

## **Week 28 Psalm 54, John 14-18, Psalm 55**

**Psalm 54**— David remembers God's help and deliverance when he was rescued from those seeking to destroy him. **In what ways does this example of answered prayer encourage you?**

**John 14**— After the disturbing news about Peter's betrayal and His own forthcoming departure, Jesus comforts His disciples by painting a beautiful picture of a future with them in His Father's house, because of their trust in Him as the way, the truth, and the life (vv. 1-6). Jesus assures the disciples of His unity with the Father and that the works they have seen Him do through the power of the Father, are the very works He will do in them, but in greater way (vv. 7-14). Now that Jesus reveals His return to the Father, He announces to them that they will have a new Counselor, the Holy Spirit, who will dwell in them forever and teach them all things. Jesus emphasizes that the real evidence of love for Him is that we will obey the commands He has given us. The end result of obedience is an intimate relationship with Him and the Father (vv. 15-31). 1. Jesus said, "If you ask me anything in my name, ***I will do it (v. 14).***" ***Is this promise a blank check or are there conditions? Explain.*** 2. Jesus said, "***If you love me, you will keep (obey) my commandments.***" ***Explain what this verse means and why is obedience so important? Extra Question: Does John 14:6 mean that Jesus is the exclusive way to heaven? What about other religions?***

**John 15**— Jesus now uses the symbol of the vine and the branches to represent our intimate relationship to Christ and the importance of the branches being connected to the vine in order to produce fruit. The key words in the first seventeen verses are abiding (remaining), love, fruit, and obey my commands (vv. 1-17). Since the same animosity that was directed toward Jesus will also be aimed at His followers, we need to prepare ourselves for this same persecution. Jesus says that Holy Spirit and His disciples will testify to the truth of who He is and what He has done (vv. 18-27). ***What are the results in our lives for abiding/remaining in Christ? See verses 2, 3, 7, 8, 11, 14, 16.***

**John 16**— Jesus continues forewarning His disciples of the inevitable persecution that will come to them when He is gone (vv. 1-4). Jesus returns to His teaching about the coming Counselor (Holy Spirit) whom He will send to take His place; (1) to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, (2) to guide His followers into all truth and, (3) to glorify Jesus and reveal Christ's person, purpose, and work (vv. 5-16). Our Lord assures His disciples that they will be in great sorrow because of what He will suffer, but that their sorrow will turn into joy and gladness. After Christ ascends into heaven to be with His Father, they will be able to ask the Father anything in His name and therefore, will be assured of receiving their petitions. Since Jesus has overcome the world, His disciples will find in Him complete peace and joy even though they might be in the middle of painful trials (vv. 17-33). ***What questions do we need to ask in order to find out if a teaching is coming from the Holy Spirit or not? See John 14:26, 16:8, 16:14, II Timothy 3:15-17 and II Peter 1:20-21, and I John 4:2.***

**John 17**— In this chapter we are able to overhear the intimate prayer of the Son to His Father just before He goes through great suffering and the cross. He prays first for Himself (vv. 1-4), then for His disciples (vv. 6-19), and finally for those who would believe because of their testimony (vv. 20-26). Jesus reports to the Father that the work He had been given is finished, and now He asks that He and the Father would be glorified (to manifest bright splendor and greatness) through the work of the cross (vv. 1-4). Jesus prays that the Father will keep His disciples unified in mission, protected from the schemes of the evil one, and sanctified and purified through the truth of the Word of God (vv. 4-20). Jesus then prays for all believers throughout the ages, that their love and unity in the truth will be a clear testimony to the whole world (vv. 21-26). **1. Jesus prayed that believers would manifest the unity and love that the Father and the Son have. How is this unity of Spirit accomplished in a church and among Christians? 2. What does God not intend when speaking of the unity of Christians and the Church?**

**John 18**— As we come to the events of the arrest and trial of Jesus, we see Him, not as a surprised victim, but as a Savior who is fully cognoscente of His divine mission. Judas leads a battalion of soldiers to the Garden of Gethsemane to find Jesus and arrest Him. As He was arrested, Jesus protects His disciples to make sure they are not arrested with Him. Peter then acts on his own to defend Jesus but is rebuked by Him (vv. 1-11). Jesus was taken first to the house of Annas, the high priest, for a preliminary hearing and was questioned about His teaching. Peter denies Jesus three times in the courtyard before the rooster crows (vv. 12-27). The Jewish leaders bring Jesus to Pilate's headquarters, since only he had the authority to execute Him. When Pilate interrogates Jesus, he finds out that His kingdom was not of this world, but that He was sent to testify to the truth. Pilate declares His innocence but gives the Jewish leaders a choice of releasing Barabbas or Jesus (vv. 28-40). **What two lessons did Peter learn in this chapter that we must also learn? Extra question: What was so ironic about the action of the Jewish leaders in verse 28?**

**Psalms 55**— David complains to God regarding the betrayal of a trusted friend, most likely Ahithophel (see vv 12-14; 2 Samuel 15:12-13). Betrayal from a friend or a spouse is devastating. **How does David deal with this?**

### **Week 29 Psalm 56, John 19-21, Acts 1-2 Psalm 57**

**Psalm 56**— This psalm is sung to a familiar tune commemorating God's deliverance of David from the Philistines. **What happened to David in Gath (see 1 Samuel 21:10-16; 27:1-7)?**

**John 19**— Jesus suffers physical and emotional torture beyond imagination by being flogged and then tormented by the Roman soldiers. Upon hearing that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, Pilate made every effort to release Him, but the Jewish leaders applied great pressure and would not relent until Pilate finally gave Jesus up to be crucified (vv. 1-16). The Roman soldiers took Jesus away to Golgotha to be crucified with two others. Pilate put a sign on the cross with saying, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews", which the Chief Priests disputed. The scripture is fulfilled when the soldiers cast lots for His clothes. Being the oldest son, Jesus asks John to take care of His mother (vv. 17-27). After an agonizing six hours on the cross, Jesus

cries out, "It is finished", and then releases His spirit to His Father. To prove He was already dead, the soldiers pierced Jesus side with a spear thus fulfilling scripture. After receiving permission from Pilate, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus prepared His body with spices and placed Him in a new tomb that was nearby (vv. 28-42). **1. What did Jesus mean by His words to Pilate in verse 11? In what way can we apply this verse today? See also Romans 13:1. 2. After reading this chapter and meditating on Christ's sacrificial death, express in a few words your gratitude to Him for what He suffered on your behalf.**

**John 20**— On the first day of the week, while still dark and finding the stone rolled away from the tomb, Mary Magdalene ran to tell the news to Peter and John. Running to the tomb and finding it empty with the linen wrappings lying there like an empty cocoon, John saw the evidence and believed, even though he did not understand the scriptures regarding the resurrection (vv. 1-10). In a very emotional scene, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and she clings on to Him, never wanting to lose Him again (vv. 11-18). That same day in the evening, Jesus appears to His disciples and commissions them to be His witnesses in the same way the Father had sent Him (vv. 19-23). Eight days later, Jesus appears to His disciples and to Thomas, who was not with them at His first appearance. Seeing Jesus, Thomas believes that Jesus was resurrected from the dead but is chided because of his unbelief. In verse 31, John finishes this chapter by giving the very purpose for writing this book, to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing to receive eternal life through His name (vv. 24-31). **Why is the resurrection the key to the Christian faith? Extra question: Thomas was scolded by Jesus for doubting that He had risen from the dead. Is it wrong for a Christian to have doubts? Why or why not?**

