

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding an open Bible. The person is wearing a grey button-down shirt. The Bible is open to a page with text, and the person's right hand is resting on the pages. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the hands and the book.

NEW TESTAMENT

in a year - March

Daily Bible Reading Plan

MARCH 1 ACTS 12:25 – 13:12**DONE**

With the return of Barnabas and Saul to Antioch (12:25) begins the story of a great expansion of the gospel among the Gentiles.

1. What parts were played by: (a) the Holy Spirit and (b) the local church in initiating the new advance? Note that the church may have been praying about possible future developments of their work when guidance came through a prophet inspired by the Holy Spirit. What does this teach you about guidance?
2. Paul and Elymas meet in a head-on clash (verses 6-12). What was: (a) the cause of the clash, (b) the reason for Paul's strong condemnation of Elymas, (c) one purpose of the judgment that visibly fell upon him? Are you as prepared as Paul to rebuke and resist direct opposition to the Lord Jesus?

MARCH 2 ACTS 13:13-43**DONE**

Paul's journey from Paphos to Antioch involved an ascent of 3600 feet from the sea coast to a high plateau which was flourishing region of Graeco-Roman civilization. This probably accounts for the return of John Mark, who was thus faced with more than he expected when he set out. Note also the presence in the synagogue at Antioch of two classes – Jews and God-fearing Gentiles (verses 16 and 26).

1. In the first part of his address (verses 16-25), how does Paul show that the coming of Jesus was the culminating point in God's activity in the history recorded in the Old Testament?
2. When speaking of the resurrection (verses 30-39), what does Paul say about: (a) the reason for, (b) the Old Testament prophecies about, and (c) the result of Jesus' resurrection? Of what particular blessing is it a God-given pledge? Cf. Rom 4:25.

MARCH 3 ACTS 14:1-28**DONE**

The Jews at Antioch became jealous (verse 45) because Paul's message of forgiveness through Christ was drawing away the God-fearers, whom they hoped would eventually become fully committed to Judaism.

1. What was the effect of this jealous opposition on the work of Paul and Barnabas? Cf. 18:-6; 28:28. Do you ever allow opposition to silence your testimony or halt your Christian work? What may the refusal of some to respond indicate?
2. Paul and Barnabas now turned to the Gentiles. What two reasons are given in verses 46-47, and what two results follow in: (a) the wider proclamation of the gospel and the ingathering of believers, and (b) the experience of the converts?

MARCH 4 ACTS 14:1-28**DONE**

Paul continues his missionary visits to the towns and cities of Asia Minor. He always chose the strategic centers from which to work. Iconium was a prosperous commercial city on one of the main trade routes

from east to west, where there would be both Jews and Gentiles. Lystra was a smaller and more country town, with a simpler and less-educated population.

1. Each verse of verses 1-7 describes a fresh development in the events at Iconium. From these identify the three main stages of the work. Are you finding that opposition (human or satanic) follows blessing in your Christian work?
2. What five elemental truths about God are set forth by Paul in verses 15-17? What application does he draw from them? Cf. verses 11, 14-15. To whom do you think Paul would bring this kind of message today?
3. Verses 19-25. Despite opposition Paul and Barnabas return to the cities where churches have been founded to strengthen them. In what ways did they encourage these young Christians? What can we learn from this about helping one another in our faith?

MARCH 5 ACTS 15:1-34

DONE

1. The point at issue between the newly-established Gentile church at Antioch and the older Jewish church at Jerusalem was: 'On what terms can Gentiles be saved?' What answer was given by: (a) Paul and Barnabas (see 14:27), and (b) the teachers from Judaism (verses 1, 5)? Write down what you think is essential for salvation.
2. Verses 14-21. Here James, the leader of the Jerusalem church, the Lord's brother, and probably President of the Council, sums up. What judgment does he give, and for what reasons? Do you think this would satisfy both Jew and Gentile?
3. Verses 22-23. In what ways was the decision to be made known to the Gentiles, and with what results? From the whole debate, what principles can you draw out to guide you when there is a disagreement among fellow-Christians: (a) on essentials of the faith and (b) about non-essentials and matters of individual conscience?

MARCH 6 ACTS 15:35 – 16:5

DONE

1. What was the contention between Paul and Barnabas? Which was right, or were both wrong? Cf. John 21:21-22; 2 Tim 4:11. Can you disagree with another Christian without falling out with them?
2. What provision did God make for Paul when he lost the help of Barnabas and John Mark? What was the keynote of their work at this stage? Cf. 14:21-23; 18:23. In what ways can you help a young Christian to be strong in the faith?

