

Reading Together
New Testament Bible Reading
June 13 – June 19

Monday, June 13 – Acts 25: 1 – 27

In this chapter, Paul is once again tried by the Roman authorities, first, by the new governor, Festus, and then by King Agrippa, who was related to King Herod and was the puppet king of the Roman government over Israel. Once again we see the Jews hatch a plot to have Paul assassinated (verse 3) and once again God protects Paul and uses the plot to take Paul's life as a way to move Paul and the message of the Gospel deeper and deeper into the heart of the Roman Empire. Because Paul knew that a trip back to Jerusalem would end his life, Paul, as a Roman citizen, appeals to be tried by Caesar. This was going to mean a trip to Rome, where Paul wanted to go anyway, and an opportunity to spread the Gospel further into the Roman Empire. The trial before King Agrippa is really just a show trial where Festus is looking for help as to what he should write in the letter to Caesar concerning the charges against Paul. The dilemma Festus has is that if he sets Paul free there will be a riot among the Jews, but he doesn't want to look like a fool and send Paul to Rome without something substantial to charge him with. No one wanted to be accused of wasting Caesar's time! As you read this, one thing becomes very clear; every authority who comes into contact with Paul believes Paul to be innocent. Clearly God is using this trouble in Paul's life to further the spread of the Gospel. Could God be doing the same thing in yours?

Tuesday, June 14 – Acts 26: 1 – 32

King Agrippa was a Jew by birth and so he knew the basics of Judaism. Notice how Paul uses this to not only defend himself, but to present the truth of the Gospel to both Agrippa and to Festus. Notice how Paul skillfully weaves his personal testimony of God's grace in his own life with the story of the Bible. As Paul

reaches the climax of his mini sermon by proclaiming that Jesus, who the Romans and Jews crucified, had been raised from the dead. Festus accuses Paul of being insane. But Paul does not allow that charge to stand and directs his attention to Agrippa who understands better what Paul is talking about. Notice how Paul is more interested in sharing the Gospel than in defending himself. So often we focus on trying to just win an argument, or defending ourselves, and we forget that winning a heart should be the main focus of our efforts.

Wednesday, June 15 – Acts 27: 1 – 26

As with everything in Paul's life, even his Mediterranean cruise to Rome is not without drama! The Roman commander treats Paul kindly (verse 3), but refuses to listen to Paul's advice concerning the dangers of the voyage that lie ahead of them. Paul warns them to put into harbor, but the Roman commander listens to the ships' captain (who can blame him?) instead, and they continue to sail on right into the storms of winter. In the midst of a violent storm, the sailors do everything possible to try to save the ship, but it is all to no avail. Paul warns them that the ship is going to be lost, but assures them that God has promised to protect not only Paul but all who are on board the ship as well. .

Thursday, June 16 – Acts 27: 27 – 44

As the ship is about to wreck, the sailors decide to abandon the ship. Paul warns the centurion that if he lets the sailors go then all will be lost, and now the centurion, who has ignored Paul's advice in the past, decides to listen to Paul, and he has his soldiers cut the lines to the lifeboat the sailors had hoped to escape on that had already been lowered into the water. But that doesn't end the drama, as the ship runs aground the soldiers plan to kill Paul and the other prisoners, because if any of the prisoners were to escape Roman law called for the soldiers who were guarding them to be executed in the escaped prisoner's place. Once again

the centurion steps in and saves Paul's life, and everyone is able to reach land safely.

Friday, June 17 – Acts 28: 1 – 31

The sailors, soldiers and prisoners all wash up on the Island of Malta where they are welcomed by the islanders. A fire is built to warm them and as Paul takes some sticks to build the fire with he is bitten by a venomous snake. It is interesting to see the reaction of the islanders. First, they think Paul must be very evil to escape the shipwreck only to be killed by the snake, but then when Paul lives and is unharmed by the bite, they assume he is a god. On this island Paul is able to heal those who are sick and spread the Gospel, but then the time comes for them to continue on their journey to Rome. In Rome, even though Paul is chained to a soldier and under house arrest, Paul continues to preach the Gospel. Following the pattern Paul established throughout his ministry, Paul preaches first to the Jews, and then goes to the Gentiles when the Jews reject the Gospel. Notice how the book of Acts ends; Paul is able to boldly and without hindrance preach the Gospel even though that is the very thing he is under house arrest for doing. Clearly it was God's plan for Paul to end up in Rome. As Acts closes Paul is still alive. Church tradition holds that Paul was eventually released and went on a 4th missionary journey that took him all the way to Spain. It is believed that Paul was later re-arrested by the Roman Emperor Nero and executed.

Saturday, June 18 – Galatians 1: 1 – 24

The Book of Galatians is a letter Paul wrote to the churches he established in Galatia, which is a region in present day Turkey. These churches were falling under the influence of false teachers who had come into the churches and tried to convince them that in order to be Christians they also had to become a Jew first by obeying the Jewish law's including circumcision. In this first chapter of Galatians, Paul lays out the reason why he is writing to them in verses 6-10. Paul warns them not to accept any gospel

other the true gospel that he preached to them when he was there with them. In verse 10, Paul makes the point that the Gospel has nothing to do with pleasing men and everything to do with pleasing Christ. In verses 11-12 Paul tells them that the Gospel he preached to them came to him directly from Christ. In the rest of chapter 1 Paul lays out his credentials as a preacher of the Gospel. Paul knew what it was to be a Jew because he was the best Jew you could be, but he also knew the Gospel because he had personally met Jesus on the Road to Damascus and that meeting changed his life. Judaism no longer mattered; all that mattered was pleasing Christ.

Sunday, June 19 – Galatians 2: 1 – 21

In the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians, Paul establishes the fact that he was commissioned by the leaders of the church to be a missionary to the Gentiles. Paul went to the Gentiles and preached about freedom in Christ, but there were some who spied on their freedom to try to make them slaves again (verse 4). What Paul is talking about are those Jews who saw that Paul was not insisting on Gentiles becoming Jews first before they could become Christians. Remember in Acts 15 the Council in Jerusalem decided that it was not necessary for Gentiles to also become practicing Jews, so Paul is on very solid ground in his argument to the church in Galatia. Paul then goes on to remind the Galatians how he even stood against Peter when Peter was segregating himself from the Gentile believers (verses 11-14). Paul's whole argument is summed up in verses 15 – 21. No one can be saved by observing the law because no one can do that perfectly. We all need Jesus because we are sinners. As Christians we have died to our sinful nature (although we still sin) and so we don't live by faith in the law but by faith in Christ. If we could be saved by obedience to the law Christ died for nothing!