeper

Questions to help us go deeper

Acts 23:12-22

- Why might the Jews’ refusal of Apostle Paul’s message have grown into hatred to the point of such a violent pledge?
- What lessons can I draw from this about the emotional preparation needed to be a minister of the gospel?

“

God shapes the world by prayer. Prayers are deathless.
They outlive the lives of those who uttered them.

- E.M. Bound -

”



Prayer of Gratitude

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing a prayer of gratitude.



Prayer of Supplication



Hymn of August

Close to Thee

Thou my everlasting portion,
 More than friend or life to me,
 All along my pilgrim journey,
 Savior, let me walk with Thee.
 Close to Thee, close to Thee,
 Close to Thee, close to Thee;
 All along my pilgrim journey,
 Savior, let me walk with Thee.

Not for ease or worldly pleasure,
 Nor for fame my prayer shall be;
 Gladly will I toil and suffer,
 Only let me walk with Thee.
 Close to Thee, close to Thee,
 Close to Thee, close to Thee;
 Gladly will I toil and suffer,
 Only let me walk with Thee.

Lead me through the vale of shadows,
 Bear me o'er life's fitful sea;
 Then the gate of life eternal
 May I enter, Lord, with Thee.
 Close to Thee, close to Thee,
 Close to Thee, close to Thee;
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 May I enter, Lord, with Thee.



Prayer of Supplication



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Journal

Please use one of the prompts below to get your journaling started.

- Explore your fears and what's behind them.
- Write about a relational conflict you are experiencing.
- List out all that you are grateful for.
- Recall a significant reaction, conversation or event.

A large area of the page is filled with horizontal dotted lines, providing a space for journaling.

Commentary

CHAPTER 24 COMMENTARY

BACKGROUND

"The future of the gospel was at stake, as powerful forces ranged themselves for and against it. On the one hand, the Jewish persecutors were prejudiced and violent. On the other, the Romans were open-minded and went out of their way to maintain the standards of the law, justice and order of which their best leaders were understandably proud.... Between these two powers, religious and civil, hostile and friendly, Jerusalem and Rome, Paul found himself trapped, unarmed and totally vulnerable. One cannot help admiring his courage. [...] The source of his courage was his serene confidence in the truth. He was well aware that the Romans had no case against him. He was convinced that the Jews had no case either, because his faith was the faith of his fathers, and the gospel was the fulfillment of the law. And above all he knew that his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was with him and would keep his promise that he would bear witness, some day, somehow, in Rome." ¹

v.1: "The seriousness with which the Jewish leaders took this case is apparent in that the high priest himself made the sixty-five-mile journey to Caesarea along with elders and lawyer Tertullus." ²

vv.10-15: "...[I]n the few days at his disposal [Paul] had had no time to foment an insurrection; he had had no intention of doing so either, since he went to Jerusalem as a pilgrim to worship, not as an agitator to cause a riot; and his accusers could produce no evidence that in temple, synagogue or city he had caused a disturbance or even engaged in an argument.

"Secondly, Paul addressed himself to the charge that he was 'a ringleader of the Nazarene sect.' This led him to affirmation as well as denial. Although he was indeed 'a follower of the Way,' this was not a 'sect,' as they called it, for he worshipped the God of their fathers and believed the teaching of the Scriptures." ³

vv.11-16: "Paul does admit that he is a member of the Way, but he goes on to show that this sect has similar beliefs to the Jews (vv. 14-15); this is a sect just like the Pharisees and

Sadducees. Next Paul asserts his blamelessness (v.16). No one can point a finger at him regarding his personal life.... The word translated 'strive' in verse 16 (askeo) was originally used for athletic strife. It means 'to engage in some activity, with both continuity and effort.'" ⁴

v.14: The followers of Christ were known as *followers of the Way*. Only later was the term *Christian* commonly used to identify believers. ⁵

vv.14-15: "Paul's purpose in this was not just to make a personal declaration, however, but to insist that he shared it with the whole people of God. He worshipped the same God ('the God of our fathers'), believed the same truths (the Law and God of our fathers'), shared the same hope (the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked) and cherished the same ambition (to keep a clear conscience). [...] His ownership, faith, hope and goal were no different from theirs. 'The Way' enjoyed a direct continuity with the Old Testament, for the Scriptures bore witness to Jesus Christ as the one in whom God's promises had been fulfilled." ⁶

vv.22-23: "Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way (perhaps through his Jewish wife, Drusilla), adjourned the proceedings. He found himself on the horns of a dilemma. He could not convict Paul, since Lysias the tribune had found no fault in him (23:29), nor had the Sanhedrin (23:9), nor had Tertullus been able to substantiate his charges. On the other hand, Felix was unwilling to release Paul, partly because he hoped for a bribe (26) and partly because he wanted to curry favour with the Jews (27). The only other option was to postpone his verdict on the pretext that he needed the tribune's advice..." ⁷

¹ Stott, *The Message of Acts, The Bible Speaks Today Series*, 356-357.

² Fernando, *Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series*, 578.

³ Stott, *The Message of Acts, The Bible Speaks Today Series*, 361.