MARCH 7 ACTS 16:6-15

DONE

A new period begins here, recording Paul's greatest missionary effort and achievement: the evangelization of three important Roman provinces – Macedonia, Achaia and Asia.

1. Verses 6-10. By what various means was Paul guided at this time? Trace on a map how remarkable the guidance was. What indication is there from this that God does not always guide us in the way we might expect?

2. Verses 11-15. The gospel comes to Europe. What evidence is there: (a) that Luke, the author of Acts, joined Paul at this time; (b) that the work began in a small way (with verse 13, cf. 13:14-16; 14:1-2 and Zech 4:10), and (c) that Lydia was truly born again of the Holy Spirit? Do you ever try to organize great work for God, rather than let God start a lasting work in a small way?

MARCH 8 ACTS 16:16-40

DONE

1. Verses 16-24. What was the origin of the persecution, and in what way did it differ from all those hitherto recorded? Note the successive stages of it, as described in Luke's very vivid account. Do you find yourself tempted or persecuted in new ways in your Christian life?

2. A beating with rods (verse 22) was very severe. Yet Paul and Silas are calm and rejoicing. What caused them to triumph? Cf. Phil 4:13; 2 Tim 1:7-8. Paul insists that a public declaration of their innocence is made (verse 37). What use would this be to the advance of the gospel? Are there any ways we can use public authority to help advance the gospel?

3. What caused the jailer to believe? What was essential to his salvation? What change was immediately found in his life? Cf. 8:39; 13:52. Does your salvation give you the joy of the Lord?

MARCH 9 ACTS 17:1-15

DONE

Thessalonica was the metropolis and most populous city of Macedonia, a center for both inland and maritime trade. Berea was a smaller town some sixty miles to the south-west.

1. What do we learn from Paul's visits and preaching at Thessalonica and Berea about: (a) the places where he preached, (b) the features of his preaching, (c) his chief message, (d) those who believed, and (e) the persecution that arose? The same events are written about Paul in 1 Thess 1:1-2:16. Do you realize that opportunities for strategic Christian witness may last only a short time? What ought you to do?

2. Verses 11-12. How are those who attended the Jewish synagogue in Berea described, and why are they commended? Are these features found in your life and Bible study?

MARCH 10 ACTS 17:16-34

DONE

Paul at Athens faces philosophers, who are eager to hear another man's views in order that they may add these to their rag-bag of ideas, and who also have no background understanding of the Old Testament.

1. Verses 16 & 21. From what motives, and by what methods, did Paul proclaim the gospel? Do you know anything of a divine jealousy provoked by the fact that people do not give Christ the allegiance that is his right?

2. Verses 22-34. Study Paul's sermon and note: (a) how he gained the interest of his hearers (verses 22-23), (b) what he taught about God in relation to the universe, mankind, idols and images (verses 24-29), and (c) the response he argued which men needed to make to God (verses 30-34). Paul sought to make the Christian message relevant to the thought and background of his hearers. He had no slick

phraseology. What do you learn from this about preaching today?

MARCH 11 ACTS 18:1-17

DONE

The city of Corinth was the capital of the Province of Achaia, and one of the greatest cities in the Empire. It was famous for commerce and learning, but infamous for its wickedness.

1. Consider the enormous task Paul faced in an evil and pagan city as he sought to found a church there. Note: (a) the value of Christian fellowship (verses 2-3, 5, 7-8) and (b) the command and promises of God's word to Paul (verses 9-11). Cf. 1 Cor 2:3. Is this God's answer to a depressed Christian worker? Do these things encourage you in difficult situations?

2. Compare the three distinct stages in Paul's ministry mentioned in verses 4, 7 and 12. What hindrances did Paul face and what encouragements came to him? Notice that with the hindrances came new opportunities and new encouragements. Let us pray for grace to be equally faithful.

MARCH 12 ACTS 18:18-28

DONE

1. Paul ends his second missionary journey (verses 18-23) with travels of more than a thousand miles. Luke reviews many months very briefly. Note, with the help of a map, the places Paul visited and the purposes he hoped to achieve.

2. We have a thumb-nail sketch of Apollos in verses 24-28. What is said about: (a) his knowledge of the Scriptures, (b) his enthusiasm, (c) the help Aquila and Priscilla gave, (d) his preaching, and (e) the value of his ministry (cf. 1 Cor 3:6)? Take each of these five points and ask yourself what you can learn from the life of Apollos.