**John 21**— The scene changes now from Jerusalem to Galilee, and seven of the disciples go fishing in the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee). At daybreak, after fishing all night and catching nothing, Jesus appears on the shore and tells them to cast the net on the other side of the boat. When they obey Him their net is suddenly full of fish. Jesus and the disciples then had a breakfast on the shore together (vv.1-14). Jesus now asks Peter three times if he loves Him. Peter responds "yes" and is newly commissioned to feed and shepherd His sheep. After Jesus tells Peter the type of death he would suffer, Peter wants to know about how John would die. Jesus reproves Peter by telling him it is really none of his business. Peter's business was to follow Christ (vv. 15-25). **Why did Jesus ask Peter three times if he loved Him? Extra question: What important lesson did Jesus teach Peter in verses 21-22, and why is this important to us also?**

**Acts**— Luke wrote the book of Acts to Theophilus as a sequel to the Gospel of Luke and gives the history of the birth of the church from approximately 30 A.D. to Paul's first imprisonment in Rome at about 62 A.D. when the book was written. The book begins with Christ's commission to His Apostles and His ascension to Heaven from the Mount of Olives. Acts 1:8 is the key verse of the book highlighting the importance of the Holy Spirit in the witness of believers to the world as well as in the direction and growth of the Church. Verse 8 gives the timeline of the book from Jerusalem and all Judea (chapters 1-7), to Samaria (Chapter 8), and to the ends of the earth (chapters 9-28). The main characters in the book of Acts are Peter (chapters 1-12) and Paul (chapters 9-28). Luke was a Gentile doctor who accompanied Paul on many of his journeys,

wrote this historical narrative in polished Greek, and thoroughly researched every detail to provide a meticulous accuracy of people, places, and events. The real title of the book should be the “Acts of the Holy Spirit.”

**Acts 1**— Although Matthew and Mark gave the Great Commission at the end of their books, Luke gave the Great Commission at the beginning of the book of Acts instead of the end of his gospel. The Apostles ask the burning question that any Jewish Christian would have asked after His resurrection. “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel (v. 6 ESV)?” Christ didn’t deny that there was a future kingdom for Israel, but made it clear that the business at hand was to be His witnesses and take the gospel to the whole world through the leadership and power of the Holy Spirit. After the ascension of Christ to heaven, the apostles returned from the Mount of Olives to the upper room in Jerusalem to wait for the coming of the promised Holy Spirit. During the next ten days the 120 persons spent much time in united prayer to prepare their hearts to receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit so that they would be equipped for the task of world evangelism. One item of business to be done was to choose someone to take the place of Judas as a part of the Twelve Apostles. Matthias was chosen. ***While here on earth, we are called to be His witnesses in our Jerusalem. Give names of specific people at your work, in your neighborhood, ministry, and family who you are (or should be) praying for, and whom God has put on your heart to share the gospel. Extra Question: As Jesus ascended to Heaven from the Mount of Olives, two men in white clothing (angels) said that this same Jesus would come again in the same way they saw Him go to heaven. When will Christ return from heaven back to the Mount of Olives? See Zechariah 14:3-9.***

**Acts 2**— The day of Pentecost (also called Feast of weeks) was held in Jerusalem 50 days after the Passover where thousands of Jews came from all over the Roman Empire to celebrate this festival of thanksgiving to God for the harvested crops. On this day the greatest harvest was that of new Christians who became a part of the Church, the Body of Christ. As the Holy Spirit empowered the 120 believers, they began to speak in the languages of people who had gathered in Jerusalem from around the world. When the people were wondering what was happening, Peter stood up and clearly declared a message explaining that this day fulfilled Joel’s prophecy where God would pour out His Spirit on all humanity. Peter then clearly presented the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and the need of repenting, believing, and being baptized. The original 120 now multiplies to 3000 in one day. A new community is born in which the apostles taught God’s Word, the people shared their lives and possessions, and many were being added daily to the Church. ***What evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work can be observed in this chapter? What evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work is seen in your life?***

**Psalm 57**— This is another psalm of David celebrating God’s protection when Saul was pursuing him. **List the things that God has done for David in this Psalm**

### ***Week 30 Psalm 58, Acts 3-7, Psalm 59***

**Psalm 58**— David boldly asks God to destroy the wicked. **Does this Psalm seem harsh to you? Why or why not?**

**Acts 3**— In this chapter the Apostle Peter again takes the lead in preaching another gospel filled message energized by the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter demonstrates the power and authority of Jesus by healing a man who was lame from birth. The healing occurred when he and John were going to the temple complex to pray at 3:00 pm. As a large crowd gathered, Peter used this miraculous sign to declare a message to the Jews that Jesus was the promised Messiah spoken of by Moses and all the prophets. He pointed out that although they had killed the source of life, God had raised Him from the dead of which they were witnesses. If they would repent of their evil ways and turn in faith to Jesus as their Savior and Messiah, their sins would be wiped out. Then, at the appointed time, Jesus would return from Heaven to bring in seasons of refreshing, the restoration of all things, and establish His Kingdom. ***What do verses 13 to 26 say about Jesus?***

**Acts 4**— The church in Jerusalem now has grown to 5000 disciples, and there is great amazement among all of the people after the healing of the lame man. The priestly family and the Sadducees are very distraught that the Apostles are preaching the resurrection of Christ and accusing them of His murder. Peter and John are taken into custody and brought before the Sanhedrin the next day to give an accounting. Peter and John say that the power and name by which they have done this sign is “Jesus Christ” and that He is the only way of salvation. Knowing they cannot deny the miracle, the Jewish leaders ordered them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus and released them. After their release, Peter and John returned to the church body and reported what had taken place. They did not ask the Lord for protection but for boldness to speak the message, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. The whole church was unified in one heart and mind and generously shared their possessions so that there was not a needy person among them. Joseph, known as Barnabas, was singled out as one who showed great generosity. Verse 12 says that Jesus is the only way of salvation and the only way to God. ***How would you answer someone who says that all religions lead to God but just express different ways to get at Him? Extra question: Did the early church practice communism (vv. 32-37). Why or why not?***

**Acts 5**— External pressures on the church spur on its growth, but in verses 1 to 11 we come to the first internal test that was caused by the deceit and hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira who verified that the money they gave to the church for the sale of their property was the full price of the land when it was not true. Their immediate deaths brought great fear to the whole church and those outside did not dare join them (vv. 1-13). As believers were added to the church many signs and wonders were done by Peter who healed the sick and those tormented by evil spirits. Filled with jealousy, the high priest and the Sadducees arrested the apostles and put them in jail. The angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail for the apostles during the night, and they went to the temple at daybreak and began to teach. Completely baffled as to what happened to these men, the leaders found the apostles in the temple preaching and brought them in to confront them. Peter unflinchingly declares that they will obey God and not men, that God has exalted Jesus to His right hand as ruler and Savior, and will grant repentance and forgiveness of sins to those who believe in Him. Through the intervention of Gamaliel, the Sanhedrin decided to flog the apostles and let them go. The apostles left the presence of the Sanhedrin rejoicing they had been counted worthy of suffering and continued proclaiming the gospel (vv. 14-42). ***Why was the punishment on Ananias and Sapphira so swift and seemingly too harsh?***

**Acts 6**— As the church grew in number a problem arose in that the Greek-speaking widows were not receiving the daily food distribution that the Hebrew-speaking widows were receiving. Since the Apostles were occupied in the food distribution, they decided to call seven Greek-speaking men to take over for them so that they could then fully dedicate themselves to the preaching of the Word and prayer. The church was flourishing and growing, and even a large group of priests became believers (vv. 1-7). One of those called to serve the church was Stephen who was full of grace and power and did great wonders and signs. The leaders of a synagogue composed of former Jewish slaves disputed with Stephen but were unable to stand up against his wisdom. They lied about Stephen and dragged him off to the Sanhedrin where they set up false witnesses. Stephen's face was like the face of an angel (vv. 8-15). ***Explain the problem the church had in verses 1 to 7, and what they did to solve the problem. What are principles from this passage that can be applied to our churches today?***