⁴ Fernando, *Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series*, 579.

⁵ *The Quest Study Bible, study notes*, 1543.

⁶ Stott, *The Message of Acts, The Bible Speaks Today Series*, 361-362.

⁷ Stott, *The Message of Acts, The Bible Speaks Today Series*, 362.



Bible Text

Acts 24:1-27 (ESV)

¹ And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul.² And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying:

“Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation,³ in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude.⁴ But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly.⁵ For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.⁶ He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him.⁸ By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him.”

⁹ The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so.

¹⁰ And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied:

“Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense.¹¹ You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem,¹² and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city.¹³ Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me.¹⁴ But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets,¹⁵ having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.¹⁶ So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.¹⁷ Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings.¹⁸ While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia—¹⁹ they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me.²⁰ Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council,²¹ other than this one thing that I cried out while standing

among them: ‘It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.’”

²² But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, put them off, saying, “When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case.”²³ Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs.

²⁴ After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.²⁵ And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, “Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you.”²⁶ At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him.²⁷ When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.



Go Deeper

Questions to help us go deeper

Acts 24:1-21

- What lesson can I draw about Christian proclamation through the difference between Tertullus’s presentation and Apostle Paul’s introductory remarks?

Acts 24:22-27

- In what ways is Felix a confusing and contradictory man?
- What lessons or parallels to my own relationship with the truth of God’s word can I draw from Felix’s odd response to Apostle Paul?

Tuesday, August 9, 2022



Prayer



Journal

Please use one of the prompts below to get your journaling started.

- Explore your fears and what's behind them.
- Write about a relational conflict you are experiencing.
- List out all that you are grateful for.
- Recall a significant reaction, conversation or event.

A series of horizontal dotted lines providing space for journaling.



Bible Text

Acts 25:1-27 (ESV)

¹ Now three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. ² And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul, and they urged him, ³ asking as a favor against Paul that he summon him to Jerusalem—because they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way. ⁴ Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea and that he himself intended to go there shortly. ⁵ “So,” said he, “let the men of authority among you go down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them bring charges against him.”

⁶ After he stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought.

⁷ When he had arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him that they could not prove. ⁸ Paul argued in his defense, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense.” ⁹ But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges before me?” ¹⁰ But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar’s tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well. ¹¹ If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar.” ¹² Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, “To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go.”

¹³ Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and greeted Festus. ¹⁴ And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying, “There is a man left prisoner by Felix, ¹⁵ and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews laid out their case against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. ¹⁶ I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up anyone before the accused met the accusers face to face and had opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him. ¹⁷ So when they came together

here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought. ¹⁸ When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed. ¹⁹ Rather they had certain points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive. ²⁰ Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wanted to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them. ²¹ But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of the emperor, I ordered him to be held until I could send him to Caesar.” ²² Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I would like to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” said he, “you will hear him.”

²³ So on the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. ²⁴ And Festus said, “King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. ²⁵ But I found that he had done nothing deserving death. And as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to go ahead and send him. ²⁶ But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write. ²⁷ For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him.”



Go Deeper

Questions to help us go deeper

Acts 25:1-12

- It seems like Apostle Paul is a pawn in the hands of these governors at Caesarea and that he is forced to appeal to Caesar in Rome, but Jesus had already told him that he would go to Rome.

Acts 23:11 (ESV)

The following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.”

Meanwhile, Apostle Paul wrote many letters (the “prison epistles”) while in custody, enjoying a degree of personal liberty, as his friends were free to visit him and meet his needs (24:23). From this, what are some lessons regarding how God is leading Apostle Paul’s life and ministry?

Acts 25:22-27

- Consider the scene of Apostle Paul before King Agrippa and Bernice, the military tribunes and all the prominent men of the city. What is the audience’s view of Paul? What is Paul’s view of his audience?

Wednesday, August 10, 2022



Prayer



Journal

Please use one of the prompts below to get your journaling started.

- Explore your fears and what's behind them.
- Write about a relational conflict you are experiencing.
- List out all that you are grateful for.
- Recall a significant reaction, conversation or event.

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Commentary

CHAPTER 26 COMMENTARY

“It was a dramatic moment when the holy and humble apostle of Jesus Christ stood before this representative of the worldly, ambitious, morally corrupt family of the Herods, who for generation after generation had set themselves in opposition to truth and righteousness. ‘Their founder, Herod the Great,’ wrote R.B. Rackham, ‘had tried to destroy the infant Jesus. His son Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, beheaded John the Baptist, and won from the Lord the title of “fox”. His grandson Agrippa I slew James the son of Zebedee with the sword. Now we see Paul brought before Agrippa’s son.’ [...] But Paul was not in the least intimidated.”¹

vv.4-8: “Saul must have been a familiar figure in Jerusalem when as a young man he sat at the feet of Rabbi Gamaliel (22:3). He is likely to have gained a reputation for scholarship, righteousness and religious zeal. Many Palestinian Jews still alive knew how he had lived as a child, first in Tarsus, then in Jerusalem. More than that, they had known him personally and could testify from their own experience that he had belonged to the strictest party in Judaism, that of the Pharisees (4-5). It was surely anomalous, therefore, that he should now be on trial for his hope in God’s promise to the fathers, which he and they shared, namely that God would send his Messiah (foretold and foreshadowed in the Old Testament) to rescue and redeem his people.”²

