


KEITH MEMORIAL
UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH
AT-HOME STUDY
THE BOOK OF ACTS

Summer 2020
Daily Study Guide



Week 10 – July 27 – 31, 2020

Monday, July 27, 2020

Paul On Trial

“But how can we stop him? His glamour increases by leaps every moment; he's top of the poll.”
- Jesus Christ Superstar

Read Acts 22:30-24. The tribune is unable to flog Paul due to his Roman citizenship. Therefore, the tribune convenes the Jewish council to address the accusations made against Paul. Paul and Ananias, the high priest, have an altercation. Then, Paul brings forth division between the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Despite their differences, over forty of the Jewish leaders end up joining together in a conspiracy. They agree to fast until they have Paul killed. Paul is made aware of the conspiracy by his nephew who makes a plea before the tribune. Therefore, by the cover of night, the tribune sends Paul to Felix, a Roman official. Paul then makes his defense before Felix.

Worship Option: Acts 23:12-13 tells of a plot the Jews conspired against Paul. They agree not to eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. These religious leaders fasted with evil intentions. What are some ways that you might fast today with positive intentions? How might this day of fasting speak into your heart and allow you to grow closer in your relationship with God?

Deeper Study:

- (Acts 22:30-23:22) Paul Before the Council: Paul shares a message before the Sanhedrin saying that he has a clear conscience before God. In response, the high priest Ananias orders Paul to be slapped. This causes Paul to respond by saying, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall...” This eventually leads to the Jews conspiring a plot to kill Paul. Read Matthew 23:1-36. How does Paul’s conversation with the religious leaders compare to the conversations that Jesus had with the Pharisees?

- (Acts 23:23-24:23) Paul and Felix the Governor: According to William Barclay, “Felix had begun life as a slave. His brother, Pallas, was the favorite of Nero. Through the influence of Pallas, Felix had risen first to be a freedom and then to be a governor. He was the first slave in history ever to become the governor of a Roman province.” Felix was known, however, for his cruelty and lust for power.

- (Acts 24:24-27) Paul Held in Custody: Felix and his wife (who was Jewish – the daughter of Herod Agrippa the First) go and listen to Paul proclaim the good news. Felix becomes frightened of the news of coming judgment. However, Felix, hoping for a bride, keeps Paul in custody over two years. Felix’s successor Festus continues to keep Paul imprisoned as a favor to the Jews. How do you see Felix’s political motivations intersect with his fear of Paul’s message?

Prayer Focus: Today you are invited to pray for God to guide you in your daily journey to grow closer to God, even in the midst of difficult circumstances.

Tuesday, July 28, 2020

Paul On Trial

“This is the supreme command. Through the medium of prayer, we go to our enemy, we stand by his side, and we plead to God for him.”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Read Acts 25. The religious leaders, who are still plotting Paul’s murder, request for Festus to transfer Paul to Jerusalem. Instead, Festus gives Paul a fair hearing. Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, asks Paul if he wishes to go to Jerusalem to stand trial. Paul responds that he wishes to appeal to the emperor of Rome. Then, Festus consults King Herod Agrippa II, and Paul is brought before him.

Journaling Option: Consider writing about a time when you had to defend something you believed in. As you write, reflect on these questions: How did you respond to the criticism that you faced? How did you defend your thoughts and ideas? Were you able to change anyone’s mind? How did your experience change in your own life in this process?

Deeper Study:

- (Acts 25:1-12) Paul Appeals to the Emperor: Despite the plots of the Jewish religious leaders, Festus listens to Paul’s address. Festus honors Paul’s request to appeal to Caesar. Paul seems determined to go and stand trial in Rome. What do you make of Paul’s appeal to stand trial in Rome? How does Paul’s appeal to go to Rome fulfil what the Lord said to him in Acts 23:11? “Keep up your courage! For just as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also in Rome” (Acts 23:11 *NRSV*).

- (Acts 25:13-27) Festus Consults King Agrippa: King Herod Agrippa II and his wife Bernice come to Caesarea to welcome Festus. (Bernice was the sister of Drusilla, the wife of Felix. She was also Agrippa’s own sister too). Festus realizes that Paul has committed no crime, and it would be difficult to send him to stand trial in Rome with no actual charges against him. Therefore, he recruits the help of King Agrippa. Agrippa, knowing the ins and outs of the Jewish faith, agrees to meet with Paul. Again, Paul is asked to plead his case yet again. As Jesus says, “You will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles” (Matthew 10:18 *NRSV*). How does this verse relate to Paul’s situation in Acts? How do you face situations when you are criticized or questioned?

Prayer Focus: Today you are invited to pray for God to guide you in times of criticism and unrest.

Wednesday, July 29, 2020

Paul On Trial

“Christians faced discrimination under socialist rule in Cuba for more than three decades until Christian leaders had their first meeting with President Castro in 1990. Many religious leaders were in awe of his presence and sugarcoated their words. Then Rev. Joel Ajo stood and spoke on behalf of all the Christians who faced discrimination. His speech convinced Castro that Christians did not deserve to be mistreated. The following year Rev. Ajo was elected Methodist bishop, and the Cuban constitution was amended to offer religious freedom. Just as Paul had the courage to speak to King Agrippa, we all have opportunities to speak truth to power.” - The Wesley Study Bible

Read Acts 26. Paul goes before King Agrippa and defends himself against the accusation made against him by the Jewish religious leaders. Paul begins by talking about his youth and dedication to the law as a Pharisee. For the third time in the book of Acts, Paul tells of the story of his conversion to King Agrippa. Paul then tries to convert King Agrippa to Christianity. In the end, Agrippa and Festus see that Paul has done nothing wrong; however, Paul cannot be set free because he has appealed to the emperor.

