

# Through The Bible In One Year

## The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

## Daily Devotional Companion

### Week 26

**Day 176.** Read 2 Kings 8.1-9.13; Acts 16.16-40;  
Psalm 143.1-12; and Proverbs 17.26.

### Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Kings:** The royal roulette runs on and on. One king follows another. Some die naturally, but many perish violently. Israel and Judah are involved in a convoluted destructive dance, influencing and following one another further and further away from God. Unshakeable in the midst of all the intrigue and chaos is Elisha, the ‘man of God.’ Even King Hadad of Aram consults him when he is sick. Hadad’s trusted messenger returns with a deceitful message back to his master, promising recovery, only to smother him on his sickbed to become king himself. Joram, son of Ahab, king of Israel, becomes king after his father dies. Not long afterwards, Jehoram, king of Judah, marries one of Ahab’s daughters—and King Joram’s sister—and the two nations are bound together by blood ties for a time.. The two royal families are drawing tighter together as the dance continues. Finally, when God instructs, Elisha summons a prophet to anoint Jehu, commander of Israel’s army, to be king over Israel. His instructions include the strange warning that after he has delivered the message and anointed Jehu, king, he is to, ‘Open the door and run!’ ‘Don’t delay,’ he warns, ‘or you too will be caught in the violence to follow.’ Jehu tells his officers the message and meaning of the prophet, and they crown him king on the spot. For a time...just a brief time...there are two kings of Israel. But there is only room for one King.

**Questions:** 1. What about the chaos and evil in the world most tries my faith that God is sovereign and in ultimate control? 2. What does it mean to be a ‘man (or woman) of God’ today? Why is it so hard to be a person of God in any age? Right now? 3. How can I, like Elisha, stay close to God and his Word so I have a compass to steer by in all the decisions I have to make in life?

**Acts:** God wants freedom for every one of his children. They were making money off her misfortune. The thing that set her apart—her ‘gift’ for predicting the future—became the source of her enslavement. The more money she made for her ‘owners,’ the farther she got from true freedom. People listened to her. People paid well to hear her predictions. So when she happened upon Paul and the others on his mission team, she simply says what she ‘sees’ through her ‘gift’: ‘These men are servants of the true God and will tell you the way to be saved.’ Not ‘a’ way, as in one among many ways to be saved. ‘The’ way. And

she says it that one day. And the next. And the next one after that, for many days. Finally, Paul, like a parent driven crazy by the incessant calling of a child from the backseat of the car ‘are we there yet?’ can stand it no longer. He casts the demon out of her in the name of Jesus. She is free. For freeing her, Paul is dragged into court to pay damages. In fact, he is accused of sowing unrest and revolution. Paul and Silas are beaten severely and imprisoned, literally in the deepest dungeon. After that kind of a day, at midnight the two are...not sleeping...not even nursing their wounds. They are worshipping... praying and singing hymns to God. All the prisoners are listening...so astounded they are. To top off the day, an earthquake comes, opening all the doors of the jail. The jailer, who will suffer the punishment for any escaped prisoners, prepares to kill himself on the spot. Paul calls to him not to harm himself, assuring him all the prisoners are still inside. Paul does not need to ‘go’ free; Paul is free already. The jailer senses his true freedom and asks, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ Paul tells him, to be free all you must do is believe in Jesus Christ. The jailer, who with his friends probably helped inflict Paul’s wounds, now helps to bind those wounds. The jailer who locked Paul in the dungeon, now takes him to his own house. The jailer and his whole household are baptized into Jesus Christ. The prisoner has set the jailer free! God wants everyone to be free: a girl exploited for money, and even a jailer who earns his living locking people up. **Questions:** 1. What cozy arrangements or compromises that benefit me personally do I make in my workplace or profession that don’t honor God or reflect his ways? 2. Am I doing things that hurt or misuse others in any of my relationships? What can I do to deal justly and lovingly with the others involved? 3. When times are tough, am I more likely to pray and sing hymns to God like Paul or give up and despair like the jailer? How can I strengthen my faith and trust in God, so I can shine brightly in the darkest situations, as Paul did in the dungeon?