v.14: It is hard for you to kick against the goads. “This proverb appears often in classical writings. Daniel Fuller explains that it was ‘often used by the Greeks to express the futility of striving against fate or against the gods, and its meaning to Paul on the Damascus road was that it was now futile for him to try any longer to work against Christ as it would be for an ox to kick against the plowman’s goad.’”³

vv.14-15: “Surely, when the heavenly voice declared, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ at least two truths must have registered instantly in Saul’s consciousness. The first is that the crucified Jesus was alive and had thus been vindicated, and the second that the Jesus who identified himself so closely with the Christians that to persecute them was to persecute him, must regard them as being

peculiarly his own people.”⁴

v.17: “...I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles (17). A similar promise of ‘rescue’ was made to Jeremiah. This did not guarantee immunity to suffering. On the contrary, it was part of the vocation of prophets and apostles to endure suffering (cf. 9:16). But it did mean that their testimony would not be silenced until their God-appointed work was done.”⁵

v.18: “The promise of forgiveness was part of the apostolic gospel from the beginning. So was belonging to the Messianic people (2:40-41, 47). For the new life in Christ and the new community of Christ always go together. What was specially significant in Christ’s commissioning of Paul was that the Gentiles were to be granted a full and equal share with the Jews in the privileges of those sanctified by faith in Christ, that is, the holy people of God.”⁶

vv.14-18: “In this passage Paul insists that the center of his whole message is the resurrection. His witness is not of someone who has lived and died but of One who is gloriously present and alive for evermore. For Paul every day is Easter Day.”⁷

“It is not so much what is actually said in this passage which is interesting as the atmosphere which the reader can feel behind it. Paul was a prisoner. At that very moment he was wearing his fetters, as he himself makes clear. And yet the impression given unmistakably is that he is the dominating personality in the scene. Festus does not speak to him as a criminal. No doubt he knew Paul’s record as a trained rabbi... Agrippa, listening to Paul, is more on trial than Paul is. And the end of the matter is that a rather bewildered company cannot see any real reason why Paul should be tried in Rome or anywhere else. Paul has in him a power which raises him head and shoulders above all others in any company. The word used for the power of God in Greek is *dunamis*; it is the word from which dynamite comes. The man who has the Risen Christ at his side need fear no one.”⁸

“As for the trial before Agrippa, Paul was not overawed by the show of pomp and power which marked that occasion, or by the assembly of notable personages in court. [...] But Paul made no attempt to ingratiate himself with the authorities. He wanted the king’s salvation, not his favour. So he did not stop with the story of his own conversion;

⁴ Stott, *The Message of Acts, The Bible Speaks Today Series*, 372.

⁵ Stott, *The Message of Acts, The Bible Speaks Today Series*, 373.

⁶ Stott, *The Message of Acts, The Bible Speaks Today Series*, 374.

⁷ Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles, Daily Study Bible Series*, Rev. ed., 177.

⁸ Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles, Daily Study Bible Series*, Rev. ed., 180.

¹ Stott, *The Message of Acts, The Bible Speaks Today Series*, 370.

² Stott, *The Message of Acts, The Bible Speaks Today Series*, 370-371.

³ Fernando, *Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series*, 593.

he was concerned for Agrippa's conversion too. Three times, therefore, Luke has Paul repeating the elements of the gospel in the king's hearing. [...] Each time Paul thus repeated the gospel in court, he was in fact preaching it to the court. [...] Jesus had warned his disciples that they would be 'brought before kings and governors' on account of his name, and had promised that on such occasions he would give them 'words and wisdom,' Jesus had also told Ananias (who had presumably passed the information on) that Paul was his 'chosen instrument' to carry his name 'before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel' (9:15). These predictions had come true, and Paul had not failed."⁹

vv.26-27: "This challenge is for Agrippa to compare what the prophets foretold with what happened in Christ. The king is in a dilemma. As an expert on the Jewish Scriptures, he knows what Paul is speaking about. But he cannot afford to make connections between what he knows and what Paul is saying because then he will have to make a decision about Christianity. He therefore brushes off the challenge with an evasive comment..."¹⁰



Bible Text

Acts 26:1-32 (ESV)

¹ So Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense:

² "I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews,³ especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

⁴ "My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews.⁵ They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.⁶ And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers,⁷ to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king!⁸ Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

⁹ "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁰ And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them.¹¹ And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

¹² "In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.¹³ At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me.¹⁴ And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'¹⁵ And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'¹⁶ But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,¹⁷ delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you¹⁸ to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

¹⁹ "Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,²⁰ but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.²¹ For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.²² To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass:²³ that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

²⁴ And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind."

²⁵ But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words.²⁶ For

⁹ Stott, *The Message of Acts, The Bible Speaks Today Series*, 379.

¹⁰ Fernando, *Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series*, 594.

the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner.²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.”²⁸ And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?”²⁹ And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.”