**Acts 7**— Stephen begins by reciting the history of Israel from the calling and covenant of Abraham (vv. 1-8), to the deliverance of Jacob's entire family by Joseph (vv. 9-16), to the life, calling, and leadership of Moses (vv. 17-37), and to the rebellion of Israel from their days in the wilderness to their deportation to Babylon (vv. 38-43). Stephen spoke of the importance of the temple but said that it is of greater importance that our glorious God should not be limited to the temple as the present Jews had done to Him (vv. 44-50). Stephen boldly confronted the Sanhedrin saying "You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit (v. 51 NLT)?" Upon hearing his words that they had killed the Messiah, they became enraged, dragged him out of the city, and stoned him to death (vv. 51-60). ***How was Stephen an example to us in the way he responded to the people that stoned him to death? How should we respond to others that may persecute us or say evil things against us falsely?***

**Psalm 59** — David cries out to God for protection from Saul's henchmen. **Why is David so confident that God will deliver him (see vv 4-9-10, 16-17; also 1 Samuel 17:26, 37)?**

### ***Week 31 Psalm 60 Acts 8-12, Psalm 61***

**Psalm 60**— This is a prayer of David recounting Israel's former sins and asking for victory and reinstatement into God's favor. **Who is David's ally compared to the nations he defeated (see 2 Samuel 8:2-5; 10:6)?**

**Acts 8**— Chapter 8 is the good news/bad news chapter. The good news is that the gospel was finally taken to Judea and Samaria in accordance with Christ's command in 1:8. The bad news is that it took the persecution by Saul and others to scatter the church so that they would obey His command to be His witnesses outside of Jerusalem. Philip (not the apostle) goes down to Samaria, proclaims the gospel of Christ, performs signs and miracles, and a multitude believes. One of the converts is Simon who had practiced sorcery. Upon hearing that Samaria had welcomed the gospel message, Peter and John came and prayed that the Samaritans might receive the Holy Spirit. Simon was severely rebuked when he offered money to be able to replicate what Peter and John had done (vv. 1-25). An angel of the Lord sent Philip down to the road toward Gaza so that he could proclaim the message of the gospel to an important official of

Candace, the queen of Ethiopia. Upon joining him in the chariot, Philip explained the good news about Jesus beginning with Isaiah 53. When he believed the gospel, he asked Philip what would hinder him from being baptized. After he baptized the Ethiopian, Philip was taken away by the Spirit of the Lord and taken to Azotus where he continued to evangelize, and the Ethiopian eunuch returned to his country rejoicing. Jesus gave the command in Acts 1:8 (Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15) to go into all of the world and preach the gospel, but it wasn't until the persecution came that they began to scatter and preach the gospel. ***Is there anyone in your life right now that the Holy Spirit has been prompting you to share the gospel with? Who is that person? Ask the Lord for strength to share the gospel with that person. Be accountable to another Next Level woman about this.***

**Acts 9**— This chapter is a turning point in the life of the church when our Lord Jesus Christ personally selects the one that He desires to be his vessel to take the gospel to the Gentiles and thus, appears to Saul of Tarsus on the Road to Damascus. Instead of dragging off the believers to jail in Jerusalem, Saul receives his sight, is baptized, and then goes into the temple and proclaims Jesus as Messiah and Savior. Both in Damascus and Jerusalem he barely escapes death because of his preaching and is finally sent off to Tarsus by the Apostles (vv. 1-31). As the Apostle Peter travels from place to place, he comes to Lydda where God uses him to heal Aeneas who was paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. This miracle causes the people of this area to turn to the Lord. When a lady full of good works by the name of Tabitha (or Dorcas) dies in Joppa, the disciples hear that Peter is near and send for him. Upon entering her room Peter kneels down, prays, and says "Tabitha, get up." Throughout Joppa many of those who heard of her resurrection believed in the Lord (vv. 32-43). Before Saul's conversion he was the number one enemy of the church and the one that the church thought that it would be impossible for him to become a Christ follower. The angel said to Mary, "For nothing will be impossible with God (Luke 1:37 ESV)." ***Write down the name of a person among your family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers that you would love to see saved but that it seems highly unlikely or nearly impossible for that person to become Christian. Share their name with the group and covenant to pray for that person regularly and see what God will do.***

**Acts 10**— This chapter gives a second turning point in the church when the Lord extends full salvation and acceptance to the Gentiles who believe in Jesus. God simultaneously prepares Cornelius, a God-fearing centurion, and Peter for a meeting in Caesarea where Peter will powerfully proclaim the message of the gospel to him, his family, and close friends. An angel appeared in a vision to Cornelius to send for Peter in Joppa. The next day near the time the messengers that Cornelius had sent arrived at Simon's house by the sea, Peter had a vision three times of a great canvas sheet coming down from heaven with all kinds of unclean animals on it. He was commanded to kill and eat but protested that he had never eaten anything unclean. A voice said, "What God has made clean, you must not call unclean (v. 15 HCSB)." When the messengers arrived to ask Peter to go to the house of Cornelius, the Lord told him to go with them and have no doubts. When Peter and other brothers arrived at the house of Cornelius, he preached and explained the gospel of Christ to all that were in the house. Upon hearing that "everyone who believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins," the Holy Spirit came in power, they spoke in other languages, and they declared the greatness of God. After

they had received the Holy Spirit, Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus. **What was the difference in the way the Gentile believers (vv. 43-48), the believers on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38), and the believers in Samaria (8:12-17) received the Holy Spirit and baptism? What might account for the differences?**

**Acts 11**— Upon hearing that the Gentiles became disciples, those Christians in Judea who were Judaizers protested that to truly become a disciple a man first must be circumcised. After rehearsing the story of Cornelius and those of his house, and how they received the Holy Spirit when they believed, the people rejoiced that God had even granted “the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life (v. 18 NLT).” When the Gentiles in Antioch began to turn to Christ in large numbers, the Apostles sent Barnabas to encourage and teach them. He went to Tarsus to search for Paul in order to bring him back to Antioch to assist him teaching and making disciples. During this time the prophet Agabus predicted a famine, and so the church in Antioch sent money to the elders in Jerusalem to help them with their need. **How was this church in Antioch important in the early history of Christianity?**

**Acts 12**— Another wave of persecution came over the church, and King Herod killed James, John’s brother, with the sword. When he saw that the Jewish leaders were pleased, he arrested Peter and held him in prison until after the feast of the Unleavened Bread was finished so that he could bring him to trial and execute him. The night before coming to trial, the church earnestly prayed for Peter’s safety. An angel of the Lord came and rescued him from prison. When Peter arrived at the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, the people that were praying were completely shocked by Peter’s rescue. He explained how the Lord had saved him from sure execution. After King Herod interrogated the guards and ordered their execution, he went down to Caesarea. While giving an oration to the people of Tyre and Sidon, King Herod was struck down by God and eaten with worms because of his pride in accepting the adulation of the people. **How are we like the people that gathered for prayer at Mary’s house? Do we always believe God answers prayer? What answer to prayer have you seen in the last few months?**

**Psalms 61**— David asks to live in God’s presence forever. **Is this a selfish prayer for his prolonged reign or is David asking about eternity (vv 2-4 & 6)?**

### **Week 32 Psalm 62 Acts 13-17, Psalm 63**

**Psalm 62**— We see in this psalm a contrast between trusting in God and trusting in wealth and ill-gotten gain. **How does this psalm encourage us to trust in God (hint: look for "my" in this Psalm)?**

**Acts 13**— As the church at Antioch prayed and fasted, the Holy Spirit directed the believers to send off Barnabas and Saul to win souls, make disciples, and plant churches. On their first stop, they came to the island of Cyprus which was the home of Barnabas. Cyprus had a large Jewish population. The Roman governor of the island became a believer when through Paul’s words, the Lord struck Bar-Jesus (Elymas), the sorcerer, with blindness (vv. 1-12). Leaving the city of Paphos on the island of Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas arrived at Perga in the province of



Pamphylia where John Mark left them and went back to Jerusalem. Going on to Antioch in Pisidia, Paul was invited to speak a message of encouragement in the synagogue on the Sabbath. He then gave a gospel message which included the history of Israel and God's promises to them, the life of Jesus Christ including His death, burial, and resurrection, and the offer of forgiveness of sins to all who believe on Him. Nearly the whole town came to listen to him the next Sabbath, and the Jews became jealous of the large crowd and incited leading men and prominent women against Paul and Barnabas. They were expelled from Antioch and went on to Iconium, but the new believers were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. ***After reading the Apostle Paul's message in the synagogue (vv. 16-41), what things stand out in your mind about its structure and content?***

**Acts 14**— The next stop for Paul and Barnabas is Iconium where they first go to the synagogue and proclaim Christ. Although a great number of Jews and Greeks believed, part of the town tried to stone them so they fled to Lystra (vv. 1-7). In Lystra a man lame from birth was healed by Paul. This healing caused the crowd to think they were gods that came down from heaven. Then the priest from the temple of Zeus tried to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas. They were barely able to stop the people from offering sacrifices to them. Then Jews that came from Antioch and Iconium, won the crowds over, and incited them to stone Paul. They dragged Paul out of the city thinking he was dead, but he got up and went back into the town (vv. 8-20). Going to Derbe next, they made many disciples, and then returned through all the cities encouraging the believers, appointing elders, and telling them "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God (v. 22b NIV)." ***When the missionary journey was completed, who did Paul and Barnabas report to about their first missionary journey? Why was this important, and how is this an example to our churches today?***

**Acts 15**— Now we come to a decisive council in Jerusalem where an important decision had to be made as to whether the Gentiles would be forced to be circumcised and live under the Law of Moses in order to be saved as the Pharisaic wing of the church in Jerusalem demanded. First, Peter made it clear that through his mouth the first Gentiles were saved, and upon believing the gospel message they received the Holy Spirit. Next Barnabas and Paul described all the signs and wonders God has done through them among the Gentiles. Finally, James brings scripture to bear upon God's purpose of enfolding Gentiles into His eternal plan. He then passed on four guidelines to the Gentile churches which would bring unity between Jews and Gentiles in the local assemblies. A letter then was written by those in the council to all the Gentile churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Upon hearing the letter, the church was very encouraged and strengthened. Paul wanted to return with Barnabas to the churches they planted but had a sharp disagreement happened because Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them although he had deserted them on the first journey. As a result of the contention, Barnabas took John Mark to Cyprus, and Paul departed with Silas to revisit and strengthen the churches in Syria and Cilicia. ***Give the steps from start to finish that these leaders and Apostles used to resolve their conflict about whether or not Gentiles have to keep the Law of Moses to be saved.***

**Acts 16**— Paul and Silas returned to the churches in Asia Minor that were planted and gave them the report of the Jerusalem council, and the churches were strengthened in the faith and

grew daily. They tried to take the gospel to other parts of Asia Minor, but the Holy Spirit wouldn't allow them to go. Timothy and Luke had joined them along the way. When they came to Troas, Paul had a vision of a man pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us (v. 9b HCSB)!" After arriving in the city of Philippi in Macedonia, they went on the Sabbath day to the riverbank outside the city and found some women gathered for prayer. One of the women in the group was Lydia who was a merchant of expensive purple cloth. The Lord opened Lydia's heart to believe, she was baptized, and then she invited Paul's team to stay at her home. When Paul cast demons out of a slave girl who was constantly bothering them, her owners seized Paul and Silas and dragged them off to the authorities. After a mob stripped off their clothes and beat them, Paul and Silas were thrown into prison. At midnight as Paul and Silas were singing, God sent a violent earthquake which loosened everyone's chains. Since no one escaped, the jailer asked "Sirs, what must I do to be saved (v. 30 ESV)." After believing in the Lord Jesus, the jailer and his family were baptized. Since Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, the city magistrates apologetically escorted them out of the city. ***Where do we see the work of the Holy Spirit in this chapter? What work does the Holy Spirit do in your life?***

**Acts 17**— Paul's team traveled from Philippi to Thessalonica where he reasoned with them from the Scriptures in the Jewish synagogue for three Sabbaths. Although many Jews and God-fearing Greeks were persuaded to believe in Christ, other Jews became jealous, formed a mob, and forced Paul and Silas to leave town (vv. 1-9). As was their custom, Paul and Silas went to the synagogue in Berea and taught the scriptures. The Jews of this city were more open-minded and fair and eagerly examined the Scriptures to see if Paul was speaking the truth. A large number believed in Berea, but Jewish agitators from Thessalonica came and forced Paul to leave Macedonia (vv. 10-15). Silas and Timothy stayed in Macedonia to instruct the believers, but Paul went on to Athens to await them. He taught in the synagogue but also reasoned with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who took him to the Areopagus to share his strange ideas with them. Having been taught in Greek philosophy, he adapted his message of the gospel in a way the Greeks could understand by talking about the altar to an unknown God and even quoting Greek philosophers. After finishing his message on the theme of Christ and the resurrection, some ridiculed him, some wanted to hear more another day, and others believed (vv. 16-34). Paul used the altar to the unknown God and Greek philosophy as points of contact between the people and the gospel. ***What are some of the ways we can contextualize (adapt and relate the gospel to a culture) the gospel today in order to reach people for Christ? See I Corinthians 9:19-23***

**Psalm 63**— This psalm is a love letter extolling God's virtues and longing to be near Him. **1. Write a short paragraph showing your love for God by using some of the thoughts from this psalm.**

### ***Week 33 Psalm 64 Acts 18-22, Psalm 65***

**Psalm 64**— This psalm is a prayer of deliverance from David's foes. While Psalm 63 concentrates on God, **what is the focus of Psalm 64?**

**Acts 18**— After leaving Athens, Paul arrived in Corinth and found a believing couple from Rome by the names of Aquila and Priscilla who were tentmakers as he was. When Silas and Timothy joined them, Paul was occupied with the message of the gospel in the synagogue. Although many believed in Christ, he was strongly opposed by the Jews and thus dedicated his time to reaching the Gentiles. God promised to protect Paul in Corinth, and so he boldly proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah for a year and a half. When Paul was dragged into court, the judge by the name of Gallio would not accept the Jews arguments and had them escorted out of the court. Leaving Corinth, Paul went to Ephesus where he stayed for a short period of time and reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue. Leaving Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus, Paul sailed back to Caesarea and Antioch where he greeted the churches. He then returned through Galatia and Phrygia strengthening the churches. When Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos speak boldly in the synagogue, he only declared what John the Baptist said about Jesus. “They took him home and explained the way of God to him more accurately (v. 26b HCSB).” Crossing over to Corinth from Ephesus, Apollos greatly helped the believers and refuted the non-believing Jews in public. This chapter introduces us to a dynamic couple by the name of Priscilla and Aquila. ***What information can we glean about them from this chapter as well as other parts of Paul’s writings? See verses 1-3, 25-26, Romans 16:3-5, I Corinthians 16:19, and II Timothy 4:19.***

**Acts 19**— Upon returning to Ephesus, Paul found some disciples of John the Baptist who he taught clearly the gospel of Christ and had them baptized in the name of Jesus. After their baptism Paul laid his hands on the twelve men, and they spoke in other languages (tongues) and prophesied (vv. 1-7). For two years Paul spoke boldly the message of the gospel so that all the inhabitants of the province of Asia heard the Word of the Lord. The Lord performed extraordinary miracles through Paul, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Believers who had previously been involved in the occult brought their incantation books and burned them in a public bonfire (vv. 8-20). Because of the large number of converts in Ephesus and surrounding cities, the silversmiths who made silver shrines of the goddess Artemis were losing a vast amount of money. Demetrius assembled all the craftsmen who became enraged by the loss of business, and so they dragged Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s travelling companions, into the amphitheater. Confusion reigned for two hours as the people shouted “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.” The city clerk calmed the crowd down, urged the silversmiths to bring charges in a court of law if they have any, and then dismissed the assembly (21-41). ***As you have read and thought about the last seven chapters (13-19) that record Paul’s missionary journey, what seemed to be his strategy in church planting and evangelism?***

