



Reading through the New Testament—Week 23

June 11-17

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Becoming more like Jesus—growing in His Word

As we conclude our reading in the book of Acts, one thing to review as far as the ministry of Paul is concerned, is that the book of Acts details the three separate missionary journeys of Paul.

Paul's first missionary journey is recorded in 13:1-14:28. While Jerusalem was the center of the Jewish and Christian faith in Jesus' day, during the times of the apostles the main city was Antioch, capital of the Roman province of Syria. Antioch became the primary missionary church of earliest Christianity. All three of Paul's missionary journeys began at Antioch.

Paul's second missionary journey is recorded in 15:36-18:22. Paul's main traveling companion on this journey was Silas. They began by visiting churches founded on the first missionary journey (16:1-5). This journey lasted about three years and covered nearly three thousand miles. During that time, they visited towns or cities that included Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth.

Paul's third missionary journey is recorded in 18:23-21:15. Once again, Paul visited some of the churches he and Barnabas planted on their first missionary journey. In Ephesus, Paul began his longest known continuous ministry in one particular location.

Many times, Paul expressed a desire to go to Rome. That finally happened when Paul was put on a boat as a prisoner headed to Rome which is detailed in 27:1-28:31.






THIS WEEKEND'S SERMON OUTLINE

The Grand Reversal

- Saul was a well-educated man and respected by many because he was a P_____ in the Church
- It is hard to be so wrong and admit it. Saul did admit it because of the I_____ by God on the road to Damascus
- When Paul was brought up before King Agrippa he said, "I was c_____ that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth."
- God intervened in my life on the day of my b_____.
- Paul's reversal led him to become a bold m_____ in the ancient world.
- Paul writes to the Romans, "For I am not a_____ of the G_____, for it is the p_____ of God for salvation."

New Testament in a Year—June 11-17

Acts

Chapter 22  23  24  25  26 

Additional Reflections from this week's reading

Chapter 22. How was Paul's status as a Roman citizen an asset in his ministry to Gentiles (vv. 25-29; see also 16:37-38)?

Paul told his own story instead of preaching a sermon to the crowd. If you have not already done so, share your story of faith with someone in three minutes or less.

Chapter 23. How do you explain the fierce determination of the men to kill Paul (see also Romans 10:2)? Why did they think he was so dangerous?

Chapter 24. In light of what is happening here with Paul who was essentially under "house arrest," have you ever felt like there was a period in your life when nothing seemed to be happening in your life of faith (as seems to be the case with Paul)? Why do you think God allows such times in our lives?

Chapter 25. Think about how far Paul has come since the events of 9:1-2.

Chapter 26. Up to this point, the Romans considered Christians and Jews as basically one and the same. Within five years, the emperor Nero was aware of enough differences to violently persecute Christians in Rome. From Paul's speech, what can the Romans begin to see as some of the differences?

Blessing the World

Are you looking for opportunities to be involved in serving our community? We have two opportunities happening this summer - Vacation Bible School and the Back to School Clinic.

Each of these opportunities offers several ways to get involved in connecting kids and their families to Jesus. From greeting people at the door, helping people know where to go, and playing games, there is a place for everyone to join in the fun. Check out your Parish Notes to learn more about the opportunities and who to contact.

*Everyone volunteering for these events will have a background check run for the safety of our students.

Belonging in Community

Connect Groups are a group of Christians who meet together regularly where we intentionally share in our faith walk. Connection is created through commitment and presence in fellowship, discussion, and prayer.

- Begin your time together by following up on anything that was shared during your last time together.
- Take some time to share any reflections of aha's you had from your reading.

This week we get a chance to discuss how God shapes our lives through powerful moments of reversal. There is a powerful music video for the song *Remind Me Who I Am* by Jason Grey. (If you have time and capabilities, take a few minutes to watch it!) In this video, we encounter a variety of people who hold up pieces of cardboard with a word or short phrase that is meant to be a testimony to who they are. The words on the cardboard read "I don't matter", "regrets only", "addict", "victim", "I am angry" and more. The song however, is asking God to be the one who tells us who we are. As the song ends we see those same people holding up the same pieces of cardboard with the word "Beloved" written on them. This is who God is, he takes who we are and makes into who he sees us as.

As we near the end of Acts we hear about Paul's story of who he was and who he is because of God telling Paul who he is. Acts 22:15 says, "for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard." And that is who Paul became.

There are moments in our lives in the Church where we can say we have experienced this identity changing encounter with God. In our baptism we become His child, in the words of confession and absolution we can know we are His forgiven. There are also moments in each of our own stories where God works in individual and personal ways. Take time together to share your "cardboard" testimony.

- Who were you? (I was confused, I was hurt, I was lonely...)
- Who are you now that God has continued his transformative work in your life? (I have confidence, I am being healed, I belong...)

As you hear people's stories take time to ask and hear more of how God has worked in their life. Then close in prayer celebrating the powerful transformative work of Christ.