**Prayer:** O God, I truly want to be yours. Completely yours. Draw me closer to you. Today, bind me to you ~ heart, mind, and spirit~ for only so will I ever be truly free. Only then...when I am yours...will I be truly myself. And as you set me free, to live with hope and joy, courage and confidence, may everyone see how you are the God who sets the prisoner free, as you did me, and come to you for the freedom only you can give. Amen.

**Day 177.** Read 2 Kings 9.14–10.31; Acts 17.1-34;  
Psalm 144.1-5; and Proverbs 17.27-28.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Kings:** The bloodbath comes quickly. In swift, decisive, deadly moves, Jehu becomes king of Israel. In one encounter he first kills Joram, the king, and then Ahaziah, Joram’s brother-in-law and king of Judah. Jezebel, the queen mother, falls next. Then Jehu sends a challenge to the capital city of Samaria where seventy sons of Ahab—the whole royal family dwell: choose the most worthy of them, put him on the throne and fight for your

master's house! Jehu knew people, and the people knew Jehu's violent impulsive nature. 'You do whatever is best,' they respond submissively. No wonder the slang term 'Yahoo' (a misspelling of the name Jehu), has come to mean a reckless and violent person out of control. In a bloody purge, all seventy relatives of the king are slain, along with all his close friends and advisers. The whole family of Ahab is destroyed, as God had prophesied through his prophet Elijah, for breaking God's laws and leading the people to worship false gods. Now enthroned as king in the capital city, Jehu invites everyone throughout the kingdom who worships Baal, the god of Ahab and Jezebel - all the ministers of Baal - to come to a great feast. All of them are killed in the temple, and the temple itself burned to the ground. Jehu destroyed Baal worship in Israel, but...he didn't lead the people back to the Lord. He followed the first, faithless king of Israel in keeping the golden calves and temples. Four generations of his family will rule...before destruction finds them, too.

**Questions:** 1. When have I had to face consequences for my wrongful actions that I would rather have escaped? Would it really have been loving of God to make no consequences whenever I go wrong? What would I have been like if I couldn't learn through consequences? 2. Have I gone just so far with God and then stopped short of going further with him, as Jehu did in his life? What is my next step in obedience—and therefore my next step in spiritual growth—with God?

**Acts:** 'Those rabble rousers who've caused trouble all over the world have come here now! They are defying the state and saying there is a great power, some person named Jesus!' A mob sought Paul and, when they couldn't find him, seized Jason instead. At night, when it was safer, the believers sent Paul and companions away. Unafraid, he preached the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus there as well. Everywhere Paul goes and proclaims the good news of Christ's death and resurrection to restore people to relationship with God, people respond. Hope is kindled. Lives are changed. The same accusers follow him and stir up persecution in the neighboring towns, too. Finally, Paul is led all the way to Athens, the capital city, where the favorite pastime is...talking. Here people delight in nothing else than debating and debunking the latest philosophies. Here everything is tolerated, until something more interesting comes along to replace it. Here Paul is sickened at heart to see a city adrift in idols and false gods. When he proclaims Jesus rising from the dead, some believe; but many more scoff. To many he is a babbler, but to others he brings good news. Some sneer, but others hunger for more. Even here, where the going is hardest because of the affluence and the lackadaisical lifestyle, the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus bears fruit. **Questions:** 1. How does the level of affluence and supposed enlightenment or progress we possess make it harder for people to believe in Jesus Christ? How does it make it harder to follow him and live like him? 2. Am I willing to face ridicule or even rejection to try to help people come to life through faith in Jesus Christ, as Paul was? 3. Whom do I know who has succumbed to the general idea of society that they don't need Jesus Christ, because we have evolved beyond the superstition? How can I love, serve and share my faith with them in a way that leads them to know that Jesus is real and the solution to their problems?