MARCH 13 ACTS 19:1-20

DONE

Ephesus was the metropolis of the large and wealthy Province of Asia, a center of commerce and religion, famous for its image and its temple dedicated to the goddess Diana.

1. Apollos had taught only the baptism of John (18:24-25) at Ephesus. When Paul arrived, what did he find these disciples lacked in knowledge and assured experience? Is this experience yours? Have you realized how essential it is for you to understand fully in order to teach others accurately?

2. Verse 20 summarizes both Paul's ministry at Ephesus and Luke's whole section from 16:6 to 19:20, which covers the evangelization of Macedonia, Achaia and Asia. What methods and special incidents led to such a result in Ephesus (verses 8-19) and by what power were great results achieved in the three provinces? Cf. 16:14; 18:9 and 19:11. Does this review highlight any weaknesses in your Christian life?

MARCH 14 ACTS 19:21-41

DONE

Luke's vivid description of the riot at Ephesus is a close study in crowd psychology as well as a faithful account of the persecution, which Paul and his companions faced.

1. Verses 21-22. What were Paul's plans for the future? To where was his eye turned? But what two things must first be done? Cf. Rom 15:19, 23-24. Is your Christian work planned or haphazard?

2. What was the cause of the riot and persecution? How did it spread and how was it quieted? Note especially: (a) the challenge of the Christian faith to a man's business and wealth (verses 25, 27); (b) the blindness of religious people (cf. verses 26-27, 35-36); (c) the cost, fellowship and protection Paul found in missionary service (verses 28-31, 37-41). To which of these truths do I personally most need to pay attention?

MARCH 15 ACTS 20:1-38

DONE

Paul revisits the churches in the province of Macedonia to encourage them.

1. Paul is seeking to encourage and strengthen the young churches. What part do personal example (verse 4), fellowship (verse 7), and instruction (verse 11) have in this? With verses 7-12, cf. 2:22. Are the spirit and the marks of these Jewish and Gentile churches found in you and your church today?

2. Verses 17-27. Paul reviews his ministry at Ephesus. Notice, especially, what he says about his behavior, service, faithful preaching of Christ and the overriding ambition of his life. As you measure your outward service and inward spirit against Paul's, in what respects do you feel your come short?

3. Verses 28-35. What counsel does Paul give those to whom God has given positions of leadership? How can they guard the flock against the dangers that threaten?

MARCH 16 ACTS 21:1-16

DONE

1. Paul continues his journey to Jerusalem. Note, especially, the moving scene in verse 5, and the part that hospitality played (verses 4, 7-8, 16). What insights does this give us about the influence of a Christian home on visitors and children?

2. How are we to understand these warnings of the Spirit? To Paul's friends they seemed to say 'Do not go up to Jerusalem'. But Paul himself did not so interpret them. Is the explanation that the Spirit gave clear warning of peril and suffering, and Paul's friends in their human affection interpreted this in one way, while Paul regarded it in another and deeper way? Cf. 20:23-24; Matt 16:21-23. What would your reaction have been in the same situation?

MARCH 17 ACTS 21:17-36

DONE

1. Verses 17-26. Paul's arrival at Jerusalem. He relates to the leaders of the church at Jerusalem all that God has done among the Gentiles. (a) What problem did James consider would thus arise (verses 20-22)? (b) What practical action is recommended to Paul (verses 23-26)? (c) What principles determined Paul's action? Cf. 20:24; 1 Cor 9:20-23; 10:32-33. How might these principles affect your own attitudes to others?

2. Verses 27-36. Paul's arrest at Jerusalem. Try to picture the vivid scenes. Why did it happen? Trace the parallels – at least five – between the treatment given to Paul and to Christ. Do you expect men to treat you better than they did Christ?

MARCH 18 ACTS 21:37 – 22:16

DONE

In the face of a murderous mob, and by permission of the captain of the guard who at first misunderstood who he was, Paul makes his defense.

1. Paul uses, not a sermon, but personal testimony. Notice what he says about this background, religious activity, conversion and calling to serve the Lord Jesus. Have you realized how powerful a weapon you possess in your personal Christian testimony? Do you use it?
2. Paul seeks to put no unnecessary offence before the Jews: notice the language he uses, and what he says about Ananias as a Jew. Here was a man being utterly faithful to Christ, and concerned for his enemies. Can you care, in the same way, for those who badly treat you?

MARCH 19 ACTS 22:17-29

DONE

1. Paul argues in verses 19-20 that he is well qualified to take the gospel to the Jews. Why? Yet God commands him to go to the Gentiles (verse 21). What practical lessons about Christian service and God's working can we learn from this?