³⁰ Then the king rose, and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them.³¹ And when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, “This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.”³² And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”



Go Deeper

Questions to help us go deeper

Acts 26:12-23

- Underline the gospel proclamation in these verses.

Acts 26:18-20

- Reflect on vv. 18-20. What is the heavenly vision I have received, and what has been my response to this calling?

Acts 26:24-32

- Recount and consider the various responses to Apostle Paul’s testimony and the presentation of the gospel. Have I personally encountered some of these responses?

Acts 26:28-29

- Reflect on Apostle Paul’s wish in vv. 28-29 and his boldness to declare it to all. Is it my wish toward everyone I meet—young or old, wealthy or poor—that they become Christian? How does this compare with my wishes for the people in my life?

“

Sinning and praying agree not well together. If a man be constant in the duty of secret prayer, it will tend to restrain him from willful sinning.


- Jonathan Edwards -

”



Prayer of Gratitude

Handwriting practice area with horizontal dotted lines.

 Prayer of Supplication

 Hymn of August

Close to Thee

Thou my everlasting portion,
More than friend or life to me,
All along my pilgrim journey,
Savior, let me walk with Thee.
Close to Thee, close to Thee,
Close to Thee, close to Thee;
All along my pilgrim journey,
Savior, let me walk with Thee.

Not for ease or worldly pleasure,
Nor for fame my prayer shall be;
Gladly will I toil and suffer,
Only let me walk with Thee.
Close to Thee, close to Thee,
Close to Thee, close to Thee;
Gladly will I toil and suffer,
Only let me walk with Thee.

Lead me through the vale of shadows,
Bear me o'er life's fitful sea;
Then the gate of life eternal
May I enter, Lord, with Thee.
Close to Thee, close to Thee,
Close to Thee, close to Thee;
Then the gate of life eternal
May I enter, Lord, with Thee.



Prayer of Supplication



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Close to Thee, close to Thee;
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May I enter, Lord, with Thee.



Journal

Please use one of the prompts below to get your journaling started.

- Explore your fears and what's behind them.
- Write about a relational conflict you are experiencing.
- List out all that you are grateful for.
- Recall a significant reaction, conversation or event.

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing.

Commentary

CHAPTER 27 COMMENTARY

BACKGROUND OF PASSAGE:

“The last two chapters of Acts record the fulfillment of Paul’s great ambition to go to Rome (cf. Rom. 1:10-13, 15:22-32). Luke records the event with the crisp, ‘And so we came to Rome’ (Acts 28:14). This was politically the most powerful city of the time and Paul had been a citizen of it from birth. He had planned to go there several times but had been prevented from doing so (Rom. 1:13). He had spent the twenty-seven years or so after his conversion in the eastern parts of the empire (15:19-20) and had dreams of taking the gospel westward as far as Spain, hopefully using Rome as a base for this stage of his career (15:22-29).

“About three years before, Paul had written to the Roman church his testament of faith, the letter to the Romans, in preparation for his visit. In a time of crisis, the Lord had buttressed this dream through a vision in which he was told that he ‘must also testify in Rome’ (Acts 23:11). But he probably never imagined that he would reach Rome as a prisoner. The description of the way he got there reads like an excerpt from an exciting novel. We can feel the drama and excitement of the events through Luke’s vivid description. These two chapters also contain details typical of the record of one who was part of the travel group (this is a ‘we’ section).”¹



vv.1-3: “Paul has embarked upon his last journey. Two things must have lifted up his heart. One was the kindness of a stranger, for all through the voyage Julius, the Roman centurion, treated Paul with kindness and consideration, which were more than mere courtesy. He is said to have belonged to the Augustan Cohort. That may have been

¹ Fernando, *Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series*, 609.

a special corps acting as liaison officers between the Emperor and the provinces. If so, Julius must have been a man of long experience and with an excellent military record. It may well be that when Julius and Paul stood face-to-face one brave man recognized another. The other uplifting thing was the devotion of Aristarchus. It has been suggested that there was only one way in which Aristarchus could have accompanied Paul on this last journey and that was by enrolling himself as Paul’s slave. It is probable that Aristarchus chose to act as the slave of Paul rather than be separated from him – and loyalty can go no further than that.”²

vv.4-12: “It was Paul’s advice that they should winter in Fair Havens where they were. As we have seen, the ship was an Alexandrian corn ship. The owner would be rather the contractor who was bringing the cargo of corn to Rome. The centurion, being the senior officer on board, had the last word. It is significant that Paul, the prisoner under arrest, was allowed his say when counsel was being taken. But Fair Havens was not a very good harbor nor was it near any sizeable town where the winter days might be passed by the crew; so the centurion rejected Paul’s advice and took the advice of the master and the contractor to sail farther along the coast to Phoenicia where there was a more commodious harbor and a bigger town.”³

vv.13-20: “The peril of the ship was by this time desperate. These corn ships were not small. They could be as large as 140 ft long and 36 ft wide and 33 ft draught (the depth of water a ship draws especially when loaded). But in a storm they had certain grave disadvantages. They were the same at the bow as at the stern. They had no rudder like a modern ship, but were steered with two great paddles coming out from the stern on each side. They were, therefore, hard to manage. Further, they had only one mast and on that mast one great square sail, made sometimes of linen and sometimes of stitched hides. With a sail like that they could not sail into the wind.

