

**Reading Together**  
**New Testament Bible Reading**  
**May 30 – June 5**

**Monday, May 30 – Acts 15: 36 – 16: 10**

At the end of chapter 15 Paul and Barnabas are getting ready to leave on a second missionary journey, and they have a disagreement about whether to take a man named John Mark with them. John Mark apparently had deserted them on their first journey and Paul wanted nothing more to do with him. Interestingly enough, later in his life Paul finds John Mark to be an indispensable help to his ministry (Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11). We could learn from this that we should be careful not to write people off too quickly! The disagreement between Paul and Barnabas cannot be resolved so they go their separate ways. As sad as this is, it now means that there are two missionary teams rather than one spreading the Gospel to the Gentiles. Paul takes Silas and a young disciple named Timothy (1 & 2 Timothy are letters Paul wrote to encourage Timothy in his ministry) and they head out to Derbe and Lystra. In spite of what the Church council decided in chapter 15, Paul has Timothy circumcised just to avoid controversy, since Timothy's father was a Greek.

Paul has a desire to go deeper into Asia, but God has other plans for him. In Acts 16:9 Paul has a vision of a man from Macedonia (Greece) who is begging him to come and preach the gospel there, so in obedience to Christ, off they go.

**Tuesday, May 31 – Acts 16: 11 – 40**

The funny thing is that Paul's vision of the man from Macedonia is really a woman named Lydia. She appears to be the convert to Christianity in Philippi, which was the first city Paul and Silas visited in Macedonia (Philippians is Paul's letter to the church that started in Philippi). The second convert was also a woman, a slave girl who was a fortune teller. As you read the account you find out that her conversion lands Paul and Silas in jail, but as they are singing hymns in the middle of the night, God sends an earthquake that shakes the doors of the jail open. They could have walked out if they had wanted

to, but doing so would have cost the jailer his life, so instead they save the jailer's life by sharing the Gospel with him. Isn't it amazing the way God works? First sending Paul to this region he didn't intend to go to at all, and then using Paul to bring people from so many different backgrounds to faith in Christ.

### **Wednesday, June 01 – Acts 17: 1 – 15**

From Philippi Paul and Silas move on to Thessalonica (1 & 2 Thessalonians is Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica), where they go to the synagogue and share the gospel with the worshippers who are gathered there. Some Jews become Christians as well as "a large number of God-fearing Greeks" (these were Gentiles who believed in the God of Judaism, but had not converted by being circumcised), and this makes the Jewish leaders in the town jealous. So they round up a mob and start a riot. You can see the beginnings of where the real persecution will come from for the early church with the charge they bring in verse 7. The worst persecution the early Christians endured came because they refused to proclaim Caesar as lord, because Jesus was their Lord.

In Berea, the Gospel is received with open arms until Jews from Thessalonica come to cause trouble once again. Pay close attention to verse 11 and notice why it is said the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians. They actually studied the Scriptures to see if what Paul was saying was true, and when they found that it was they believed. We should never just take the word of others, even preachers, when it comes to the Word of God. We should always be investigating ourselves to see if what they are telling us is true.

### **Thursday, June 02 – Acts 17: 16 – 34**

In Athens Paul is able to share the Gospel with the greatest thinkers and philosophers of that day. Notice how Paul does not disparage them for their idol worship. In fact, in verses 22-23, Paul compliments them for their religious zeal, and then uses their memorial to "An Unknown God" to share Christ with them. Paul speaks to them in a way that relates to them. Verses 27-28 are direct quotes Paul uses

from some of their writers and philosophers to make the case for Christ. We can learn a lot from Paul's techniques that he uses to try to reach these men where they are at the moment. The way you reach people with the Gospel is reach them where they are. Change only happens after the Gospel get a hold of a person's life.

### **Friday, June 03 – Acts 18: 1 – 28**

As Paul continues his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey he travels on to Corinth (Paul later wrote two letters to the church in Corinth that we know as 1 & 2 Corinthians) where he stays for 18 months. Again in Corinth we see the pattern of Paul's ministry going first to the Jews and then when they reject the Gospel going to the Gentiles who receive it warmly. In verses 9 and 10 we see Paul strengthened by the voice of the Lord in a vision while Paul sleeps. I am sure that this encouragement was greatly needed when you consider all of the attacks Paul has already endured. Paul also makes two very important contacts in Corinth—a husband and wife named Priscilla and Aquila. They work alongside of Paul making tents and I am sure that while they were doing that they learned a lot. Priscilla and Aquila then use what they learned to teach a man named Apollos (verses 24-28) who was already teaching about Jesus and defending the Gospel but there were gaps in his understanding that Priscilla and Aquila helped to fill in. They were able to do this because of the time they had spent alongside of Paul making tents. Apollos would become one of the great preachers and evangelists of the early church (1 Corinthians 3: 4-6).

### **Saturday, June 04 – Acts 19: 1 – 41**

Next Paul moves on to Ephesus (he also wrote a letter to this church that we know as the book of Ephesians). Notice, that as Paul moves on, Apollos stays behind in Corinth to continue the ministry. As you read chapter 19 you can see that the Gospel has spread into Ephesus already, but just like with Apollos there is not a great understanding of what it all means. The first men that Paul witnesses to are men who have repented of their sins and are trying to follow Jesus' teachings, but have not received Christ as their savior through faith. As they receive Christ as savior they also receive the Holy Spirit which

confirms that they now understand the Gospel and by faith have claimed it as their own.

Once again, as in the other cities, Paul goes first to the synagogue to share the Gospel with the Jews. After three months of witnessing to the Jews, they reject the Gospel, so once again Paul takes the good news of the Gospel to the Gentiles by going to a public forum, the lecture hall of Tyrannus. Paul's message of the Gospel is accompanied by many powerful miracles and the result is that many people repent (burning their scrolls containing magic spells and witchcraft), and a real revival takes place. But once again, there are those who are threatened by the message of the Gospel. In this case it is their livelihood, and in verses 23-41 they start a riot, but God continues to watch over Paul and his companions.

### **Sunday, June 05 – Acts 20: 1 – 12**

This passage continues what is actually a rather humorous story about a boy named Eutychus who fell asleep during a very long sermon that Paul was preaching. Based on the fact that Paul spoke until after midnight, the sermon was probably over 5 hours long (and you thought I was long winded!). In Paul's defense he probably wasn't sure when he would see them again so he wanted to say everything he needed to say. Eutychus, who must have been sitting on a window ledge fell 3 stories to what seemed to be his death. The amazing thing is that after Paul revived the boy he went back to preaching and preached until daylight. Paul was absolutely intent on preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ!