

ACTS

With the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Jesus' small band of disciples is empowered and emboldened to take the Good News of their risen Savior to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (1:8). Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles, spearheads the gospel advance on three far-reaching missionary journeys. The Book of Acts ends in Rome with Paul's imprisonment. Paul's ministry is drawing to a close, but an unstoppable message is just beginning.

Focus	Peter	Philip	Paul
Divisions	Power of the Church Progress of the Church	Persecution of the Church Propagation of the Church	Paul's First Journey Paul's Second Journey Paul's Third Journey Paul's Arrest Paul's Three Trials Paul's Trip to Rome
	1 4 5 7 8	9 10 12 13	15 16 18 19 20 21 23 24 26 27 28
Topics	History of the Church	History of a Church Planter	
	Establishment	Extension	Expansion Explanation
Place	Jerusalem	Judea & Samaria	Uttermost Part
Time	2 Years (A.D. 33-35)	13 Years (A.D. 35-48)	14 Years (A.D. 48-62)

Power of the Church / Acts 1-4

I Thursday
November

Heart of the Passage:
Acts 1:1-14; 2



Overview: Luke's two books, the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, might well be called a two-volume "History of the New Testament Church"—Volume 1: *The History of the Founder of the Church*; Volume 2: *The History of the Followers of the Church*. With the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven, the disciples are left in Jerusalem with

good news to share and a command to obey: "Wait for the promise of the Father" (1:4). True to Christ's word, on the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit arrives, accompanied by dramatic signs. With the Spirit's empowerment, the disciples move out to proclaim the glad tidings.

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
Waiting for Power	Witnessing Power	Powerful Cure	Powerful Appeal
Holy Spirit		Holy Boldness	

Without God, we are inadequate; with Him, we are invincible.



Your Daily Walk: Is your life a wonder to those around you? Is there anything about your lifestyle—the way you use your time . . . spend your money . . . treat your family . . . love your neighbors—that causes others to sit up and take notice?

There was no ignoring the powerful witness of those first-century Christians. "Fear came upon every soul" when they saw the "many wonders and signs" the apostles did in their midst (2:43). One such sign in chapter 3 involved a lame man—a man who begged for alms, but instead received legs! As others looked at his changed life, they responded in "wonder and amazement" (3:10). Peter's preaching turned that casual encounter by the Beautiful Gate into a wonderful revival with hundreds responding to the Good News of a risen Savior. But it all began with *one* changed life.

It's never too late for revival to break into your family or neighborhood. All God needs is one life to use as a showcase for His transforming power. Are you willing to let that revival begin with you? Then write God a note in the margin and tell Him so.



Insight: A Bit of Arithmetic in Acts

In 1:15 the band of disciples consisted of 120. In 2:41 their number had swelled to more than 3,000. By 4:4 that total had increased by several thousand more. At first, disciples were *added* daily (2:47; 5:14). But soon the believers were *multiplying* rapidly (6:7)!

Progress of the Church / Acts 5-7

Friday

November

2



Overview: Every church has its problems, and the newly organized church in Jerusalem is no exception. On the heels of Peter's miraculous curing of a lame man, several waves of trouble arrive: scandal in the church involving Ananias and Sapphira, sharp dissension between Jews and Greeks over the provision for widows in the church, and the brutal martyrdom of Stephen after his eloquent and convicting address before the Sanhedrin. But even in the face of such strong adversity, God is at work. One of the witnesses of Stephen's death is Saul, the Jewish persecutor who would soon become one of the chief figures in the expanding church!

Heart of the Passage:
Acts 5:1-16; 6

Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7
Embezzlement in the Church	Overlooked Needs in the Church	Opposition Outside the Church
Discipline	Deacons	Death



Your Daily Walk: Two pastors were exchanging the latest news. Said one, "Did you hear about the revival we had at our church?" "No," replied the other, "how many new members did you add?" "None," responded the first, "but we had some very helpful subtractions!"

The early chapters of Acts are marked by both kinds of "revival." There was dramatic growth by *addition*: at first 3,000, then 5,000 more were added. But don't overlook the growth by *subtraction*. Ananias and Sapphira felt God's disciplining hand, and "believers were the more added to the Lord" (5:14). Stephen, the church's spokesman, died a terrible death by stoning. Consequently, "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (8:4).

Start a revival in your life today by either *adding* something that is missing (like taking time to read good Christian books) or *subtracting* something that is hindering your walk with God (like too much television or too many late-night hours).



Insight: Stephen's Sermon—Old Testament in a Nugget
With the help of your Bible (and some back copies of this devotional guide if you have them), "walk" your way through the Old Testament with Stephen, marking in chapter 7 of Acts where each Old Testament book begins and ends. For example, Genesis begins with verse 1 and ends with verse 16. See how many more you can find. Have fun!

Revival is nothing more than a new beginning of obedience to God.

Persecution of the Church / Acts 8-9

3/4

Sat.-Sun.

November



Overview: Saul's persecution against the Christians in Jerusalem forces them to scatter to the regions of Judea and Samaria—exactly as Christ had predicted in 1:8. Philip the evangelist becomes God's instrument to lead many to faith in the city of Samaria, and later he shares the Good News with an Ethiopian dignitary on the road to Gaza. But the most strategic conversion takes place more than a hundred miles to the north, where Saul comes face to face with the very Lord whose cause he has persecuted.

Heart of the Passage:

Acts 8:1-8, 26-40; 9:1-22

Chapter 8				Chapter 9			
Evangelism in Samaria		Evangelism in the Desert		Encounter near Damascus		Escape in a Basket	
1	25	26	40	1	18	19	43
Philip's Preaching				Saul's Conversion			

To know God is to know that He should be obeyed.



Your Daily Walk: What does the Second Law of Thermodynamics (the greater the heat, the greater the expansion) have to do with the Book of Acts?

Answer: It is an accurate description of the process by which the gospel message expanded beyond the city of Jerusalem.

Two years after Jesus spoke the words recorded in Acts 1:8, the disciples resided only in Jerusalem, and so the Good News they were commissioned to share stayed within the city walls. But that meant only Phase One of the Great Commission was being accomplished. So God allowed a little heat in the form of persecution to encourage the expansion of the gospel into the regions of Judea and Samaria.

Postponed obedience to the command of God is disobedience. And God has many loving (but often painful) ways to encourage you to obey. The choice is yours: You can beat the heat by doing His bidding, or "feel the heat" of His chastening hand. Five times in today's passage an individual is commanded to arise and do something. Locate and circle the response in each case, and let that guide your response the next time you receive a similar command.



Insight: Why "Down" Is "Up" in Palestine

We read in 8:5 that "Philip went *down* to the city of Samaria," even though Samaria is *north* of Jerusalem. This makes sense when we realize that Israel's capital city is located atop a hill, and Samaria lies in a low plain. Moreover, we draw our maps with the top facing north, but the Palestinians drew them with the top facing east, looking inland from the Mediterranean.

Propagation of the Church / Acts 10–12

Monday

5

November



Overview: After his encounter with the Ethiopian, Philip leaves for Caesarea and is not mentioned again until chapter 21. Another resident of Caesarea, a Gentile centurion named Cornelius, becomes the first non-Jewish convert to Christianity. God uses a thrice-repeated vision to Peter to break down centuries of deep-seated prejudice between Jew and Gentile, setting the stage for the third and most expansive phase of the gospel advance—this time to the remotest corners of the known world.