“It can be easily seen what peril they were in. Then an amazing thing happened. Paul took command; the prisoner became the captain, for he was the only man with any courage left. The man of God is the man whose courage stands when terror invades the hearts of others.”⁴

² Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles, Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed.*, 181.

³ Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles, Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed.*, 183.

⁴ Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles, Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed.*, 184.

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"We noted that this passage is unique to the exposition of God's sovereignty amidst hardship in Acts because here the hardship comes not from the sinfulness of people but from the forces of nature and the folly of humans [...]

"Indeed, Christ can still every storm, but he does not immunize Christians from problems that others in the world also face. Sometimes he miraculously delivers Christians from such situations, while at other times he gives Christians courage to endure natural and other disasters. We thank him for performing miracles but also for his sufficient grace that provides endurance in the midst of storms (2 Cor 12:7-10).

[...]

"Since Paul believed so strongly in the sovereignty of God, he could look beyond the bleak situation and anticipate good to come out. A vision of sovereignty may not come to us at once because our natural tendency may be to panic in a difficult situation. If so, we must grapple with God until we come out of that situation and are able to go to the people with a word from God rather than with a public display of anxiety.

"The psalmist in Psalm 73, for example, pondered the mysterious providence of God that can permit the wicked to prosper while the righteous suffers. After a sustained reflection on his doubts, he said, 'If I had said, 'I will speak thus,' I would have betrayed your children' (Psalm 73:15). As a result, without publicly proclaiming his doubts, he went to the sanctuary to battle it out with the Lord (73:17). There he received a vision of God's sovereignty, and in the rest of the psalm he praised God. We too must grapple until we see things the way that God sees them. This will give us the confidence to be agents of hope in this hopeless world."⁵

vv.27-38: "The sailors planned to sail away in the dinghy, which would have been quite useless for 276 people; but Paul frustrated their plans. The ship's company must sink or swim together. Next comes a most human and suggestive episode. Paul insisted that they should eat. He was a visionary man of God; but he was also an intensely practical man. He had not the slightest doubt that God would do his part but he also knew that they must do theirs. Paul was not one of those people who 'were so heavenly minded that they were of no earthly use.' He knew that hungry men are not efficient men; and so he gathered the ship's company

around him and made them eat.

"As we read the narrative, into the tempest there seems to come a strange calm. The man of God has somehow made others sure that God is in charge of things. The most useful people in the world are those who, being themselves calm, bring to others the secret of confidence. Paul was like that; and every follower of Jesus ought to be steadfast when others are in turmoil."⁶

vv.30-32: "Contrary to the best tradition of the sea, the sailors schemed to save themselves by lowering the dinghy (cf. vv. 16-17) under cover of lowering some more anchors from the bow. But Paul saw through the ruse, doubtless realizing that no sailor would drop anchors from the bow under such conditions. He knew to try to make shore in the morning without a full crew would be disastrous. So Paul warned Julius that all would be lost if the sailors deserted the ship. Though he had not listened to Paul earlier (cf. vv. 11-12), Julius took his advice here and ordered his men to cut the lines holding the dinghy and let it fall away."⁷

vv.33-38: "The storm had been so fierce that preparing food had been impossible. In this time of crisis, Paul's great qualities of leadership came to the fore. Urging all on board to eat, he took some bread, gave thanks to God, and ate it. The others on board also ate. Then, strengthened by the food, they threw the cargo of grain overboard to give the ship a shallower draft as they beached her.

"Only at v. 37 does Luke tell us how many were on board. Probably it became necessary when distributing the food to know the exact number, and Luke himself may have had a part in supervising the distribution. Though there is some MS evidence for reading 76, there is nothing improbable in the larger and better-attested number 276. Josephus tells of making a Mediterranean crossing to Rome in A.D. 63 in a ship that had 600 on board and which was also wrecked (cf. Life 15 [3])."⁸

vv.42-44: "Once again, the fine character of this Roman centurion stands out. The soldiers wished to kill the prisoners to prevent possible escape. It is difficult to blame them, because it was Roman law that if a man escaped, his guard must undergo the penalty intended for the escaped prisoner. But the centurion stepped in and saved Paul's life and the other prisoners with him."⁹

⁶ Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles, Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed.*, 186.

⁷ Gaebelein, *Gen. Ed. Expositor's Bible Commentary CD, notes for vv.30-32.*

⁸ Gaebelein, *Gen. Ed. Expositor's Bible Commentary CD, notes for vv.33-38.*

⁹ Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles, Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed.*, 186.

⁵ Fernando, *Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series*, 618.



Bible Text

Acts 27:1-38 (ESV)

¹ And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius. ² And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. ³ The next day we put in at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for. ⁴ And putting out to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. ⁵ And when we had sailed across the open sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. ⁶ There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us on board. ⁷ We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone. ⁸ Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.

⁹ Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, ¹⁰ saying, “Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.” ¹¹ But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. ¹² And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in, the majority decided to put out to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.