**Acts 20**— Paul departed from Ephesus to go to Macedonia and Greece. He spent three months in Corinth, returned to the cities of Macedonia, and then stopped seven days in Troas. He assembled the church together on the first day of the week and preached until dawn. A young man by the name of Eutychus, who was sitting on a window sill, sank into a deep sleep and fell from the third story and died. Through Paul, the Lord brought him back to life (vv. 1-12). Arriving at Miletus Paul sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus. First, Paul reviewed his ministry with them which was preaching everything they needed from the Word including repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus. Even though he knew that going to Jerusalem would mean prison and suffering, his concern was not his life but that he will finish the course and ministry of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace (vv. 12-24). Now the writer Luke begins to

show the deep love and concern that Paul had for the churches and challenges the elders to be on guard for the flock that the Lord has called them to shepherd. He warned them to constantly be on the lookout because savage wolves will come in to tear the sheep apart with false doctrines in order to lure away disciples to themselves. He then described his behavior which he wanted them to imitate such as providing for their own needs and not being greedy. After his farewell heartrending message, they knelt down and prayed together with a great deal of weeping and grieving when he told them that he would never see them again (vv. 17-38). In this chapter Paul is completely transparent. **After reading verses 17 to 38, describe what Paul reveals about his motives, character, and person.**

**Acts 21**— Paul and his team left Miletus and sailed to Phoenicia, spending time with the disciples in Tyre and Caesarea. At every place the Holy Spirit indicated that Paul would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. Even the prophet Agabus said that Paul would be bound in chains, but this did not deter Paul on what he knew the Lord wanted him to do (vv. 1-14). Coming to Jerusalem, Paul met with James and all the elders as he declared what God had done among the Gentiles. Since it was rumored that Paul encouraged the Jews to abandon the Law of Moses, they advised him to fulfill a Nazirite vow with four other men, thus showing that he was not rejecting the law (vv. 15-25). On the last day of the annual feast of Pentecost (presumably), the Jews from Asia saw Paul and leveled false charges against him, stirred up the crowd, and dragged him out of the temple complex. As the mob tried to kill him, the Roman commander and the soldiers rescued Paul. After identifying himself to the tribune, Paul asked and was given permission to speak to the crowd (vv. 26-40). In Acts 16:3 Paul had Timothy circumcised, and in this chapter Paul fulfilled an Old Testament custom of a Nazirite vow which included seven days of purification and then making animal sacrifices. **Was Paul right in doing these rites, or was he compromising and denying the doctrine of salvation by grace. See also I Corinthians 9:22**

**Acts 22**— Paul then addressed the audience of the Jews in Aramaic which was the common Hebrew language. He describes his background, education, and zeal before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. He then tells the story of his conversion and calling, but when he mentions his ministry to the Gentiles, the crowd once again erupts in yelling and tossing dust in the air. The commander then ordered that Paul be brought in to be flogged to find out why the people were shouting and out of control. When the commander was told that he was a Roman citizen, those who were going to flog him withdrew at once. **How were Paul's Roman citizenship, his speaking Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic, his birth in Tarsus, and his education under the rabbi Gamaliel assets to his ministry to both Jews and Gentiles? How has your background as to place of birth and childhood, parents, gifts, talents, and personality prepared you for Christian service in your life?**

**Psalm 65**— This is a song of David about God's sovereignty, majesty, and goodness. **What would you consider to be the greatest attribute or work of God mentioned in this Psalm?**

**Week 34 Psalm 66 Acts 23-27, Psalm 67**

**Psalm 66**— The psalmist rehearses the Lord’s great miracles for Israel in this song of praise and adoration to God. **How does the tone of this psalm shift in the final stanzas (vv 16-20)?**

**Acts 23**— The commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews, and so he convened a meeting with the Sanhedrin and Paul. Realizing that the Sanhedrin was divided between the Sadducees and Pharisees, Paul said, “I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead (v. 6b NIV).” Because of their belief in the resurrection, the Pharisees began to defend Paul, and the dispute became so violent that the commander had to rescue Paul and bring him back to the barracks (vv. 1-10). The Lord gave Paul a promise that night that he would also testify in Rome. There was a conspiracy of 40 men who vowed to kill Paul, but Paul’s nephew found out and told Paul. When the commander was told of the plot, he prepared 200 soldiers, 70 mounted troops, and 200 spearmen to take Paul to Caesarea at nine o’clock that night. The commander, Lysias, sent a letter to Felix the governor giving in detail the reason he sent Paul to Caesarea. Felix promised a hearing when Paul’s accusers were able to come to present their case (vv. 11-34). ***What was the difference in beliefs between the Sadducees and the Pharisees? How did Jesus show that the teaching of the resurrection was found in the five books of Moses (Pentateuch)? See Matthew 22:31-32 and Exodus 3:6.***

**Acts 24**— Five days later Ananias, the high priest, came down with some elders and a lawyer named Tertullus to accuse Paul. They charged Paul with being an agitator among the Jews throughout the Roman Empire, a ringleader of the Nazarene cult, and a desecrater of the temple (vv. 1-9). Paul skillfully defended himself declaring that he had come to Jerusalem to bring charitable gifts and to worship without attracting a crowd or causing an uproar. He said that the Jews from the province of Asia should bring their charges against him if they have any. He asserted that the people of the Way (Christians) believe in all that is taught in the Old Testament including the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous (vv. 10-21). Felix called Paul to listen to him talk concerning the subject of Christ Jesus, but also hoped that Paul would offer him a bribe. He left Paul in prison for two years as a favor to the Jewish leaders (vv. 22-27). ***What response should we have as Christians when we are falsely accused and persecuted?***

**Acts 25**— Felix is replaced as governor by Festus who immediately confers with the Jews in Jerusalem. The chief priests and the Jewish leaders wanted him to act right away on Paul’s case and bring him to Jerusalem to be judged, but their real intent was to have him killed on the way. Not willing to bring Paul to Jerusalem, Festus held court in Caesarea where the same accusations they had given to Felix were presented by the Jews, and the same defense was given by Paul. When Paul sensed that his options were either to go to Rome or be killed on the road to Jerusalem, he said to Festus, “I appeal to Caesar!” Festus said, “You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you will go!” When King Agrippa and Bernice paid a courtesy call on Festus, he made them aware of a prisoner left by Felix who had appealed to Caesar. Since Agrippa knew the Jewish culture well, Festus wanted him to clarify the charges that needed to be brought to the Emperor in Rome. The next day King Agrippa and Bernice entered the auditorium with great fanfare to hear Paul. Many prominent people of the city were also in attendance to see King Agrippa and hear Paul. The Apostle Paul received protection from the Roman

authorities during this period in his life. Can we trust God to work out His will through civil authorities? Explain. See Romans 13:1-5. **Do we really appreciate and pray for our government officials, police officers, and first responders as they serve us? I Timothy 2:1**

**Acts 26**— Paul gave his defense and testimony before King Agrippa, beginning with his background as belonging to the strictest group of the Jews as a Pharisee, and showing his great zeal for Judaism by his persecution of those who belonged to Jesus the Nazarene. He shared his conversion experience of how he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul clearly declared to Agrippa and to those who were listening the gospel story and the reality of the resurrection. He said that the reason he was seized in the temple complex by the Jews with the intention to kill him was that he told the Jews that God has offered this gift of salvation also to the Gentiles. Both Festus and Agrippa reacted to Paul's testimony since Paul encouraged them to believe in Christ. King Agrippa asked Paul if he believed that he would be persuaded to become a Christian so quickly. After the encounter with Paul, both Agrippa and Festus agreed that he had not done anything that deserved imprisonment. **Write down from this chapter the verses that describe the message of the gospel. As Paul gave his testimony in this chapter, what group of people did he emphasize, the Jews or the Gentiles? Why?**

**Acts 27**— Luke describes the trip from Caesarea to Rome in graphic details giving us knowledge of what travel on the Mediterranean Sea was like at that time. When they reached Fair Havens on the island of Crete, they found the harbor unsuitable to winter in and decided to sail on to Phoenix even though it was late fall and very dangerous to sail. Paul warned that the voyage would have damage and heavy loss if they tried to sail on to Phoenix before winter, but the captain and owner of the ship paid no attention to his words. As Paul predicted, bad weather ensued and a violent storm was raging that carried them on without seeing the sun or stars. They did all they could to lighten and to gird the ship but it was to no avail. The storm continued violently for two weeks with their hope of being saved growing dim. Paul stood up among them and encouraged them to take heart since the angel of the Lord promised him that he would stand before Caesar in Rome and all those on the ship would be safe. Paul prevented sailors from escaping and the soldiers from killing the prisoners. Coming to an island and sighting a beach, they planned to run the ship ashore, but they struck a sandbar. Eventually, all of the 276 that were on the ship arrived safely to the island of Malta. Luke describes in vivid detail the unbelievable treacherous storm the people in the ship experienced where they even despaired of life. Describe a terrible "storm" that you have suffered in your life. **What caused this storm? What did you learn from this storm? How has this storm changed you?**

**Psalm 67**— This psalm begins with a popular benediction and continues with requests for His power and majesty to be made known to the world. Take some time to consider each "Let" or "May" in the Psalm. **Does anything stand out to you?**

### **Week 35 Psalm 68 Acts 28- Romans 1-4, Psalm 69**

**Psalm 68**— This is a song of David anticipating God's coming judgment and comparing that to the Exodus and conquest of Canaan. David rejoices in the thought of God's future judgment of mankind. **Why is this significant?**

**Acts 28**— They wintered on the island of Malta and were given warm hospitality by the friendly Maltese. Paul survived a poisonous snake bite without any effect and healed many who were sick on the island including the father of Publius, the chief officer of the island. After three months, they set sail for Rome, and Paul arrived at the port of Perteoli about 130 miles south of Rome. As they traveled on foot, they were greeted by Roman believers about 40 miles outside of Rome. In Rome Paul was able to rent his own living quarters with a Roman soldier guarding him. He invited the Jewish leaders from Rome to come to his house, and he declared the gospel of Christ from the Law of Moses and the Prophets. After a full day from morning to evening, some believed and some didn't. From that time on Paul went to the Gentiles to preach the Good News boldly and without hindrance for two years. ***How is the attitude of the Jews in Rome different from the Jews in Jerusalem and Asia? How do you account for the difference?***

**Romans**— Romans was written by the Apostle Paul in about 57 AD before ever going to Rome from the city of Corinth as he was preparing to go to Jerusalem. The book has been called the Mt. Everest of all scripture with Chapter 8 being the summit. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write this great treatise explaining the Christian faith. The outline of Romans can be easily remembered by five words; 1. Sin ( 1-3:23) 2. Salvation (3:24-5:21) 3. Sanctification (6-8) 4. Sovereignty (9-11) and Service (12-16).

**Romans 1**— Paul begins with an introduction and greeting to the church at Rome, declaring to them his desire to visit them to reap a harvest among them (v.1-15). In verses 16-17, he states the overall themes of the Gospel and the Righteousness of God. God's wrath is justly revealed against sinners because they suppress the truth and turn to idolatry (v. 18-23). The fruit of their rejection of truth and the acceptance of idolatry causes the complete moral disintegration of society (v. 24-32). ***1. Explain what Paul means by "God's righteousness is revealed from faith to faith ( or 'by faith from first to last') as it is written ' the just (righteous) shall live by faith' (v.17)." See also Colossians 2:7. 2. What does the Bible teach about homosexuality? See verses 26-27, I Corinthians 6:9- 10, Leviticus 18:21-25, and Jude 7. What should be our attitude toward those who practice it?***

**Romans 2**— After a vivid description of human depravity in Chapter 1, Paul now speaks of the pride and judgmentalism of the Jews who think that God will overlook their sins for the simple reason they are Jews. God, however, shows no partiality and will judge each person according to their works and His gospel (v. 1-16). Simply because the Jews had the law and received the rite of circumcision, they thought they were approved by God. Paul says that only those who are Jews inwardly and have a circumcised heart by the Spirit will be praised by God (v. 17-29). ***What arguments did Paul give to the Jews who thought they were special with God but in reality because of their sins would suffer the same condemnation as the Gentile sinners? Extra Question: Do verses 12 to 16 teach that the Gentiles do not have to be saved by trusting Christ if they live a life of obedience to the law? Explain.***

**Romans 3**— The Jews do have an advantage in that through them God has revealed the very words of Scripture for which all people will one day be held accountable (v. 1-8). After a complete examination of humankind from head to foot, God's Word declares everyone unrighteous and under sin, being fully condemned by the law (v. 9- 20). Now God gives His

superior, perfect righteousness to those who trust in the blood of Christ Jesus to justify them. This salvation excludes all human works and boasting since it is received by faith only (v.21-31).

**1. What is the purpose of the law? See verses 19-20. 2. After reading verses 19 to 29, how would you explain the basics of the gospel using five or six bullet points.**

**Romans 4**— Now Paul begins to prove his case beginning with the Patriarch Abraham, verifying that Abraham believed God and was declared righteous, and thus all those who believe the gospel are children of Abraham and heirs of eternal salvation. After David's declaration of righteousness apart from the law (v. 6-8), it is made clear that Abraham was the father of all who are heirs of salvation, since his faith in God's promise (Genesis 15:6) was before his circumcision, and was not related to keeping the law. Verse 21 says of Abraham, "being fully convinced that God had power to do what he had promised." **Where are you at this present time being stretched in your ability to trust God's promises?**

**Psalms 69**— This song of David is set to a popular tune of the day. Numerous messianic verses are found here. **1. How many messianic verses can you find? 2. Why is David being ridiculed by the people? (vv 7, 9-12. See also 2 Samuel 7:2, 13 & 1 Kings 6:1)**

### **Week 36 Psalm 70, Romans 5-9, Psalm 71**

**Psalm 70** — This psalm is an urgent request for God to deliver David from his enemies quickly. **What justification does David offer for requesting God's deliverance?**

**Romans 5**— Paul lists the many benefits of being justified by faith. The benefits of this justification are peace with God, access into this grace, hope in sufferings, and God's love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. All these blessings come to us including our continuous salvation and reconciliation to God, not because we deserved them, but by the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. As a proof that the entire human race participated with Adam in his sin and disobedience, everyone experiences death and condemnation. With the coming of Christ, the second Adam, believers have all the benefits of grace including justification, the free gift of righteousness, and eternal life. **Explain what it means to be reconciled to God and why it was necessary? See verses 10-11, Colossians 1:21-22, II Corinthians 5:18-21. Extra Question: List in two columns the comparisons and contrasts between Adam and Jesus.**

**Romans 6**— Paul refutes the accusation that his doctrine of grace encourages believers to sin more in order to highlight God's grace more. He proclaims the moral incongruity of a believer living in sin since he was baptized with Christ in His death and united with Him in His resurrection. The three important words Paul uses in this chapter are: (1) know, (2) count (consider, reckon), and (3) yield (present). We must know that our old life was crucified with Christ. We must count as true in our lives that we are dead to sin but alive to God. Lastly, we must fully yield or surrender our bodies as members of God and instruments of righteousness. The promise we receive if we follow these steps is that sin will not dominate our lives because of His grace. When we yield ourselves to sin, we become slaves of sin which leads to lawlessness and death. When we yield ourselves to God, we become His slaves. **1. Is there any hope of**