Heart of the Passage:
Acts 10

Chapter 10	Chapter 11	Chapter 12
Peter's Revelation	Peter's Explanation	Peter's Incarceration
Vision	Vindication	Vast Expansion



Your Daily Walk: Using a dictionary (or better yet, a medical dictionary), look up the following words: *spleen, pancreas, kidney, pituitary gland, hypothalamus*. What do they all have in common? Here are two suggestions:

1. They are hidden from view.
2. They are essential to the proper functioning of the body.

It's easy to be aware of the visible parts of an organism, whether it's a human body or the body of Christ. But just as vital—and perhaps more so—are those parts you never see and seldom think about.

A diabetic may look perfectly healthy at a casual glance. But deep within his body a single organ has ceased to make its essential contribution, and as a result the entire body suffers. In the church at Antioch, Barnabas and Saul taught (11:26), but countless others exercised the gifts of giving, helps, and mercy to undergird their ministry (11:29; 12:5). One without the other would have left the church anemic and ineffective. Have you discovered the role God wants you to play in your local church? If not, your minister or church leader would be delighted to help you find it . . . and fill it!



Insight: The Third Time's a Charm

For Peter, almost every major lesson had to be repeated three times before he got the message. Three times he denied the Lord (Matthew 26:34); three times he was commanded by Christ to feed God's flock (John 21:15-17); and three times the sheet rose and fell before Peter saw the significance of it (Acts 10:9-16).

We find it easier to go to church than to be the church.

Paul's First Journey / Acts 13–15

6 Tuesday
November



Overview: Beginning with chapter 13, Syrian Antioch replaces Jerusalem as the missionary headquarters of the church. While five men are ministering in the church at Antioch, the Holy Spirit selects two to spearhead Phase Three of the gospel's advance, this time "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (1:8). Paul and Barnabas

Heart of the Passage:
Acts 13:1-3; 15

leave for Cyprus, making stops in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe before returning home to Jerusalem. There they find that their success in making Gentile converts has caused a major dispute among Jewish believers, prompting an all-church council to settle the matter.

Chapter 13	Chapter 14	Chapter 15
Commission of Paul and Barnabas	Mission to Lystra and Derbe	Circumcision in Question
First Missionary Journey		First Church Council

The more we know the mind of Christ, the more missionary-minded we become.



Your Daily Walk: Ask ten Christians, "Who is the greatest missionary in the New Testament apart from Jesus Christ?" and chances are good at least nine will answer without hesitation, "The Apostle Paul!"

But did you ever stop to consider the fact that missionaries today face even greater challenges than Paul did in his day? For example:

Paul did not need to learn a foreign language. Every part of the known world spoke the same universal language—Greek.

Paul did not need to adjust to a foreign culture. Rome ruled the known world, providing the same rights and privileges for Roman citizens worldwide. A little bit of Rome awaited Paul everywhere he went. Not so with today's overseas missionaries!

Repeatedly in his letters, Paul asked for prayer as he traveled and ministered (Colossians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:25). Don't your missionaries today deserve the same? Locate a picture of a missionary family you or your church supports, and place it in a prominent place at your home or office. Then make Philippians 1:3-4 your daily discipline in prayer on their behalf.



Insight: A Preview of Paul's Travels (Chapters 13–21)

Journey	Length	Locale	Personnel
#1	2 years	Galatia	Paul and Barnabas
#2	3 years	Macedonia/Achaia	Paul and Silas
#3	4 years	Asia Minor	Paul and others

Paul's Second Journey / Acts 16-18

Wednesday

7

November



Overview: John Mark, Barnabas's cousin and a traveling companion for part of the first journey, becomes the focus of a sharp dispute between Paul and Barnabas. As a result, the two veteran missionaries part company. Barnabas stays with John Mark and sails for Cyprus. Paul, accompanied by Silas and Timothy, travels more than 3,000 miles planting and building up churches in Macedonia, Achaia, and Greece.

Heart of the Passage:
Acts 16

Chapter 16	Chapter 17	Chapter 18
Entrance to Europe	Turmoil in Thessalonica	Co-laborers in Corinth
Paul's Second Missionary Journey		



Your Daily Walk: Disagreements in the church are nothing new. Even Paul and Barnabas had a falling out. But we can learn much from the way they wisely resolved their conflict.

The reason for their "sharp disagreement" (15:39) was John Mark, who had left the team midway through the first journey. Barnabas (whose name means "son of encouragement") was concerned primarily for the *worker* and wanted to give his cousin a second chance. Paul, on the other hand, was more concerned about the *work*, not wanting to lose the momentum of the first journey through another desertion. In the end they parted company to form two gospel teams instead of one. The impact of Paul's second journey is well documented in today's section. And in Colossians 4:10 and 2 Timothy 4:11, Paul himself warmly notes John Mark's contribution to his ministry.

Being reconciled does not always mean holding the same view. Sometimes it can mean agreeing to disagree in a spirit of love and humility.

Are you having a disagreement today? Take the first step toward reconciling it by assuring the other person, "I accept you as you are; let's support one another as we labor for God's glory."



Insight: Called by a Man, Confronted by a Woman

In his vision Paul saw a "man of Macedonia" (16:9) pleading with him to come to Europe with the message of good news. But when Paul arrived in Philippi, there were no God-fearing men to be found. Undaunted, Paul began working instead with women. Result: The first Macedonian convert to Christianity was not a man at all! (Can you find her name in today's section?)

*Force may subdue,
but love gains; and
he that forgives
first wins
the laurel.*

Paul's Third Journey / Acts 19-20

8

Thursday

November

Heart of the Passage:
Acts 19:8-41



Overview: Turn back to Acts 18:23 to pick up the beginning of Paul's third journey—an expedition which takes him throughout the province of Asia, where he visits churches founded on previous trips. The church at Ephesus hosts Paul for nearly three years while he conducts a ministry so successful that “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (19:10). Leaving Ephesus, Paul visits churches in Macedonia and Achaia before setting sail for Jerusalem and an uncertain future.

Chapter 19				Chapter 20						
Persuasion at Ephesus	22	23	Persecution at Ephesus	41	1	Travels to Greece	16	17	Testimonial to Ephesians	38
Paul's Third Missionary Journey										

*Our sense
of sin is in
proportion
to our
nearness
to God.*



Your Daily Walk: Put yourself in the following situation.

You have just received word that an adult bookstore is opening next door to your house or apartment. What is your response? Are you indifferent or indignant? What action would you take?

Paul was surrounded by sinful influences and corrupting pressures during his public ministry. Corinth was notorious for its immorality, Ephesus for its idolatry, Athens for its polytheism. And yet, through the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul was able to move among sinful people, making an impact on their lives for Jesus Christ. In Corinth and Ephesus he left behind growing bodies of believers who formed the nucleus of new churches.

What impact is your life making on sinful people and sinful situations around you? Is your influence for God being felt? Make a list of three or four corrupting influences in your neighborhood you would like to see changed. Select one item from your list and make it the focus of your prayer time. Then write your mayor, city council member, or congressional representative and tell him or her about your concern.



Insight: Standing Room Only in Ephesus

The Grand Theatre in Ephesus, site of the famous pro-Diana, anti-Paul rally, was a large outdoor amphitheater that seated more than 25,000 people—all of whom screamed for two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians” (19:34). The site still stands today near Selcuk, Turkey.