Prayer: O God, gods are a dime a dozen in the world today. Everyone has their own god. It may be money, or food, or possessions, or power, privileges or pleasures..or anything. We think tolerance, not truth, is the answer. Your Son, Jesus Christ, died on a Roman cross one day in Palestine. He rose from the tomb on the third day. That is the wonderful truth. To believe it sets the heart, the mind, the spirit, free. Let me ever live in the light of this truth. Let me ever proclaim this truth in my every thought, and word and deed. Amen.

**Day 178.** Read 2 Kings 10.32-12.21; Acts 18.1-22;  
Psalm 145.1-21; and Proverbs 18.1.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Kings:** The ruthless rule in this world...for a limited time only. By their very violence they set in motion the destructive forces that will be their own undoing..and bring about the very plans of God to save people into relationship with him. The slain king of Judah's mother sees her opportunity and seizes it. To rule, she ruthlessly murders her dead son's sons— her own grandsons—so she can seize absolute power. All except one son, who is hidden in the temple for six years, in the safe-keeping and protection of the high priest. For six years she rules, only one day to hear the shout from the temple, 'Long live the king!' And there stands the rightful heir to the throne, a seven year old boy who has a crown on his head, and in his hands a copy of the covenant. From such a strange and unlikely beginning rises a shining light in Judah: King Joash. He may have done many important things for the kingdom; but the best, the thing recorded at least, is: he repaired the temple, so people could worship the Lord. The cycle of violence falls hard on him, too. After reigning forty years, he is assassinated; and his son rules in his stead. **Questions:** 1. How do people around me abuse their power? How am I tempted to? 2. How can I be like Joash and exercise my influence and power in God-pleasing ways? 3. How can I help build up God's Church and strengthen it to be an organization that completes its proper purpose: helping people love God and one another for God?

**Acts:** The encouragement comes in a dream. 'Keep speaking, and don't be silent. Don't be afraid, for I am with you and no one is going to harm you; because I have many people in this city,' God says to Paul. Paul stays a year and a half in Corinth, teaching the word of God; and many people believed. There he met a husband and wife team of ministers, Aquila and Priscilla, who had been exiled from Rome. Yet, resistance and attack does indeed come. Paul is seized and brought to court. The Roman ruler refuses to judge the matter as beneath his consideration, a mere matter of superstitions and semantics. Priscilla and Aquila accompany Paul as far as Ephesus, where Paul went again to the synagogue to reason with the Jews. They asked him to stay there, but Paul hungers to return to the church that sent him and strengthened him for his mission: Antioch. He has come home again to his family of faith, he who started so many families of faith. **Questions:** 1. What strengthens me whenever I feel afraid in following Jesus? 2. What ways has God given to

encourage me in my faith and work for God? Am I availing myself of those ways to know him more personally and keep connected with him to draw my strength from him alone?

3. What is my home community of faith? How does it strengthen me for my personal mission and work for God in my daily life and relationships? Am I active enough in to my faith community to keep as intimately connected to God through it as I need to be? How can I connect with God better through my faith community?

**Prayer:** My Lord, you have promised that where even two or three gather in your name, you are in the midst...in the relationships between them. You have made me to be fulfilled in relationship with you in relationship with other believers. The world and the evil one want to separate and isolate us. They have succeeded so well, it is hard to find true community. It is hard to find truly caring people who love and live as you do. It is hard for me to be such a person myself. I claim your promise Lord. Gather me with people who gather in your name, and be present in our midst. Reveal yourself through the people you put me together with, my Lord, and reveal yourself to them through my words and serving. Amen.

**Day 179.** Read 2 Kings 13.1-14.29; Acts 18.23–19.12;  
Psalm 146.1-10; and Proverbs 18.2-3.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Kings:** For seventeen years the son of Jehu follows his ways, leading the people to worship the golden calves in shrines of their own choosing; but finally he relents. The anger of God was kindled against Israel and the consequences of their actions were inevitable: foreign powers oppressed them. The neighboring country, Aram, ground Israel's army down to dust. The way to be free is to bind yourself to God. When he turned to the Lord, God delivered Israel, so once again they could live in their own homes as before. But soon they fall away again. Israel is in the death spiral, relentlessly descending. Elisha, the man of God himself is near to death. The king of Israel comes to see him, despairing at the prospects of his dying, the last protector of Israel. He calls Elisha, 'the chariots and horsemen' of Israel, for he has been like an army of one; so steadfast did Elisha speak for the Lord and speak to the Lord for Israel. Elisha put a bow in the king's hands and bid him shoot out the window toward Aram, declaring as he shot, 'The Lord's arrow of victory over Aram.' Giving the king arrows, he bids him strike the ground. Three times the king strikes and then stops. Elisha grows angry. He should have struck five or six times, for each strike signifies a defeat for Aram. So Israel is oppressed by Aram perpetually. Yet, despite their faithlessness, God still shows Israel kindness because of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He won't let them be destroyed. He won't let them be banished from his presence. Amaziah rises to rule in the southern kingdom, Judah. He faithfully follows the example of his brother, King Amaziah, in following God. Still, the shrines on the highest hills where people burn incense to other gods are left to tempt the

people. Thinking more of himself and his powers than really is so, he challenges the king of Israel to war. Defeated, the enemy takes the treasures of the temple and tears down a long segment of the protective walls around Jerusalem. Just so anyone who puts their trust in anyone or anything other than God is exposed and defenseless. Put on the throne by a conspiracy that murdered his brother, Amaziah himself falls to treachery. His sixteen-year old son is installed as king. The long saga is winding down. Total destruction looms on the horizon. God is giving them time to turn. Will they? The Lord saw how everyone in Israel was suffering helplessly, and he used even the faithless king of Israel to preserve them. **Questions:** 1. Why does it so often take pain or fear to get my attention and change my behavior? 2. Are there areas in my walk with God or work for God that I am overconfident and trusting too much in my own abilities or powers, rather than keeping in close connection with God for his leading and power? 3. How does God use even my faithlessness and mistakes to help people?

**Acts:** There are many partners in the work of God. God is constantly lifting up leaders to do his work. Priscilla and Aquilla are two key leaders of the God movement to transform the world by transforming lives with Christ's love. The order in which the names of the wife and husband team are mentioned is significant. Being mentioned first in an age and social setting where women had little or no standing signifies that Priscilla, the wife, was probably the primary leader of the church in their house. Another budding leader, Apollos, is tutored by them to know 'the way of God more perfectly.' Priscilla and Aquilla mentor him to the next level of leadership for Christ. And so it goes, on and on, as Paul and companions mentor young believers to maturity. At Ephesus Paul found some disciples who lived with only part of the power God intends believers to experience in their relationship with him. "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" he asks. "No one even told us there is a Holy Spirit!" they reply, surprised. They knew only the baptism of repentance which John practiced. They had not received the power from baptism into Jesus' death and resurrection and the receiving of the Holy Spirit, God's living, active presence within. When they were baptized into the name of Jesus, and Paul laid hands on them bestowing the Spirit, they received the gift of tongues and prophesy - the sign the Spirit had come on them in power. For two years Paul went throughout the province until everyone heard the word of the Lord. God worked through him so powerfully that even clothing touched by Paul carried power to heal and cast out demons debilitating people. **Questions:** 1. Who are my mentors and leaders in Christ? Who helps me learn more perfectly the way of God and helps me grow into full maturity and productivity for God as his disciple? 2. Whom am I mentoring to greater maturity in faith? Am I helping others in my family, church, small group to grow spiritually? 3. What is the next level of faith and following of Jesus that is ahead of me? Do I pray for the Spirit to have his will and way with me completely and follow the Spirit's leading so that the power of God may be manifested in me and through me?

**Prayer:** Come Holy Spirit, fill your temple, which your word declares I am. Fill me full of your living presence, your love, your wisdom, and your power. Make this temple of yours shine with your glorious light, so that light shines in the deep darkness for the

people around me. Fill your temple with your word of truth, so people around me find the way to you and to life. Draw me deeper into your embrace. Teach me to know you more intimately in your word. Use me to help others on the way, even as I thank you for those who help me further along the Way. Amen.