***escaping the cycle of sinning, asking forgiveness, and then sinning again? Explain how we can escape this cycle using Romans 6. 2. What are the four benefits of being slaves to God (v. 16- 23)?***

**Romans 7**— After Romans 6 proclamation that sin will have no dominion over us since we are not under the law but under grace, Paul shares with us his and our struggle with the flesh/sinful nature and what relationship it has with the law. “Law” is the key word in this chapter being mentioned 23 times. The Apostle illustrates the death of a husband allowing the living wife to be free from the law of marriage meaning that since we are married to Christ we are free from the law (v. 1-3). He then takes a different tack and says we are dead to the law because of our identification with the death of Christ. The effect of the law on the flesh is that it stimulates us to sin more. Verse 6 gives the key to having victory over sin by (1) understanding that we are released from the law through our identification with Christ’s death and are (2) now free to serve Christ through the new way of being controlled and directed by the Holy Spirit (v. 4-6). The rest of the chapter shows the contrast between the law which is holy, righteous, and good and our sinful fleshly natures which are evil, deceitful, death producing, and wretched. As we begin to see our utter sinfulness and complete powerlessness to obey the law and honor God, we cry out to Jesus Christ who is our only means of escape (v. 7-25). 1. ***What are the reasons God gave us the law? Chapter 7:7- 11, 3:18-19, and 8:2-4.*** 2. ***What are keys to have victory over sin? See verses 6 and 25.***

**Romans 8**— In contrast to the law which stimulates us to sin and is followed by death, Chapter 8 declares no condemnation through Jesus Christ because of the new law of the Spirit of life. All this was provided to us by Christ’s sacrificial death. As we walk in the Spirit and keep in step with His promptings, God’s power will enable us to follow the righteous requirements of the law. The key word in this chapter is “Spirit” which is used about 21 times and shows us the means of finding life and peace. Verses 2 through 18 describe how the Holy Spirit enables us to live in the paths of holiness and righteousness. The chapter then speaks about our glorious future liberation and the present struggles of creation as we wait in hope for God to fulfill His promises. The chapter ends with a glorious crescendo of God’s sovereignty, our security, Christ’s inseparable love for us, and our ultimate assurance of being super conquerors in life. ***In verses 2-27, what are the things the Holy Spirit does for us? Extra Question: What are the questions and their answers given in verses 31 to 35?***

**Romans 9**— What a contrast between the joy of Chapter 8 and sorrow and burden of Chapter 9! Paul’s heart is in anguish for his people, the Jews, who had all of the spiritual advantages but rejected God’s way of salvation through faith in Christ (vv. 1-5, 30-33). This chapter clearly declares God’s right to choose and be Almighty God. Paul relates God’s sovereign choice of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and declares that God is not unfair or unjust in what He does. Paul quotes Old Testament prophets showing that God always had the salvation of the Gentiles in mind (vv. 24-26) and that in time only a remnant of Israel would be saved (vv. 27-29). ***What advantages did Israel have as a nation (vv. 4-5)? What caused their downfall (vv. 30-33)? Extra Question: Does God predestinate people to go to Hell? Explain.***

**Psalm 71** — In this psalm we have the perspective of an aging psalmist recounting God's steadfast love and protection. **In what ways has God shown Himself to be faithful to you?**

### ***Week 37 Psalm 72, Romans 10-14, Psalm 73***

**Psalm 72** — This is a prayer written for Solomon's coronation which also looks forward to the righteous reign of the Messiah. Consider verses 7, 11-14, and 17. **Who do these refer to?**

**Romans 10**— Israel sought to establish their own righteousness through obedience to the law which they couldn't obey and rejected the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ alone. Paul clearly states the only means of salvation and commends those who preach the gospel. Finally, even though God clearly presented the gospel to Israel, they still rejected it and Him. 1. Verse 4 says, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." **What does this mean? Are the Ten Commandments obsolete? Explain. 2. What is necessary to be saved? See verses 9-10, 13, 17.**

**Romans 11**— This chapter clearly answers the question, "Is God's setting aside of Israel as a nation permanent?" First, Paul indicates that in his day there was a large remnant of Jews that had believed in Christ. The first church was Jewish and there were thousands of Jewish Christians (vv. 1-10). Paul declares that Israel's rejection is only temporary so that the Gentiles can be grafted into God's olive tree. Even though it may have seemed such a difficult thing for wild olive branches to be grafted in (Gentiles), it certainly won't be difficult for the people of Israel, the natural branches, to be grafted back into God's olive tree (vv. 11-24). After the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (v. 25) all Israel will be saved (v. 26) because the gifts and callings of God are irrevocable (v. 29). Finally, God's plan for the world is unsearchable and complex showing His great wisdom and power. God is the source of all things, the sustainer of all things by His power, and His glory is the ultimate goal of all things (vv. 33- 36). **What are the verses in this chapter that indicate that God will reestablish His covenant with Israel again in the future?**

**Romans 12**— Because of all the blessings God has given us as stated in the previous 11 chapters, we are now encouraged to totally commit our lives to God and this includes rejecting the world's values and allowing our minds to be renewed by His Word (vv. 1-2). With sober judgment we discover the gifts God has given us and exercise them for the benefit of the other members of the body (vv. 3-8). Paul gives the true marks of a Christian community beginning with a sincere love for each other. As individuals progressively put into practice the commands given, they will grow in righteousness and will be powerful change agents in their families, churches and communities (vv. 9-18). Their love for others will be so transforming that they will not take personal vengeance but overcome evil with good (vv.19-21). **1. Romans 12:2 says we can test and approve what God's will is. How can we know God's will for our lives? 2. As you read the commands given to believers in verses 9-21, what are the top two or three that you really need to grow in more?**

**Romans 13**— First, Paul addresses the Christian's responsibility to government. We are to respect governing authorities because they are ministers of God in restraining evil. We are

commanded to pay the taxes we owe and show respect and honor to whom it due (vv. 1-7). All the commandments are summed up in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Paul urges believers to wake up and cast off the evil works of darkness and put on the Lord Jesus Christ (vv. 8-14). **What are the reasons and motives we are to obey governing authorities? Extra Question: How do we “put on the Lord Jesus Christ?”**

**Romans 14**— Following the exhortation of chapter 13 to “love one another,” Paul now helps us to build a unified, loving community by being careful about our judgmental attitudes toward other believers who have different convictions on questionable things. We are not to pass judgment on a brother as to what he eats or what special day he observes since the Lord is the master of each person and it is only to Him that we must give account of ourselves (vv. 1-12). Our goal is to build up weaker believers and not to flaunt our liberty or superior knowledge. Each person needs to make sure he doesn’t wound his own conscience by doing something against it or to look down on a brother who exercises freedom in those same areas (vv. 13-23). **What attitudes and motivations do we see in this chapter that guide our relationship toward those with whom we disagree or have differences (vv. 3, 7, 8, 10, 13, 19, and 22)?**

**Psalms 73** — The psalmist envies the prosperity of the wicked until he realizes their ultimate end. **1. Are the comments about the wicked that are found in verses 4, 5, 12 and 13 true? 2. What remedy does the Psalmist find for his envy? See verse 17.**

### **Week 38 Psalm 74, Romans 15-16, 1 Corinthians 1-3. Psalm 75**

**Psalms 74** — Written shortly after the Babylonian captivity, this prayer describes the destruction of the temple and pleads for God to defend His honor. **As you read this Psalm, what two things are absent in Asaph’s request?**