2. With verses 22-29 compare 16:22-23, 37-39. Paul mentions his Roman citizenship to prevent scourging; yet at Philippi he had acted otherwise. Compare the circumstances and consider the reasons for Paul's action. Are you prepared to forgo your personal rights for the sake of God's glory? Cf. 1 Cor 9:12.

MARCH 20 ACTS 22:30 – 23:10

DONE

1. What is Paul's testimony concerning his behavior and his belief? Cf. 24:16 and 2 Tim 1:3. He sought always to live to the glory of God. Are you able to testify in the same way concerning your behavior and belief?

2. Consider Paul's tactics in the courtroom: (a) his righteous anger (verses 3-5), and (b) his division of the court (verses 6-10). Once again the enquiry was abandoned. Was Paul more concerned for his own welfare and a settlement of the whole matter, or for the truth?

MARCH 21 ACTS 23:11-35

DONE

1. Consider how greatly Paul must have needed encouragement because of: (a) the physical strain he had undergone, (b) the pain of Israel's unbelief, (c) the seeming failure of his witness, and (d) the danger of which he would be aware next day. How would the vision and the words spoken by the Lord meet all these needs? What words of the Bible have you found a help in such times? Do you memorize them?

2. God sends deliverance in many different ways. How did he send deliverance in this case? Paul must have been greatly encouraged by what his nephew did. Are you able to do any acts of kindness that will bring gladness to some person in need or loneliness or anxiety?

MARCH 22 ACTS 24:1-21

DONE

1. The Jewish prosecution employed on this occasion a trained advocate, Tertullus. What four charges are brought against Paul? What evidence is produced in support?
2. How did Paul answer these charges? See verses 11-13; 14-16; 17-18. Note especially: (a) That Paul had to contend with unsupported and false accusations (verse 19-21). He was firm but calm in refuting them. Are you, when you are in the same situation? (b) Paul was able to give a reason for the hope that he had (verses 14-16). Can you? (c) Paul was really on trial because he believed in the resurrection of the dead (verse 21). Does this truth make a practical difference in your life?

MARCH 23 ACTS 24:22 – 25:12

DONE

1. 24:22-27. Paul before Felix. What four motives controlled Felix's treatment of Paul? Do self-interest and fear ever stop you from doing what is right?
2. 25:1-12. Paul before Festus. Why did Paul refuse Festus' offer for a trial in Jerusalem, and instead, as a Roman citizen, claim his right to appeal to Caesar? Do you think Paul was taking the right course of action regardless of the consequences?

MARCH 24 ACTS 25:13-27

DONE

1. What evidence is there that Festus can be commended for his fair dealings with Paul? Nevertheless, what major fault did he reveal (cf. Mark 15:15; Acts 24:27; 25:9)? Do you believe that God sometimes uses non-Christians, with their faults, for his own purposes? Cf. Isa 45:1. Should this alter our attitude towards people in authority?
2. What promises of God are now being fulfilled in Paul's experience? Cf. Acts 9:15-16; 22:15. What condition did Paul have to satisfy? How would God's word prevent him from feeling that the last two years awaiting trial had been a waste of time?

MARCH 25 ACTS 26:1-32

DONE

1. Paul makes his defense before King Agrippa. He deals with three themes: (a) his life before he was converted (verses 4-11), (b) his conversion (verses 12-15), and (c) his commission to serve Jesus Christ (verses 16-18). Sum up in a few words each of these three periods in Paul's life. What made this change and what was the real question at issue in this trial? See verses 6-8; 13-15.
2. What do you learn about obedience from Paul's example (verses 19-23)? Note especially (a) the place where he witnessed, (b) the message he gave, (c) the cost involved, and (d) the help God gave. Does your obedience cost you anything?
3. What was the motive that enabled Paul to speak so boldly and yet politely before such men as Festus and Agrippa? Cf. verse 29 with 1 Cor 9:16-22 and 2 Cor 5:14. Is this true in your life?

MARCH 26 ACTS 27:1-20DONE

1. What were the outstanding events in the voyage, and what encouragements did Paul receive during the early part of the journey? Has God given you an unexpected blessing in a difficult time?
2. In the time of testing and danger that all on the ship went through, compare the reactions of Paul (verses 24, 25:33-36) with the sailors (verses 30-32), and the soldiers (verses 42-43). Why was Paul able to behave so calmly and inspire others with his example? Do you have inner resources that help you to stand in times like these?