Paul's Arrest / Acts 21-23

Friday
November 9



Overview: Ominous signs accompany Paul's third missionary journey. A prophet named Agabus binds himself with Paul's belt, demonstrating the fate awaiting Paul in Jerusalem. True to the prophet's word, Paul's arrival sparks angry opposition and false accusations. Once before the crowd and again before the Sanhedrin, Paul attempts to defend himself. But after narrowly averting an assassination plot, he finds himself in prison awaiting the opportunity to declare the gospel before governors, kings, and Caesar himself.

Heart of the Passage:
Acts 21

Chapter 21	Chapter 22	Chapter 23
Paul's Arrest	Paul's Accusers	Paul's Attempted Assassination
Jerusalem	Jews	Jeopardy



Insight: Tale of Two Journeys

A striking series of parallels can be drawn between the last journeys to Jerusalem of Paul and Jesus. The outcomes of both journeys were predicted in advance (21:10-11; Mark 10:33). Both men were bound by the Jews and delivered to the Gentiles. And both desired above all else that the will of God be done (21:14; Luke 22:42).



Your Daily Walk: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25:11). That verse would provide a fitting title for Acts 21-28—chapters in which Paul speaks before many different audiences: mobs and councils, governors and kings, prisoners and sailors. In each case his speech is appropriate to the occasion: gracious praise for those in authority, terse commands to those on the ship, and courteous apology to the high priest.

Paul knew that words are easy to cast but difficult to reel in! Munch on an apple and think about how you have been communicating with those around you lately. Have your words been golden apples or crab apples? List below a "word fitly spoken" that you can share this week with your

- Boss or co-worker: _____
- Parent or teacher: _____
- Pastor or minister: _____
- Spouse or friend: _____
- Unsaved neighbor: _____

People like not only to be loved, but to be told they are loved; the realm of silence is large enough beyond the grave.

Paul's Three Trials / Acts 24-26

10/11

Sat.-Sun.

November

Heart of the Passage:
Acts 26



Overview: Two years pass before Paul's case reaches the courtroom. But political pressure keeps two governors, Felix and Festus, from resolving the issue. When Festus suggests the case be sent back to Jerusalem—an almost certain death sentence—there can only be one response from Paul: "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat"

(25:10). While preparations are being made for the 2,000-mile journey to Rome, King Agrippa arrives, giving Paul yet another opportunity to defend the gospel.

Chapter 24	Chapter 25	Chapter 26
Trial Before Governor Felix	Trial Before Governor Festus	Trial Before King Agrippa
Almost Released	Almost Murdered	Almost Persuaded

Only the willingness to suffer can conquer suffering.



Your Daily Walk: Doctor to parent: "And how is your little boy doing at controlling his behavior this week?"

Parent: "He's trying, doctor."

Doctor: "Good, I'm glad to hear it."

Parent: "Yes, Doc, he's very, *very* trying!"

Trials come in all shapes and sizes. But the bottom line is the same: God wants you to rise above them, persevere through them, and emerge stronger from them. Peter puts it this way: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

Paul could have viewed his three trials as a bother. Instead, he welcomed them as a blessing. Not because they were pleasant, but because Paul knew they were purposeful. Developing a faith like gold requires the fiery heat of refining situations. Build a fire in your fireplace this evening as you consider this question: "Is God finding that I am trying to cooperate with Him . . . or that I'm just plain *trying*?"



Insight: "The Power of a King with the Mind of a Slave"

The historian Tacitus made the above statement about Felix, and Felix's treatment of Paul seems to bear out this character analysis (24:24-27). He often met with Paul, not to wrestle with the issues that Paul raised, but to give Paul an opportunity to bribe him. Paul, of course, did not oblige and thus had to sit in prison for two years.

Paul's Trip to Rome / Acts 27-28

Monday
November 12



Overview: During the perilous voyage by sea to Rome, God assures Paul in a dream that he will stand before Caesar to bear witness to the gospel. What God does not tell Paul is that before he arrives in Rome he will experience shipwreck and snakebite. The account closes with Paul under house arrest for two years, "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (28:31).

Heart of the Passage:
Acts 27; 28:16-31

Chapter 27				Chapter 28			
Sailing for Rome		Shipwrecked on Malta		Reception in Rome		House Arrest in Rome	
1	26	27	44	1	16	17	31
Peril in the Water				Peril on the Land			



Your Daily Walk: Even the best seeds germinate only in the proper soil. Acts 28:24 is a summary of the response to Paul's "seed sowing" in the city of Rome: "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." It's a reminder that even the Apostle Paul couldn't persuade a person into heaven if that individual was not willing to "see . . . hear . . . understand . . . and . . . be converted" (28:27).

You can expect the same response as you venture forth with the words of life. Some will believe, for God has promised that His Word will not return void (Isaiah 55:11). And some will not believe—not because the message is deficient, but because they are unwilling to repent. Don't be discouraged with the latter, and don't be surprised at the former! Like Paul, keep praying, sharing, and looking up.



Insight: Acts Beyond the Book of Acts

Chapter 28 concludes Luke's account, but significant events continued to transpire in the life of Paul and the New Testament church. The following is a suggested chronology:

- Paul's First Roman Imprisonment (Acts 28:30)A.D. 60-62
(Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians & Philemon written)
- Paul's Freedom From Imprisonment 62-67
(1 Timothy & Titus written)
- Burning of Rome 64
- Second Roman Imprisonment 67-68
(2 Timothy written)
- Paul's Death 68
- Destruction of Jerusalem 70

We conquer—not in any brilliant fashion—we conquer by continuing.

ROMANS

How can God be both just and the justifier of sinful mankind? Paul wrote to the believers in Rome to set forth God's solution to that "divine dilemma." Christ's sacrifice on the cross provides the basis for God's gracious dealings with Jew and Gentile alike. In Romans, the believer moves from the emptiness of sin to the glory of God's presence as he is "conformed to the image of God's Son" (8:29). Having been saved by faith, the believer is thus empowered to serve by faith.

Focus	Problem	Principle				Practice
DIVISIONS	Unrighteousness of Mankind Explored	Righteousness of God Provided	Righteousness of God Applied	Righteous Plan of God Explained	Righteousness of God Displayed	
	1	3 4	5 6	8 9	11 12	16
Topics	Bad News	Good News	Spreading the News			
	Saved by Faith		Serving by Faith			
Place	Corinth (?)					
Time	A.D. 57					

Unrighteousness of Mankind Explored / Romans 1-3

Tuesday

November

13



Overview: In his letter to the Romans, Paul addresses a group of Christians whom he longs to see and for whom he has prayed often—though he has never met them face to face. In order to strengthen and comfort them, Paul outlines the basis of the gospel (chs. 1-11) and the resulting behavior that is possible because of the gospel (chs. 12-16). Underlying everything Paul says is a basic human problem: sin. Mankind stands guilty before a holy God, deserving only His wrath and judgment. That's the bad news. But there is also good news for lost men and women: "The gospel of Christ . . . is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (1:16).

Heart of the Passage:
Romans 1; 3:21-31

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3
Universal Guilt of Mankind	Universal Judgment of Mankind	Unmerited Grace of God
Degradation	Condemnation	Justification



Your Daily Walk: Like a skilled surgeon, Paul dissects sinful man and analyzes his malignant condition (3:10-18).