Journaling Option: For the third time, Paul tells of his conversion story. Paul saw the power in his testimony, and he told the story often as a way to encourage others. Consider writing out your own testimony. How has God worked in your life and brought forth transformation?

Deeper Study:

- (Acts 26:1-23) Paul Defends Himself Before Agrippa: K. Moody Stuart tells an interesting story about a famous evangelist named Brownlow North. He writes, “North began his ministry with the burden of a dreadful reputation. Who would listen to a man whose character was infamous? When he first attempted to enter the ministry, someone sent the church authorities information detailing all of North’s public sins. In shame he withdrew. But then Christ did a powerful work of conversion in his life. He came once again to the church, this time to preach. Before he preached, he received another letter detailing all of his sins. He was denounced in it as ‘such a vile sinner.’ North took the letter into the pulpit and read it for all to hear. He said, ‘I am the man described here.’ He then used the letter’s indictment of his character to exalt pure sovereign grace.” What connections do you see in Brownlow North’s story and this story about Paul?

- (Acts 26: 24-32) Paul Appeals to Agrippa to Believe: Even on trial, Paul cannot help but share the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul tries to convert Paul to Christianity. After hearing Paul’s testimony, Agrippa and Festus agree that Paul has done nothing wrong. Unfortunately, because Paul has appealed to the emperor, he cannot be made free. What do you make of Agrippa and Festus’ responses to Paul’s testimony? Who might you reach out to and share your testimony with?

Prayer Focus: Today you are invited to pray for God to guide you as you seek to share the good news with others around you.

Thursday, July 30, 2020

Paul On Trial

“And once the storm is over you won’t remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won’t even be sure, in fact, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm you won’t be the same person who walked in.”

- Haruki Murakami

Read Acts 27. Paul makes his way to Rome on a ship of Adramyttium under Julius (a centurion responsible for Paul). Julius kindly allows Paul to see his friends in Sidon. While sailing, they encounter a violent storm and they find themselves shipwrecked on the island of Malta. Julius saves Paul from the soldier’s plot to kill him and the other prisoners.

Journaling Option: The Roman centurion in charge of Paul allows him to be cared for by his friends in Sidon. As you reflect on this story, consider writing about a time when a stranger showed you kindness. As you write, consider these questions: How did you find yourself in a situation where someone else could offer you kindness? Can you recall a time when you offered kindness to someone else?

Deeper Study:

- (Acts 27:1-12) Paul Sails for Rome: Paul, even though he is a prisoner, he is allowed to journey with a small group of companions. During the journey, Paul sees that the voyage has become dangerous. Paul warns the crew that the ship is headed for danger, but they do not heed Paul’s warnings. Can you recall a time in your life when you were so determined to accomplish a goal that you failed to realize important details?

- (Acts 27:13-38) The Storm at Sea: The ship is facing certain doom, but Paul encourages his shipmates in the midst of the storm. Paul shares a message from God’s angel which tells of his safe arrival to Rome and his future encounter with the emperor. Can you think of a storm (either literal or metaphorical) that you have faced in your own life? How did you make it through the storm? How did you grow through this experience?

- (Acts 27:39-44) The Shipwreck: Read about the story of Jonah’s shipwreck in Jonah 1:1-16. What comparisons and contrasts do you see between Jonah’s shipwreck and Paul’s shipwreck in Acts? How did Jonah handle the shipwreck compared to how Paul handled the shipwreck? Of the two characters, which one do you identify with more when it comes to your own faith journey?

Prayer Focus: Today you are invited to pray for God to guide you through the storms of life.

Friday, July 31, 2020

Paul On Trial

Read Acts 28. Paul and his shipwrecked mates find safety, and they learn that the island where they have landed was called Malta. They receive unusual kindness from the natives of the land. While tending to a fire, a viper suddenly bites Paul's hand. The natives witness how Paul is unaffected by the viper and conclude that he must be a god. Paul continues performing miracles by healing Plubius' father and many other sick people on the island. After three months, they set sail to Rome on an Alexandrian ship. After they arrive, Paul is allowed to live by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him. Paul lives in Rome for two whole years while proclaiming and teaching about the kingdom of God with all boldness and without hindrance.

Journaling Option: What's Next? Consider writing about your next steps as you conclude this study guide. As you write, reflect on these questions: How have you grown through this study? What are some ways that God has spoken to you during this study of Acts? How might God be calling you to take the next step in your faith journey?

Deeper Study:

- (Acts 28:1-10) Paul on the Island of Malta: While on the island of Malta, Paul performs many amazing miracles. He is unaffected after a bite from a poisonous viper, and he heals many sick people. How have you found ways to bring about good in the midst of a difficult situation? Can you recall a time when you were able to encourage someone in the midst of a difficult situation?

- (Acts 28:11-16) Paul Arrives at Rome: After three months on this island, Paul and his wrecked shipmates find passage on an Alexandrian ship which had two figurehead gods which were often worshiped by seamen. Paul encounters other believers along his journey. What are some ways that you see God working in the midst of Paul's voyage to Rome? Can you recall a time when God's timeline looked different than yours?

- (Acts 28:17-22) Paul and Jewish Leaders in Rome: Paul appeals to his Jewish brothers in Rome, assuring them that he has upheld the customs of their ancestors. What customs and traditions in your life are important? Why are these customs important to you? What do these customs and traditions represent?

- (Acts 28:23-31) Paul Preaches in Rome: While imprisoned in Rome, Paul continues to preach the good news. Not only that, but Paul also continues to write letters to the churches. "The Prison Epistles," as they are called, include Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. How might you find ways to further the gospel even in a time of waiting?

Prayer Focus: Today you are invited to pray for God to continue to work and move in your life.