¹³ Now when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to the shore. ¹⁴ But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land. ¹⁵ And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along.

¹⁶ Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship’s boat. ¹⁷ After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and thus they were driven along.

¹⁸ Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo. ¹⁹ And on the third day they threw the ship’s tackle overboard with their own hands. ²⁰ When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.

²¹ Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. ²² Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ²³ For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, ²⁴ and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ ²⁵ So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. ²⁶ But we must run aground on some island.”

²⁷ When the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. ²⁸ So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms. A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms.

²⁹ And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. ³⁰ And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship’s boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, ³¹ Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.” ³² Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship’s boat and let it go.

³³ As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, “Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. ³⁴ Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you.” ³⁵ And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶ Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. ³⁷ (We were in all 276 persons in the ship.) ³⁸ And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.

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Prayer



Commentary

CHAPTER 28 COMMENTARY

vv.1-2: “Malta (*Melite*), on which the ship was wrecked, is an island about 18 miles long and 8 miles wide. It lies 58 miles south of Sicily and 180 miles north and east of the African coast. It had been colonized about 1000 B.C by Phoenicians, and the vernacular language in Paul’s day was a Punic (Carthaginian) dialect. But in 218 B.C it was captured by Rome at the start of the Second Punic War waged against Carthage and granted the status of a *municipium*, which allowed a large measure of local autonomy. Augustus established a Roman governor on the island, who bore the title *municipi Melitesium primus omnium* (‘the chief man over all in the municipality of Malta,’ *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 10.7495; cf. *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* 5754--or, as at v. 7, *ho protos tes nesou*, ‘the first man of the island’). He also settled a number of army veterans and their families there. In Paul’s day the island was known for its prosperity and residential architecture, and its native population must have spoken not only Phoenician but also some Latin and Greek.

“*Melite* has at times been identified with Meleda or Mljet off the Dalmatian coast (modern Yugoslavia) in the northeastern part of the Adriatic Sea, far to the northeast of Malta. But that is linked to the confusion of ‘Adrian’ with ‘Adriatic’ (cf. comments on 27:27). In all likelihood the ship was blown west from Crete to the east coast of Malta, rather than northwest into the Adriatic. So the traditional location of Saint Paul’s Bay on Malta should continue to be considered the most probable site for Paul’s landing. The island was first named by Phoenicians, in whose language *melita* meant ‘a place of refuge’--a function that naturally fits it.”¹

“The proposed forty-mile trip from Fair Havens to Phoenix ended two weeks later on the island of Malta, which was scarcely a day’s voyage from the great port of Syracuse in Sicily. But the people had to wait three months in Malta because it was winter. The word islanders’ (28:2) is *barbaroi*, which was how those who did not speak Greek were referred to in those days. The islanders showed the shipwrecked travelers ‘unusual kindness’. And Paul despite his exhaustion from the preceding events, joined in setting up a fire, which was probably needed because of the cool autumn temperature. [...] The reaction that Paul

was probably a murderer (28:4) is typical of superstitious people who see others going through misfortune – they assume that they are paying for their wrong deeds. When nothing happened to Paul, their superstition led them to change their verdict, saying that he was a god.”²

vv.3-6: “When Paul was bitten by the viper, the islanders concluded he was a murderer whom Justice (*he dike*) had at last caught up with since he hadn’t died at sea. The Greek goddess Dike, or her Phoenician counterpart, was apparently venerated by the Maltese.”³

“Wherever we are (in church, at home, in society) and whatever our role may be (leader, follower, Christian minister, worker in a secular job...etc), our attitude should always be that of a servant (Phil 2:5-8). In our study of Paul’s address to the Ephesian elders (20:17-35), we saw that he adopted a servant lifestyle in his ministry. Now we see him adopting a similar lifestyle in his activity in society. Though he must have been exhausted from the strenuous trip and though the Maltese people were doing their best to help the people from the ship, Paul was busy gathering wood for the fire that the Maltese people were building (28:2-3). Commenting on this Barclay says, “It is only the little man who refuses the little task.”⁴

v.11: “‘After three months’ (*meta treis menas*), the centurion Julius arranged for another ship to take his contingent of prisoners and soldiers on to Italy. According to Pliny the Elder, navigation on the Mediterranean began each spring on 8 February, when the westerly winds started to blow (Natural History 2.122) [...] Therefore sometime in early or mid-February 61, Paul and his colleagues boarded ship again for the last leg of their voyage to Italy after their shipwreck on Malta, perhaps in late October (cf. comments on 27:9). The ship was another Alexandrian vessel, probably another grain ship (cf. comments on v. 13) from Egypt that had been able to make harbor at Malta before winter set in and the disastrous Northeaster struck. Ships, like inns, took their names from their figureheads [...] [this ship had] Castor and Pollux, the sons of Leda, queen of Sparta, who in Greek mythology were transformed by Zeus into twin gods represented by the constellation Gemini. The cult of the Dioscuri (lit., ‘sons of Zeus’) was especially widespread in Egypt and the Gemini were considered by sailors a sign of good fortune in a storm. For an Alexandrian ship, the

² Fernando, *Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series*, 613.