- Man's mind: void of understanding about God
- Man's throat: an open grave
- Man's tongue: covered with deceit
- Man's lips: poisonous as a viper
- Man's mouth: full of cursing and bitterness
- Man's feet: wayward and wicked
- Man's eyes: nearsighted, ingrown, and godless

The prognosis is bleak: "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in [God's] sight" (3:20). But once you recognize your problem, you are a candidate for applying the Savior's cure.

Read about it in 3:24; then if you have never done so before, personalize it by placing your faith in the Great Physician who alone specializes in cases like yours!



Insight: A Vocabulary List for Readers of Romans (3:23-25)

Justification: God's declaration of a guilty sinner as "not guilty" on the basis of Christ's work received by faith

Redemption: God's purchase of mankind out of slavery to sin

Propitiation: satisfaction of God's righteous demands

Remission: cancellation or pardon of a debt of sin

Sinning wouldn't be so popular if its wages were paid immediately.

Righteousness of God Provided / Romans 4–5

14 Wednesday
November



Overview: Paul has so far set forth the need for salvation and the path to salvation. Now he illustrates his point from the lives of two Bible characters, Abraham and Adam. Justification in no way results from works of the law. That truth is seen in the life of Abraham, who “believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness”

Heart of the Passage:
Romans 5

(4:3). In contrast to Adam, whose disobedience introduced sin and death to all mankind, justification through Jesus Christ brings peace, restoration, and life to “everyone that believeth” (1:16)—Jew and Gentile alike.

Chapter 4	Chapter 5
Example of Justification	Effects of Justification
Abraham and Circumcision	Adam and Christ

Grace will save a man, but it will not save him and his idol.



Insight: One for All and All for One (5:12-21)

Notice the parallels between the far-reaching consequences of Adam’s sin and Jesus’ sacrifice.

By the one man, Adam, came

... sin and death (v. 12)

... judgment (v. 16)

... many sinners (v. 19)

... abounding sin (v. 20)

By the one man, Jesus, came

... grace and life (v. 15)

... justification (v. 16)

... many righteous (v. 19)

... abounding grace (v. 20)



Your Daily Walk: In the margin, see if you can list five things you never had to learn from your parents (such as lying, stealing, selfishness). Did you ever wonder why those “deadly virtues” came so naturally?

It is difficult to overestimate the impact of Adam’s first sin in the Garden of Eden. Because of that one act of rebellion:


- sin and death entered the world (5:12).
- all people were destined to be born sinners (5:19).
- all people incurred God’s wrath and judgment (5:18).

It is equally difficult to overestimate the impact of Christ’s death on the cross. Because of that one act of supreme love:

- God’s free gift of grace came into the world.
- the way was provided for sinners to become saints.
- believing ones today experience God’s righteousness.

Do you find that news too good to be true? Then read 5:6-11 slowly and prayerfully twice. It’s a fact worth putting your faith in!

INTRODUCTION TO THE PAULINE EPISTLES

Pauline Epistles: Individuals					
	1 Timothy	2 Timothy	Titus	Philemon	
Pauline Epistles: Church	2 Thessalonians			Hebrews	Non-Pauline Epistles and Revelation
	1 Thessalonians			James	
	Colossians			1 Peter	
	Philippians			2 Peter	
	Ephesians			1 John	
	Galatians			2 John	
	2 Corinthians			3 John	
	1 Corinthians			Jude	
	Romans			Revelation	
	Acts				
	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	
Historical Books					

The thirteen letters beginning with Romans and ending with Philemon all flow from the pen of Paul to various New Testament churches and pastors. The first nine were written to young, struggling congregations which Paul had either founded or taken a personal interest in during his missionary journeys. The last four were written to encourage pastors in their difficult and demanding duties as shepherds of the flock of God.

Romans is foundational because of its theme of justification by faith alone. Unfortunately, the Corinthians were not living that way, and the Galatians were adding works as a basis for their confidence in God. All justified believers form one body (Ephesians), which is called to unity (Philippians) and doctrinal purity (Colossians). And even as the body lives and serves today, it looks to the future (Thessalonians).

Righteousness of God Applied / Romans 6-8

15 Thursday
November

Heart of the Passage:
Romans 7:13-8:39



Overview: If the believer in Jesus is declared righteous by God and stands in God's grace, should he be concerned about the continued expressions of his old sinful lifestyle? Absolutely! The believer who has been identified with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection is set free from bondage to sin. He is free to serve a new

Master, to appropriate the power of the life-giving Spirit to enable him to live a life characterized by hope, holiness, and victory over circumstances.

Chapter 6	Chapter 7	Chapter 8
Dead to Sin	Dead to the Law	Alive in the Spirit
Problems with Sinfulness		Potential for Holiness

When we ask God to do something for us, He generally does something in us.



Your Daily Walk: When you were a child, did you ever try to pick up a box that was much too heavy for you to lift? Try as you might, you could only raise one side an inch or two off the floor. But you were powerless to lift the entire burden, much less move it from one place to another. Then, just as you were about to abandon the project in frustration, along came an adult to help you. He reached down, picked up both you and the box, and together you "carried" the box with ease!

Now think of the above example as a "Parable of Paul's Dilemma . . . and Yours" (7:19-25). What is the box? What is the frustration? Who is the One who helps? What should your response be toward Him today . . . and every day? Talk to Him about it right now.



Insight: Questions That Deserve an Answer
After you have completed today's reading, you should be able to answer the following questions:

"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (6:1).

"Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?" (6:15).

"Is the law sin?" (7:7).

"Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (7:24).

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" (8:31).

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (8:35).

11/15
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Righteous Plan of God Explained / Romans 9–11

Friday

November

16



Overview: Paul has been addressing his comments to a predominately Gentile audience.

But now he anticipates an objection that could be raised by a Jewish reader: “If Abraham, the father of the Jews, was justified by faith in the coming Messiah, why have so few seen the light? Is God unfair to His chosen people? Why have most Jews rejected God’s plan, if indeed what you have written is true?” Paul meets this objection head-on. God has not rejected His people; the Jews have rejected Him! God’s treatment of Israel is not arbitrary but rests upon Israel’s lack of faith. The rejection of Israel is only partial (as demonstrated by the fact that Paul—a Jew—trusted Christ) and temporary. A day of restoration is near when “the Deliverer . . . shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (11:26).

Heart of the Passage:
Romans 9:1-5; 9:30–10:15

Chapter 9	Chapter 10	Chapter 11
Israel’s Rejection Explained	Israel’s Unbelief Described	Israel’s Restoration Assured
Mercy Spurned	Righteousness Rejected	Salvation Promised



Your Daily Walk: True or False: A sincere belief will get you to heaven.

Perhaps you’ve heard about the man who took what he sincerely thought was aspirin. Unfortunately, he was sincerely wrong . . . and became sincerely dead.

That’s precisely Paul’s point about the Jews in 9:30-32. Who can doubt the sincerity of their beliefs and actions? They practiced their righteousness “religiously,” thinking this would win God’s approval. But they were sincerely wrong and so died in their sins.