**Romans 15**— Paul speaks of the importance of the unity of believers which consists of selflessness, mutual respect, and complete acceptance of each other. God’s plan all along was to bring the Jews and Gentiles together into one body that is unified with Christ as the center and ultimate hope (vv. 1-13). Paul focuses on his calling as the apostle to the Gentiles expressing His heart and passion for ministry among the Gentiles in places where the gospel has never been heard (vv. 14-21). He concludes this chapter by saying that since his ministry is finished in Asia Minor and Greece, he now desires to go to Spain, and hopes make a stop at Rome and greet the church on the journey (vv. 22-29). He asks for their prayers realizing the danger that he may soon face in Jerusalem (vv. 30- 33). **1. What are some of the traits and attitudes needed for believers to work toward unity and harmony? 2. The Apostle Paul had a passion to take the gospel to areas where it has never been heard. What is an area of need in God’s kingdom for which He has given you a passion?**

**Romans 16**— Paul warmly greets twenty-four friends and members of the church in Rome who are involved in ministry (vv. 1-16). The Roman believers are warned to be careful about false teachers in the church that cause divisions by teaching doctrines and practices contrary to the truth (vv. 17-19). The letter finishes with a beautiful doxology giving the theme of Romans which is the proclamation gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations in order to bring glory to God (vv.

20-27). In verse 17 Paul warns the church about those who cause division by teaching things contrary to sound doctrine. ***What are teachings that divide the Christian church today and how do we keep a balance between unity and truth?***

**I Corinthians**— The apostle Paul founded the church of Corinth about 50 AD on his second missionary journey, and wrote this letter to them about 55 AD from Ephesus, addressing problems in the church, and answering questions of a committee that was sent from the church of Corinth (16:17). Corinth, a rich commercial city, was the capital of Achaia with a population of perhaps 500,000 located in southern Greece, famous for idolatry and immorality. In this letter the Apostle wrote about the disunity, immaturity, and immorality of the church. The major themes of this epistle are Christian unity, morality, women's roles, spiritual gifts, and the resurrection. The best known and most treasured part of this book is the "love" chapter (13).

**I Corinthians 1**— The letter begins with the usual greeting from Paul, giving thanks for the church, and for God's faithfulness to complete His work in them at Christ's return (vv. 1-9). Paul first addresses the problem of divisions in the church, urging its members to be in harmony, united in one mind and purpose (vv. 10-17). The powerful message of the cross seems foolish to the world. The Jews seek signs and miracles, and the Gentiles follow a rational philosophical approach. God's way is through the foolishness of the preaching of the cross of Christ which demonstrates God's power and wisdom. Our boasting must be in Christ alone because through faith in Him we receive God's wisdom; that is, Christ's righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (vv. 18-31). Disunity in the church is a sign of immaturity and carnality. ***What do we need to do to promote unity in the church? Extra Question: The superiority of God's wisdom is seen in the three benefits we receive from Christ. Explain and amplify the meaning of "righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."***

**I Corinthians 2**— Although Paul was a brilliant scholar and could debate all of the philosophical ideas of the day, he simply preached the gospel of Christ and the cross in weakness and trembling, allowing the Spirit of God to powerfully work in the hearts of those who would believe. The temporal wisdom of this age is not what the Apostle declared, but the eternal wisdom and truth of God that was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. The unbeliever cannot understand spiritual truth since they don't have the Spirit of God in them. The spiritual person is able to evaluate and comprehend all of God's truth that is revealed to him because he has the mind of Christ. ***How did the world's wisdom explain the meaning of the cross? Extra Question: What two things are necessary to find God's wisdom and viewpoint on any situation in which we find ourselves?***

**I Corinthians 3**— Paul exposes the immaturity of the Corinthian church because of the way each one would pick and exalt a certain leader as his or her favorite, when the truth is that Paul, Apollos, and Peter were just servants performing the tasks God had assigned them (vv. 1-9). Someday Christ, the only foundation, will judge every believer for the type of materials he has used to build his spiritual house. On that day the fire of Christ's judgment will test the quality of his work, and rewards will be given (10-15). Paul gives a warning about anyone who destroys God's temple (the local church). Paul circles back to the theme of boasting in human leaders and reminds them that everything they have is a gift from God (including leaders), and they are

in union with Christ and Christ is in union with God (16-23). ***What tests should we ask ourselves so that we build our lives on gold, silver, and precious stones and not wood, hay, and straw?***

**Psalm 75** — Our Righteous Judge and our proper response are seen in this psalm. **What actions does God warn us against?**

### ***Week 39 Psalm 76, 1 Corinthians 4-8, Psalm 77***

**Psalm 76** — Commonly considered a psalm of gratitude for protection from Assyria, Psalm 76 praises God for His victory, magnificence, and sovereignty. **Consider 2 Kings 19:14-19 & 32-35. In their shoes, how would this victory make you feel?**

**I Corinthians 4**— The Apostle sees himself as a servant of Christ and a manager of mysteries, and knows that he is required to be faithful to this calling. We must be careful not to judge others, but let the Lord evaluate them on “that day.” God’s evaluation is perfect since He is omniscient and even knows the motives behind our deeds (vv. 1-5). Paul uses some sanctified sarcasm in comparing Apollos and himself with the Corinthian believers. While they are rich and reign as kings, Paul and Apollos are fools for Christ, a spectacle to the world, and treated as the world’s garbage (vv. 6-13). As a godly, spiritual father to the church in Corinth, Paul encouraged them to imitate the ways he lived his life through the transforming power of Christ Jesus. The acid test of spiritual reality is not eloquent words, but a Spirit-empowered life. Explain the meaning of verse 5. ***How should you apply this to your own life?***

**I Corinthians 5 & 6**— Chapter five deals with immorality in the church, and chapter six speaks of Christians taking other Christians to court. The church was proud of their allowing a man in their church to have a sexual relationship with his father’s wife. Paul commanded that this man be excluded from the church and turned over to Satan’s territory. Allowing sin in the church will cause sin to spread over the whole congregation (5:1-13). Paul states that legal disputes among Christians should be settled by wise people in the church and not taken to a heathen court. He talks of the previous immoral lifestyle of the Corinthians, but now they are washed, sanctified, and justified. Although we have freedom in Christ, we are not free to sin sexually since the Holy Spirit indwells in our bodies which were bought with the precious blood of Christ (6:1-20). ***Explain what Paul meant by “you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord (5:5).”***

**I Corinthians 7**— Living in a city known throughout the world for its gross immorality, Paul discusses the important topic of sex and Christian marriage. After giving general principles on the obligations of marriage, he then addresses the unmarried and widows (vv. 1-9). The topics of separation and divorce are covered, giving the Lord’s commands in the case of believing couples, as well as those who are married to an unbelieving spouse (vv. 10-16). Paul then addresses various situations in life including being Jew or Gentile, slave or free, married or single, and encourages them to remain in the situation they were in when God called them to be his children (vv. 17-24). The Apostle then states that there are advantages of remaining single since the single person can fully serve and please the Lord, where the married person is

distracted because of the need of pleasing their mate. Finally, Paul declares that married couples are bound to each other until death. At death, the living partner is free to remarry, but only to another believer (vv. 25-40). ***What are the Biblical grounds for a divorced Christian to remarry? See Verses 10-16, Matthew 19:9-10.***

**I Corinthians 8**— This chapter touches the subject of eating meat sacrificed to idols which has no relevance to western culture today. The principle taught here that can be applied to all cultures at all times is that we must always walk in love towards others, and not allow our knowledge and participation of permissible things destroy a weaker brother or cause him to stumble. ***What would be a relevant situation in which we can apply this principle today?***

**Psalms 77** — In the midst of national tragedy, Asaph remembers God's omnipotence. Asaph describes his struggles to maintain his faith in God. **How does he resolve this?**