³ Gaebelein, *Gen. Ed. Expositor’s Bible Commentary CD, notes for vv.3-4*.

⁴ Fernando, *Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series*, 621.

¹ Gaebelein, *Gen. Ed. Expositor’s Bible Commentary CD, notes for v.1*.

figurehead was an appropriate one.”⁵

v.14: “At Puteoli Paul and his companions ‘found some brothers who invited us to spend a week with them.’ It was not, of course, unusual for Christians to be found in such an important city as Puteoli.

“There was a Jewish colony there (cf. Jos. War II, 104 [vii.1]; Antiq. XVII, 328 [xii.]), from which some may have become Christians on their travels or through the witness of believers who visited Puteoli. What is surprising, however, is that Paul a prisoner was at liberty to seek out the Christians of the city and accept their invitation to spend seven days in fellowship with them. Nevertheless, it is possible that for some reason Julius found it necessary to stop at Puteoli for a week after disembarking and that during that time he allowed Paul the freedom (though undoubtedly accompanied by a guard) to seek out his fellow believers and enjoy their hospitality, as he did at Sidon when the journey to Rome began (cf. 27:3).”⁶

v.15: “At Neapolis, Julius and his contingent turned northwest to travel to Rome on the Via Appia--that oldest, straightest, and most perfectly made of all the Roman roads, named after the censor Appius Claudius who started its construction in 312 B.C. During the seven-day stopover at Puteoli, news of Paul’s arrival in Italy reached Rome. So a number of Christians there set out to meet him and escort him back to Rome. Some of them got as far as the Forum of Appius (*Forum Appii*), one of the ‘halting stations’ built every ten to fifteen miles along the entire length of the Roman road system. It was forty-three miles from Rome in the Pontine marshland, and a market-town had grown up around it. Others only got as far as the Three Taverns (*Tres Tabernae*) Inn, another halting station about thirty-three miles from Rome. Paul’s gratitude to God for the delegation that met him must have been unusually fervent, because Luke pauses to make special mention of it.”⁷

v.16: “At Rome, Paul was allowed to live in private quarters, though a soldier guarded him at all times. The chain he wore (v. 20) was probably attached to his wrists. Yet in Luke’s eyes Paul entered Rome in triumph. Through his coming the gospel penetrated official circles in the capital of the empire, and God used his detention there for two years to spread the proclamation of the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the city (cf. vv. 30-31).

⁵ Gaebelein, Gen. Ed. Expositor’s Bible Commentary CD, notes for v.11.

⁶ Gaebelein, Gen. Ed. Expositor’s Bible Commentary CD, notes for v.14.

⁷ Gaebelein, Gen. Ed. Expositor’s Bible Commentary CD, notes for v.15.

“With this verse, the last ‘we’ section in Acts closes. To judge by the greetings in Colossians 4:10-14 and Philemon 23-24 (assuming a Roman origin for these letters), Luke and Aristarchus must have remained with Paul through most--if not all of his detention at Rome, being joined from time to time by such friends as Epaphras, John Mark, Demas, and Jesus, who was surnamed Justus.”⁸

vv.23-28: “We see a familiar sequence in verses 23-28. The Jews showed an interest in Christianity and a meeting was arranged (v.23a). Paul tried “to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets” (v.23b). The familiar word *peitho* (“persuade, convince”) appears twice in these verses (vv.23-24). Some are convinced, “but others would not believe” (v.24). Those who rejected the message had stubborn hearts that did not want to believe. The result of that meeting was unpleasant for Paul (v.25). There isn’t much new here. Luke underscores the tragedy of Jewish rejection of the gospel. What is new is Paul’s use of a familiar text about hardened hearts to explain Jewish resistance to the gospel (vv.26-27).”⁹

vv.30-31: “Acts does not conclude on the note of Jewish rejection of the gospel. Rather, Luke’s conclusion presents a more glorious reality: The Gentiles hear the gospel, and Paul has two years of bold witness about “the kingdom of God and...the Lord Jesus Christ” (v.31). At the start of Acts Luke gave his key verse (1:8), which predicted that through the Holy Spirit the gospel would be proclaimed “to the ends of the earth.” The book ends with that prediction being fulfilled.”¹⁰

“In the end he comes to a conclusion, implied in his quotation from Isaiah. It is that this too is the work of God; this rejection of Jesus by the Jews is the very things, which has opened the door to the Gentiles. There is a purpose in everything; on the helm of things is the hand of the unseen steersman – God. The door, which the Jews shut, was the door that opened to the Gentiles....

To the end of the day Paul is Paul. The Authorized Version obscures a point. It says that for 2 years he lived in his own hired house. The real meaning is that he lived at his own expense, that he earned his own living. Even in prison his own two hands supplied his need; and he was not idle otherwise. It was there in prison that he wrote the letters to the Philippians, to the Ephesians, to the Colossians

⁸ Gaebelein, Gen. Ed. Expositor’s Bible Commentary CD, notes for v.16.