Have you been lulled into complacency by the sincere (but wrong) beliefs of some of your neighbors or relatives? They may be sincere, but even if they are sincerely wrong, they’re still wrong and will be eternally lost. In 10:13-15 Paul presents the need for the verbal proclamation of the gospel. Answer Paul’s questions in verse 14 and determine today to be the preacher who will “bring glad tidings of good things” (10:15) to some sin-seared sincere person.



Insight: Paul, the Old Testament Whiz

In the space of these three chapters, Paul demonstrates his thorough knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures by quoting from 10 different books. How many can you identify? Have fun!

People are far more ready to receive the gospel than most Christians are to give it.

Righteousness of God Displayed / Romans 12-16

Sat.-Sun.

17/18

November



Overview: In the closing chapters of his treatise, Paul concentrates on practical problems of everyday living that demand a demonstration of the righteousness God provides. Doctrine is dynamic, whether in matters of personal consecration, loving service to others, response to authority, use of personal liberty, or unity in the body of Christ.

Heart of the Passage:
Romans 12-13

Chapter 12	Chapter 13	Chapters 14-15	Chapter 16
Serve One Another	Submit to One Another	Support One Another	Salute One Another
Conformity	Authority	Liberty	Cordiality

The basis of effective government is public confidence.



Your Daily Walk: You may be shocked to think that the elections you vote in are rigged from the start. But in this sense they are: God knows the outcome from the beginning! In fact, the idea of political leaders and civil authorities was His in the first place. "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (13:1).

At the close of another election season, it is good to review what the Bible says about your responsibility toward the civil authorities He has placed over you. (And remember, the popularity of the leader is immaterial. Paul wrote these commands during the rule of Emperor Nero, and many Christians in that day were confident that Nero was Antichrist, so cruel was his administration.)

1. Respect the authority of those in office (13:1-2). Their role is God-ordained, and to resist them is to resist God Himself.
2. Obey the laws of the land (13:4-5). They are for your good. Don't be surprised when you suffer for breaking the law.
3. Support your government by paying the taxes and tributes which are due (13:6-7). Even Christ Himself affirmed this principle when He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" (Matthew 22:21). Tax evasion is not good stewardship; it is sin!
4. Above all, pray for those in positions of authority (1 Timothy 2:1-2). Theirs is an awesome responsibility before God.



Insight: The Peter-less Postscript
In chapter 16 Paul sends greetings to 26 individuals, 2 unnamed relatives, and 4 other groups of people. Yet Peter is not mentioned, a curious omission unless Peter was not in Rome.

I CORINTHIANS

In New Testament times, Corinth was famous as the commercial hub of southern Greece. But it was also infamous as a center of immorality. Despite that, Paul established a church there near the end of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-17). Though the church was in Corinth, Corinth was also in the church, infecting its fellowship and witness. Paul deals decisively with the problems plaguing the church. His goal is that "all things be done decently and in order" (14:40).

Focus	Four Problems	Four Perspectives			
Divisions	Problems of Factions and Lawsuits	Perspectives on Marriage and Liberty	Perspectives on Worship	Perspectives on the Resurrection	
	1 6 7	10 11	14 15	16	
Topics	Division	Discussion	Disorder	Disbelief	
	Corporate	Private	Public		
Place	Written in Ephesus				
Time	A.D. 56				

Problems of Factions and Lawsuits / 1 Corinthians 1-6

19

Monday

November

Heart of the Passage:
1 Corinthians 2-3



Overview: Churches aren't perfect because churches are full of imperfect people. Paul writes to the believers at Corinth to correct errors in their public and private behavior which are detracting from their gospel witness. In an orderly fashion Paul moves from point to point, setting forth godly guidelines for conduct consistent with

"the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ" (1:4).

Factions, immorality, lawsuits between believers—the list of offenses is lengthy. But Paul wastes no words in delivering comments that are potent and practical!

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapters 3-4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6
Fact of Divisions	Cause of Divisions	Cure for Divisions	Moral Abuses	Legal Abuses
Jealous Factions			Improper Actions	

Criticism from a wise man is more to be desired than the approval of a fool.



Your Daily Walk: Two pastors were discussing the growing criticism aimed at the church of Jesus Christ. The conversation ended with a hearty laugh when one suggested to the other, "If all the critics of the church were laid end to end . . . maybe it would be a good idea to leave them there!"

It has always been easier to criticize than to confront, to comment from the sidelines rather than get involved in the process of implementing creative change. Paul's stern letter to the Corinthians was no mere 16-chapter list of criticisms and complaints. Rather, he cared enough to confront, to suggest new courses of action, and even to visit in person to motivate the church to implement necessary discipline.

Think of individuals for whom you share a godly concern. Perhaps they have been dabbling in the occult or with morally compromising situations. And given the chance, they may continue in their deadly course—unless someone cares enough to confront them . . . someone like you. But before you approach them, be sure you are "prayed up" and blameless in conduct yourself. Confrontation is never easy, but God has promised to provide the strength to do what honors Him.



Insight: New Testament Las Vegas

Merchants and sailors from all over the Mediterranean flocked to Corinth to gamble, find prostitutes, and experience other forms of lasciviousness. The Temple of Aphrodite (goddess of love) overlooked the city from atop a hill named Acrocorinth. With its 1,000 prostitutes, it epitomized the ambiance of Corinth.

Perspectives on Marriage and Liberty / 1 Corinthians 7–10

Tuesday

November

20



Overview: Beginning with chapter 7, Paul answers a series of questions raised by the believers in Corinth.

- Is celibacy better than marriage?
- Is it permissible for Christians to eat meat offered to idols?
- Is it proper for a minister of the gospel to derive his living from that ministry?
- If an action is lawful, is it therefore permissible?

Heart of the Passage:
1 Corinthians 7–8

Building upon Old Testament quotations and Christ's teachings, Paul sets forth God's perspective on marriage and Christian liberty.

Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Chapter 9	Chapter 10
Problems with Marriage	Problems with Meat	Counsel to Ministers	Caution About Murmuring
Be Careful	Be Considerate	Be Consistent	Be Content



Insight: Key Facts About Corrupt Corinth

Because of its strategic location on the narrow isthmus between the Aegean and Adriatic seas, Corinth attracted worldwide commerce—and with it, worldwide religious influences. The city became filled with shrines and temples, the most prominent being the Temple of Aphrodite atop the 1,800-foot prominence overlooking the city. This cosmopolitan center thrived on entertainment, vice, and corruption. Eventually the city became so notorious for its immorality that the term “to act like a Corinthian” became a synonym for debauchery.

*You can't
be the salt
of the
earth
without
smarting
someone.*



Your Daily Walk: Would you want to have been a charter member of the first-century “Church of Corinth”? Why or why not?

It was no accident Paul aimed for the city of Corinth on his second missionary journey. The stakes were high; the location was strategic; the pressures were enormous. Paul knew that a clear, convincing gospel witness in that cosmopolitan crossroads could potentially change the city, the province, and indeed the world!

God is still in the business of placing His children in strategic locations—locations where the purity of your marriage and the zeal of your walk with God can make a difference. Your town, like Corinth of old, may be notorious for its wickedness. Begin to pray today that it will become “notorious” for its gospel witness. And ask God to let that witness begin with you.

Perspectives on Worship / 1 Corinthians 11–14

21 Wednesday
November



Overview: Paul's letter so far has dealt with problems of a personal nature. But now he addresses public issues in the Corinthians' church: the veiling of women, the importance of the Lord's Supper, and the use and abuse of spiritual gifts. Worship must be characterized by propriety and orderliness. Spiritual gifts must be exercised in love for the edifying (building up) of the whole body of Christ. Only then is the church of God properly worshiping the God of the church.