MARCH 27 ACTS 28:1-16DONE

1. The disastrous journey is almost ended. What opportunities of service and witness did Paul find in Malta? Have you found opportunities of service for Christ when things, seemingly, go wrong in your life?
2. 'So we came to Rome' (verse 14). Cf. 19:21; 23:11; Rom 1:13; 15:22-23. This was the goal, but what can one learn from the fact that God had other ways for it to be achieved than Paul at first realized?

MARCH 28 ACTS 28:17-31DONE

1. Paul at Rome (verses 17-22). What was Paul's chief concern on reaching Rome? It would seem he was anxious that no discredit should be laid against the Christian faith by his house-arrest. Are you anxious always to commend the Christian faith by your life?
2. Verses 23-28. What was Paul's message to the Jews at Rome? What reasons does he give for the persistence of so many in unbelief? What reaction did he expect the Gentiles would show? Is this still the same today?
3. List the main facts with which Luke summarizes Paul's ministry as a prisoner at Rome (verse 30-31). Consider the influence Paul had during those years through people coming to him, and through letters he wrote to the churches he had visited.

EPISTLE TO THE ROMANSDONE

The letter to the Romans was written by Paul from Corinth during three months which he spent in the province of Achaia, as described in Acts 20:2-3. Its purpose is to present to the church in Rome (which he had not founded, but which he hoped soon to visit) a reasoned statement of the gospel which he preached, together with a discussion of the great problem of Jewish unbelief and of the relation of both Jews and Gentiles to Jesus Christ and his salvation. From verse 15:23-24 it would seem that the apostle felt that he had done everything possible to carry out his task in the east. The time had now come to put into operation his plans for extending his work westwards. In such a task it would no doubt be an advantage to have the prayerful support and practical fellowship of the church in the metropolis. Rome was a strategic center and the church there would seem to have been as cosmopolitan as the city. A clear statement of the gospel that he would be preaching would be the best means of clearing up any misunderstandings that might arise through Jewish-Gentile tensions or through other causes, and of gaining for Paul the fellowship and co-operation he desired.

At the outset Paul declares that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone that believes. The great themes of the Christian gospel are dealt with in turn: human guilt; redemption by grace; righteousness which comes from God; justification by faith; the new life in Christ; the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer; the certainty of the final triumph of the Christian; the divine sovereignty; and the inclusion of 'the nations' in God's purposes of mercy. These are followed by a section on a practical outworking of the gospel in all spheres of life. Little wonder that this epistle, with its comprehensive treatment of the gospel and the compelling logic of its argument, is regarded by many as the most remarkable book in a volume of remarkable books.

The book can be outlined as follows"

- I. Introduction (1:1-17)
- II. The Problem of Man (1:18-3:20)
- III. The Provision of God (3:21-5:21)
- IV. The Power of the Gospel (6-8)
- V. The Perplexity of Israel (9-11)
- VI. The Practice of the Christian (12:1-15:7)
- VII. Conclusion (15:8-16:27)

MARCH 29 ROMANS 1

DONE

1. What does Paul say about the gospel, its origin, content, purpose, power and propagation? Have you any eagerness or sense of obligation to preach it?
2. How does Paul show the sin of man to be: (a) deliberate, and (b) inexcusable? How did it begin, and what spiritual, mental, moral and physical effects does it have?
3. How is God's wrath said to manifest itself? Notice the three stages in verses 24, 26 and 28. Cf. Ps 81:12; Acts 7:42. In what ways do you see God's wrath at work in the world of today? Cf. Rom 12:19; 13:4.

MARCH 30 ROMANS 2:1-16

DONE

1. What four things are said about God's judgment in verses 2, 6, 11 and 16? What else do you learn about it in this passage?
2. By what general test will God judge men? See verses 7-10. How will this bring condemnation on: (a) the self-righteous person, (b) the Gentile, and (c) the Jew? Why does God delay the day of wrath?

MARCH 31 ROMANS 2:17-29

DONE

1. In verse 17-20 Paul enumerates a number of privileges upon which the Jews of his day were inclined to congratulate themselves. If you make a list of them you should find 10 in all. Racial and religious pride are by no means confined to the Jews only, however. Substitute 'Christian' for 'Jew' and 'the Word' for 'the law', and show how the argument could be applied to professing Christians today.
2. Verses 25-29. The Jews rested upon circumcision as the seal of God's covenant with them. What else does Paul show here to be required without which the outward sign ceases to have value? Cf. 1 Sam 16:7. How would you frame the argument in relation to Christian ordinances?