⁹ Fernando, Acts, The NIV Application Commentary Series, 625

¹⁰ Ibid.

and to Philemon. Nor was he ever altogether alone. Luke and Aristarchus had come with him and to the end Luke remained. Timothy was often with him. Sometimes Tychicus was with him. For a while he had the company of Epaphroditus. And sometimes Mark was with him.

Nor was it wasted time. He tells the Philippians that all this has fallen out to the furtherance of the gospel. That was particularly so because his bonds were known throughout the Praetorian Guard. He was in his own private lodging but night and day a soldier was with him. These headquarters soldiers were members of the picked troops of the Emperor, the Praetorian Guard. In two years many of them must have spent long days and nights with Paul; and many a man must have gone from his guard duty with Christ in his heart.

And so the Book of Acts comes to an end with a shout of triumph. In the Greek without let or hindrance are one word and that one word falls like a victor's cry. It is the peak of Luke's story. We wonder why Luke never told us what happened to Paul, whether he was executed or released. The reason is that this was not Luke's purpose. At the beginning Luke gave us his scheme of Acts when he told how Jesus commanded his followers to bear witness for him in Jerusalem and all over Judea and Samaria and away to the ends of the earth. Now the tale is finished; the story that began in Jerusalem rather more than 30 years ago has finished in Rome. It is nothing less than a miracle of God. The church, which at the beginning of Acts could be numbered in scores, cannot now be numbered in tens of thousands. The story of the crucified man of Nazareth has swept across the world in its conquering course until now without interference it is being preached in Rome, the capital of the world. The gospel has reached the center of the world and is being freely proclaimed – and Luke's task is at an end."¹¹

"Paul wanted to preach the gospel in Rome, and he eventually got there – in chains, through shipwreck, and after many trials. Although he may have wished for an easier passage, he knew that God had blessed him greatly in allowing him to meet the believers in Rome and preach the message to both Jews and Gentiles in that great city. In all things, God worked for Paul's good (Romans 8:28). You can trust him to do the same for you. God may not make you comfortable or secure, but he will provide the opportunity to do his work."¹²

¹¹ Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles, Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed.*, 192-193.

¹² *Life Application Study Bible, notes on vv.17-20, 2020.*



Bible Text

Acts 27:39-28:10 (ESV)

³⁹ Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore. ⁴⁰ So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach. ⁴¹ But striking a reef, they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf. ⁴² The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. ⁴³ But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land,⁴⁴ and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.

28 ¹ After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. ² The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. ³ When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. ⁴ When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live."⁵ He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. ⁶ They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

⁷ Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. ⁸ It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him. ⁹ And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. ¹⁰ They also honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed.

Wednesday, August 17, 2022



Prayer



Journal

Please use one of the prompts below to get your journaling started.

- Explore your fears and what's behind them.
- Write about a relational conflict you are experiencing.
- List out all that you are grateful for.
- Recall a significant reaction, conversation or event.

A series of horizontal dotted lines providing a space for journaling.



Bible Text

Acts 28:11-31

¹¹ After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead. ¹² Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. ¹³ And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. ¹⁴ There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome. ¹⁵ And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage. ¹⁶ And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.

¹⁷ After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, “Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. ¹⁸ When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. ¹⁹ But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. ²⁰ For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain.” ²¹ And they said to him, “We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. ²² But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”

²³ When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. ²⁴ And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. ²⁵ And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

²⁶ ““Go to this people, and say,
“You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive.”

²⁷ For this people’s heart has grown dull,
and with their ears they can barely hear,
and their eyes they have closed;
lest they should see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.”

²⁸ Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”

³⁰ He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹ proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.




Go Deeper

Questions to help us go deeper

Acts 28:11-31

- How long does it take Apostle Paul to gather people and share the gospel upon arriving in Rome? Considering the people he calls together, and the events (and conspirators and accusers) that brought him to this point, what can I learn from Apostle Paul’s example?
- Compare the mandate of Acts 1:8 with the continuing narrative represented by Acts 28:31. What is the progress and direction of the gospel and the people who bear it? How am I obeying the same mandate and joining the same narrative today?
- Many scholars have noted that the book of Acts, in its original Greek, ends rather oddly with an adverb: unhinderedly. What may be the significance of this ending? How does this apply to me?

Thursday, August 18, 2022

 Prayer



Prayer of Supplication



Hymn of August

Close to Thee

Thou my everlasting portion,
 More than friend or life to me,
 All along my pilgrim journey,
 Savior, let me walk with Thee.
 Close to Thee, close to Thee,
 Close to Thee, close to Thee;
 All along my pilgrim journey,
 Savior, let me walk with Thee.

Not for ease or worldly pleasure,
 Nor for fame my prayer shall be;
 Gladly will I toil and suffer,
 Only let me walk with Thee.
 Close to Thee, close to Thee,
 Close to Thee, close to Thee;
 Gladly will I toil and suffer,
 Only let me walk with Thee.

Lead me through the vale of shadows,
 Bear me o'er life's fitful sea;
 Then the gate of life eternal
 May I enter, Lord, with Thee.
 Close to Thee, close to Thee,
 Close to Thee, close to Thee;
 Then the gate of life eternal
 May I enter, Lord, with Thee.