Heart of the Passage:
1 Corinthians 12–13

Chapter 11	Chapter 12	Chapter 13	Chapter 14
Settling Disorders Involving . . .			
Lord's Supper	Lack of Unity	Lack of Love	Lax Worship
Moderation	Manifestation	Examination	Edification

Ministry is our love for Christ dressed in working clothes.



Your Daily Walk: Have you ever taken an aptitude or vocational interest test? If you have, you know these tests often measure dexterity, vocabulary, and problem-solving ability. Their purpose is to identify skills you have as a guide for future education and training. That way you might avoid becoming a square peg in a round hole.

Here's a three-question aptitude test to help you discover your spiritual gift or gifts for use in your local church.

1. As you examine your church's ministry, where do you think improvement could be made? (This is probably an area which would involve your gift, as revealed by your sensitivity to need in that area.)
2. What type of ministry do you eagerly anticipate doing?
3. What type of ministry do others compliment you on?

Now take your answers to your minister or church leader, and discuss how you can get more actively involved in the life of your church.



Insight: Anatomy of a Church
Using each of the following statements from the physical world, see if you can state a corresponding principle regarding the church:

1. No single part of the body, regardless of its importance, can perform all the functions the body requires for survival.
2. The hidden parts of the body (such as the liver and lungs) are as essential as the visible parts.
3. The eye, though physically located above the hand or the foot, has great difficulty getting along without either.

Perspectives on the Resurrection / 1 Corinthians 15-16

Thursday

November

22



Overview: False teachers had been confusing the Corinthians by denying the doctrine of physical resurrection. Their attacks struck at the very heart of the Christian faith, for without the Resurrection, the good news of the gospel is made null and void. Paul defends the Resurrection as a historical fact confirmed by more than 500 eye-witnesses (15:6). The Resurrection provides hope for the believer's body as well as his soul and motivates the believer to be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (15:58).

Heart of the Passage:
1 Corinthians 15:1-22,
51-58

Chapter 15		Chapter 16	
Proof of Christ's Resurrection 1 19	Pattern for Future Resurrections 20 58	Provision for the Poor 1 4 5	Personal Plans for Paul 24
Instruction in the Faith		Instructions for the Future	



Your Daily Walk: The human body is a truly remarkable machine. Car makers are pleased if their product lasts "5 years or 50,000 miles." But your body may well last you 5 . . . 10 . . . 15 . . . even 20 times that long.

That's not to say it won't require periodic maintenance. And parts of it may wear out sooner than others. Some things will be gained that you don't want (like wrinkles and extra pounds); others will be lost that you do want (like hair and teeth).

For the Christian, however, there's an even more exciting prospect than the thought that his body might last 70 . . . 80 . . . 90 years. One day he will get a body that will last for all eternity! A body that won't wrinkle with age or fall apart with use. A body that will be incorruptible . . . immortal . . . sinless. As you minister for Christ today under the limitations of a handicap, poor health, arthritis, or just plain fatigue, ponder often and long this warming truth from 1 Corinthians 15:51-58: "I've got some body waiting for me!"



Insight: The Best Attested Fact in Ancient History
Pretend for the next few minutes that you have been given the assignment of confirming (or denying) the rumor that Jesus rose from the dead. From Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20-21, Acts 1, and 1 Corinthians 15, see if you can gather at least 10 pieces of evidence to prove that Jesus' claim of bodily resurrection is a fact of history, not a figment of someone's imagination.

If you do not think about the future, you cannot have one.

2 CORINTHIANS

False teachers in Corinth—angered by Paul's first letter—swayed the people against him. They claimed Paul was fickle, proud, unimpressive in appearance and speech, dishonest, and unqualified as an apostle. After Paul sent Titus to deal with the situation, he rejoiced to hear of the Corinthians' change of heart. Paul wrote this letter to thank the repentant majority for their support, and to appeal to the rebellious minority to accept his authority, as he defends his conduct, character, and calling.

Focus	Ministry of the Gospel		Minister of the Gospel
Divisions	Paul's Attitudes in Ministry	Paul's Motivation and Model in Ministry	
	1	5 6	9 10 13
Topics	Character	Commitment	Credentials
	Explanation	Exhortation	Vindication
Place	Written in Macedonia		
Time	A.D. 56		

Paul's Attitude in Ministry / 2 Corinthians 1-5

Friday

November

23



Overview: The numerous problems in the church at Corinth, coupled with Paul's personal conflicts with certain individuals, were weighing heavily upon him. Nevertheless, God had comforted him so that he in turn could comfort others. Despite the most trying circumstances, the faithful minister for God can enjoy daily strength and victory—not that he might be comfortable, but that he might be a comforter. The gospel ministry is superior to that of Moses and the Law. It is a ministry of glory that seeks to exalt Jesus Christ in all things. Motivated by Christ's example of love, and living daily in the fear of the Lord, the faithful minister can rejoice in his role as an ambassador for Christ—proclaiming reconciliation and restoration for estranged sinners.

Heart of the Passage:
2 Corinthians 4-5

Chapters 1-2	Chapters 3-4	Chapter 5
A Ministry of Comfort	A Ministry of Glory	A Ministry of Reconciliation
Triumph in Christ	Temple of Christ	Love of Christ



Your Daily Walk: Your best friend's marriage is in trouble. The husband moves out; the couple seeks professional help. Then you hear the welcome news: They have been *reconciled*. What does that mean?

A union goes on strike for higher wages and shorter hours. The management refuses to meet the union's demands. The two sides sit down to negotiate. At last an announcement is made: They *reconciled* their differences. What does that mean?

An estranged sinner has gone his own way (Isaiah 53:6), wandering far from the God who made him. You as an ambassador of Jesus Christ come to share with him the good news that a bridge has been provided to restore fellowship between sinful humanity and holy God (5:19). You extend the invitation, "Will you be *reconciled* to God?" What are you asking the person to do?

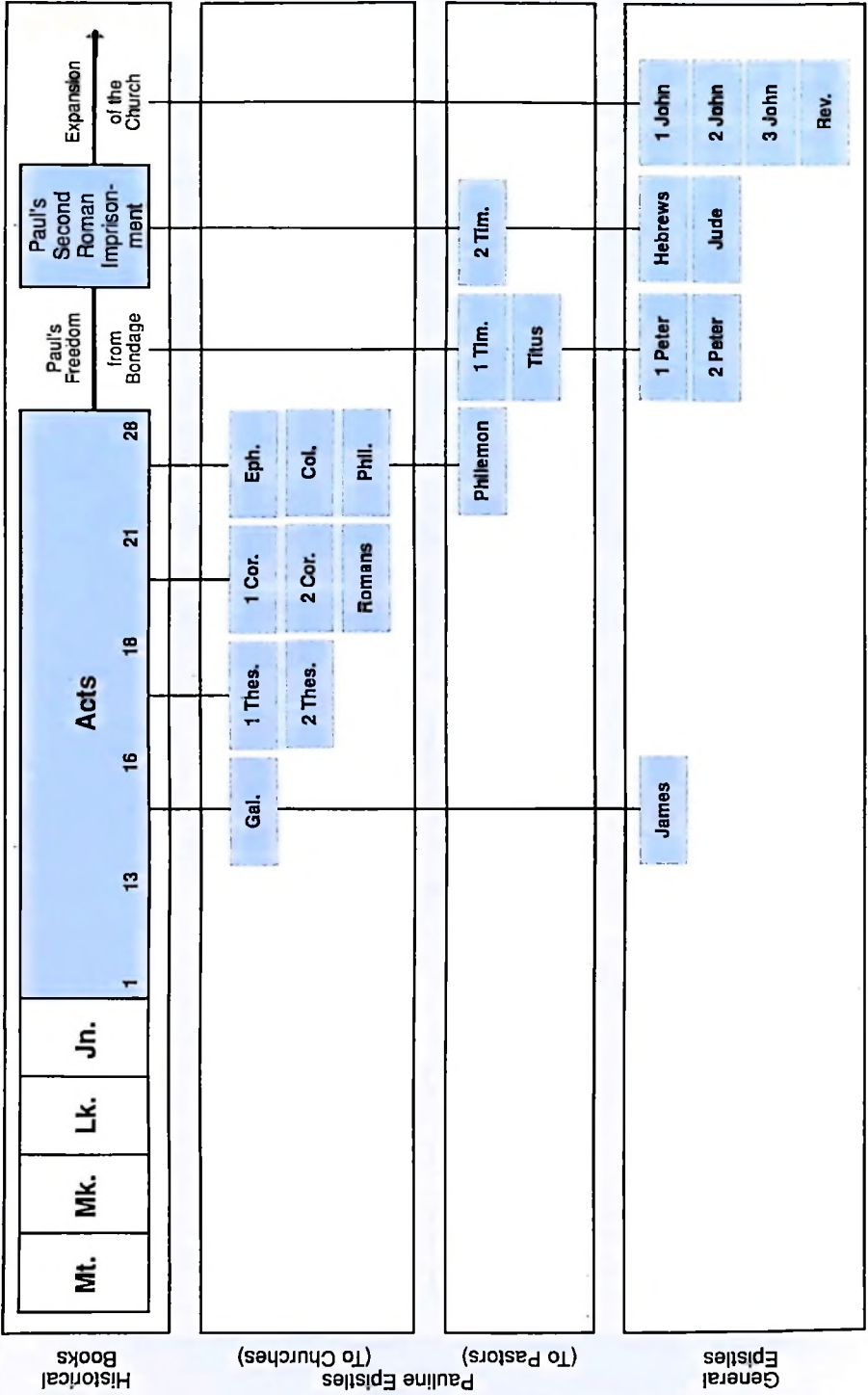
Yours is the precious privilege of inviting others to be *reconciled* to God. Have you reported for work today?



Insight: They Didn't Even Like His Looks! Paul's need to write 2 Corinthians becomes clear when you note the severity of the charges against him: fickleness (1:17-23), pride (3:1), weakness (10:10), rude speech (11:6), meanness (7:8-10), dishonesty (12:16-19), and mental instability (5:13).

It takes two sides to make a lasting peace, but it only takes one to make the first step.

AN INTEGRATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



Paul's Motivation and Model / 2 Corinthians 6-9

Sat.-Sun.

November

24/25



Overview: Being a partner in the gospel means, first and foremost, allowing the gospel to have its life-changing effect in you. As fellow workers in the gospel ministry, Paul exhorts the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in an empty, purposeless way. Fellowship with darkness, filthiness of the flesh, and insensitivity to financial needs around you are all inconsistent with the grace of God. Those truly motivated by the gospel will seek to exercise generosity toward the needy.

Heart of the Passage:
2 Corinthians 8:1-9:8

Chapter 6	Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Chapter 9
A Ministry of Purity	A Message of Praise	A Ministry of Giving	A Method of Giving
Separation		Stewardship	



Your Daily Walk: A man complained to his pastor, "It's getting to be just one continuous 'give, give, give.'" To which the pastor replied, "Say, that's one of the best descriptions of Christianity I've ever heard!"

Here are some sermons-in-a-sentence on the subject of giving:

- Only by giving of oneself is enough taken away to make room for receiving more.
- Discontentment makes rich men poor; contentment makes poor men rich.
- Two telltale marks of a Christian are giving and forgiving, for the world knows little about either.

The average American churchgoer gives less than 3 percent of his income for church and charity. If 2 Corinthians 8:1-2 were being written about you and your church—rather than the churches of Macedonia—what would Paul say? And would you be pleased or pained to know others were reading about your model of giving?

Write the words of 2 Corinthians 9:7 inside your checkbook. Let them remind you that cheerful giving comes from the heart, not just the checkbook.



Insight: Grace, the Gift That Keeps On Giving
In chapters 8 and 9 the word *grace* appears seven times. The same Greek word is translated "gift" in 8:4 and "grace" in 8:19—though clearly a monetary gift is in view in each case. Since grace is an undeserved gift, you should not be surprised to discover it is the key word in a passage dealing with money!

All we can hold in our cold, dead hands is what we have given away.

Paul's Authority in Ministry / 2 Corinthians 10-13

26

Monday

November



Overview: Discipline is never pleasant, but the task becomes doubly difficult when the authority of the disciplinarian is under attack. In order to defend his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul relates certain events from his background, including his heavenly visions and thorn in the flesh. His letter closes with a warning that he will soon make his third visit to Corinth, and so he urges the believers there to take his exhortations to heart.

Heart of the Passage:
2 Corinthians 12

Chapter 10	Chapter 11	Chapter 12	Chapter 13
Authority Declared	Authority Defended	Authority Dramatized	A Visit Described
Paul, the Minister		Paul, the Messenger	

He who would have nothing to do with thorns must never attempt to gather flowers.



Your Daily Walk: *Question:* How are splinters, thorns, and chewing gum alike? *Answer:* It's easier to get attached to them than to get rid of them!

Paul's thorn in the flesh has been the subject of much speculation. The Biblical account is brief, but this much is clear:

1. God allowed it for a purpose—to promote humility in Paul's life and to keep him from exalting himself above measure (12:7).
2. It was of satanic origin—similar to Job's loss of wealth, health, family, and status (12:7; Job 1-2).
3. No amount of prayer would remove it (12:8)—regardless of how fervent or frequent the petition.
4. It was designed to show the sufficiency of God in the face of human weakness (12:9-10).

The exact nature of Paul's thorn is unclear—perhaps so you can learn a lesson from your own "thorny" situation. A lingering illness, a physical handicap, a speech impediment—God is adequate for them all. Carry a stick of gum today to remind you that God's strength is a promise that will stick with you. Now that's a thought worth chewing over!



Insight: Know Your Enemy

Paul wrote about Satan as an "angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). Other Biblical writers call him the devil (meaning "slanderer" or "false accuser"); "Beelzebub" (Matthew 12:24); "the ruler of this world" (John 12:30); "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4); "the accuser of our brethren" (Revelation 12:10). What insights do these names give you into his character?

Unshackled in Christ / Galatians 1-6



Overview: The Epistle to the Galatians has been called “the charter of Christian liberty.” It is Paul’s manifesto of justification by faith and the liberty that justification produces. Paul directs this great charter of Christian freedom to people who are about to forsake the priceless liberty they possess in Christ. Certain Jewish legalists are influencing the believers in Galatia to trade their freedom in Christ for bondage to the law. Paul writes to refute their false gospel of works and to demonstrate the superiority of justification by faith.

Tuesday
November 27

Heart of the Passage:
Galatians 3, 5

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6
Paul's Apostleship	Paul's Authority	Law's Bondage	Faith's Freedom	Spirit's Fruit	Christ's Law
Autobiography		Argument		Application	



Insight: How Many Fruits of the Spirit Are There? (5:22-23)
Answer: One! It’s no accident that Paul chooses the singular word *fruit* over the plural *fruits* to show the unity of these nine Christian virtues as a cluster of characteristics originating in Christ and manifested in the power of the Spirit.



Your Daily Walk Find a piece of fruit (an apple will do nicely) and a sheet of paper. Then in the next five minutes, see if you can make 25 observations about that object. Describe it in terms of its shape, size, color, weight, texture, smell, and taste.

Now suppose someone asked you, “What does a Christian look like? Describe one for me.” What would you say? A good place to start would be the fruit of the Spirit. Nine characteristics of that fruit are given in 5:22-23, and they are qualities that only a Christian can exhibit consistently. Why? Because only a Christian has the supernatural Holy Spirit within to produce a supernatural life without—a life characterized by joy, peace, patience, and more.

Pick one of the nine Spirit-given “fruit flavors” in 5:22-23. Write it on a 3 x 5 card and tape the card to your dashboard, desk, refrigerator, or mirror. Ask God to exhibit that quality in your life today. Some are inward attitudes (love, joy, peace); others are outward actions (long-suffering, gentleness, goodness); and still others are Godward responses (faith, meekness, temperance). But all are unmistakable marks of the Christian.

Abiding lives always bear the most abundant fruit.

Building the Body of Christ / Ephesians 1-6

28

Wednesday

November



Overview: Summarizing the message of Ephesians is simple: What you believe affects how you behave . . . Walk worthy of your calling . . . You are rich in Christ, so live that way! But it takes a lifetime to live out the reality of those statements. The Christian's conduct should be consistent with his calling. He is indescribably rich in Jesus Christ,

endowed with every spiritual blessing. But he must learn to walk in the light of that wealth. A spiritual war rages, and only those who learn to appropriate and use the full armor of God will be able to stand against Satan's wily attacks.

Heart of the Passage:
Ephesians 1, 4

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapters 4-5	Chapter 6
Acceptance in Christ	Union in Christ	Access in Christ	Walking in Christ	Warfare in Christ
Calling			Conduct	

When you pray, make sure your will is in neutral so God can shift it.



Your Daily Walk: A little child in Sunday school once misquoted Ephesians 4:1: "Walk worthy of the *vacation* to which ye are called." But the Apostle Paul makes it amply clear in chapters 4-6 that the Christian's *vocation* is no *vacation*! Ephesians also makes it clear that your Christian vocation is not simply to be a doctor, factory worker, housewife, or student. Rather it's to translate the glorious realities of your position "in heavenly places in Christ" (1:3) into visible actions (and invisible attitudes) daily.

Write a brief job description of your regular work (inside or outside the home). Explain your position and the actions you perform to accomplish your job. Then as you read through Ephesians, think of it as your Christian job description, with chapters 1-3 describing your position and 4-6 explaining the performance necessary to carry out your responsibilities.



Insight: A Worthy Walk

In 4:1 Paul begins the second half of his book with the command, "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Can you find four other commands to "walk" in chapters 4 and 5?

Walk worthy (4:1).

Walk IN TRUTH AND LOVE (4:2).

Walk IN LOVE (4:2).

Walk AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT (5:1).

Walk IN THE LIGHT (5:1).

In which of these five areas do you need to exercise most today?

Happily Humble in Christ / Philippians 1-4

Thursday

November

29



Overview: Perhaps no other local church enjoyed the intimacy of relationship with the Apostle Paul as did the church at Philippi. As part of the first mission church founded in Europe, the believers at Philippi shared financially in Paul's ministry time and again (4:10). Paul writes a loving "thank you note" in which he commends the Philippians for their faithfulness to the Lord and challenges them to make Christ the center and circumference of their Christian experience.

Heart of the Passage:
Philippians 1, 3

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
The Preaching of Christ	The Mind of Christ	The Knowledge of Christ	The Peace of Christ
Expectation	Example	Excellency	Exceeding



Your Daily Walk: Complaining is a popular indoor sport that everyone engages in occasionally. But consider these words from an ex-complainer: "We have no more right to put our discordant states of mind into the lives of those around us and rob them of their sunshine and brightness than we have to enter their houses and steal their silverware."

*Joy is
Sunshine
turned
inside-out.*

Are you a "confirmed complainer"? Then Philippians was written for you! In it, Paul (who is in prison) writes to the Philippian church (which is under intense persecution). In order to complain about his circumstances? NO! To rejoice in the Lord! Philippians is a letter of joy from beginning to end. Suffering for the Lord is viewed as a gift from Him (1:29); Paul's chains are a cause for rejoicing (1:18); Paul enjoys contentment in the midst of his chains (4:11).

If you're a natural-born complainer, try this surefire cure. Every time you are tempted to complain today, first repeat the words of Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." Then go ahead and complain . . . if you can.



Insight: Captors Taken Captive
Paul sends greetings from those "that are of Caesar's household" (4:22; cf. 1:13). The imperial guards who held Paul under house arrest were themselves a captive audience and must have heard often and long of the claims of Jesus Christ. Apparently some had responded in believing faith, and they sent their greeting along with the other saints in Rome. Imagine what would have happened to Caesar's household had Paul shared his gripes with them instead of the gospel!

Life in the Preeminent Christ / Colossians 1-4

30

Friday

November

Heart of the Passage:
Colossians 1:1-2:7



Overview: All is not well in Colossae. A dangerous heresy—that Jesus Christ is neither central nor supreme—is undermining the church. Paul’s response to these false teachings is twofold. First, he upholds Christ as the preeminent Head of the church. Next, he speaks out against the rituals and man-made regulations that typify the worship of the Colossians. Instead of their present practices, Paul encourages them to pursue a godly life befitting those who are “risen with Christ” (3:1).

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapters 3-4
Christ Our Spiritual Head	Christ Our Suffering Savior	Christ Our Sovereign Lord
“Christ is all, and in all” (3:11).		

Jesus’ name is not so much written as it is plowed in the furrows of history.



Insight: “Make Two Copies of This, Tychicus . . .” It is quite possible Paul wrote the Books of Ephesians and Colossians about the same time under the Spirit’s inspiration. Notice the many striking similarities: Both letters were delivered by the same “postman”—Tychicus; both were written from prison; the salutations are similar; the structures of the books are remarkably alike; and there is an obvious correspondence between pairs of verses:

Ephesians	Colossians
1:7	1:14
1:10	1:20
1:15-17	1:3-4
1:18	1:27
1:19-20	2:12
1:21-23	1:16-19



Your Daily Walk: Colossians 1:27 is one of the most remarkable verses in the Bible, for it makes this claim: “Christ [is] in you, the hope of glory.” This statement is not merely hypothetical or psychological or potential. For the Christian, it is factual!

List the major activities you have planned for today, including the people you expect to be with. Now jot down one difference that will result in each of those activities and encounters today as you strive to be conscious of *Christ in you*. Why not share “the riches of the glory of this mystery” with one other person today as well!