**Day 180.** Read 2 Kings 15.1-16.20; Acts 19.13-41;  
Psalm 147.1-20; and Proverbs 18.4-5.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Kings:** The dash on the tombstone between the birthdate and deathdate tells it all. It really sums up the life. It is the life, in a sense. The long list of the last kings of Israel seems to fly past. Life after life, each summarized in a few short words—almost like dashes. The words form a simple refrain of one of only two phrases: He did “what was good in the sight of the Lord” or “what was evil in the sight of the Lord.” Although King Azariah (also known as Uzziah) of Judah ruled fifty-two years, we know very little about his life. He ascended to the throne at age sixteen. He had leprosy and lived isolated in a separate house. And ‘he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.’ Pekah reigned twenty years as king of Israel in Samaria, and ‘he did evil in the eyes of the Lord.’ Jotham became king of Judah after Azariah (Uzziah) died, reigned sixteen years, and ‘did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father Uzziah had done.’ God is no absent watchmaker who winds the clock of the universe and then goes into another room about other, more pressing business. God’s eyes are always open with loving attention upon the world...and the people...he has created. New players appear on the stage of God’s great drama of redemption...cruel characters from foreign places like Assyria and Babylon. As the darkness deepens all around them, the light shines all the brighter in the few characters who do ‘what is right in the eyes of the Lord.’ **Questions:** 1. What kind of a ‘dash’ am I creating with my life? Am I living with purpose and power, the kind of life I long to lead? 2. What will be written about me—that I did what was right in God’s sight or went my own way? 3. What kind of impact am I having on people God’s put me in relationship with?

**Acts:** What is going on? Things are getting out of hand! The whole community of Ephesus is...well, changing. People who practiced sorcery brought the expensive, secret books and...burned them! People who had done despicable things without discovery...openly confessed their wrongdoing. It’s like there is a...revival...going on. The Spirit is contagious. The name of Jesus is being lifted up...held in high honor. Wherever that happens, things change. But not everyone likes change, especially if they are comfortable. The local economy is driven by the sales of idols, images, and statues of the great goddess, Artemis, whose temple was a local centerpiece. The idol makers stir up the populace and quite a scene arises. The local amphitheater is filled with angry people shouting, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” Boldly, Paul wanted to speak to them; but

the disciples prevented him, along with some of the provincial officials. For two hours the chaos and chant continue; until threatened by the power of Rome, the crowd disperses. Wherever Christ comes, one thing is sure: people will be touched and lives will be changed. **Questions:** 1. How does following Christ affect the way I live, the things I do, what I purchase or don't purchase? 2. Do I use my financial resources responsibly in ways that honor Christ and treat people justly? Does my church or faith community? 3. Am I lifting up Christ in my community, so people are being freed from bondage to superstition? Does my church or faith community?

**Prayer:** God, everything I am and do is always under your gaze. Your loving eyes watch over me all the time, joyful when I am living the true life you intended when you created and redeemed me in Christ, saddened when I wander in ways that lead away. I want to please you in all I am and do. I want nothing else in life than to please you. Whenever I fall or fail, remember that pleasing you is my true desire. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, my Lord, forgive me and renew me in his Way. Amen.

**Day 181.** Read 2 Kings 17.1-18.12; Acts 20.1-38;  
Psalm 148.1-14; and Proverbs 18.6-7.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Kings:** Israel is caught between a rock and a hard place, and - no surprise - pulverized. The king of Israel has tried to play one superpower off against another, a common enough ploy by small-time players in geopolitics. But as so often happens, doing what seems pragmatic and practical at the moment, rather than being principled, they hitch their wagon to the wrong horse. Egypt's star is descending, while Assyria's is ascending on the world scene. The king of Assyria conquers the northern kingdom of Israel and deports the people from the promised land to a foreign land. The slaves who were freed from a world power, Egypt, are slaves again to another world power, because they would not follow the Power that created the world. The short, simple summary: 'All this took place because Israel forsook the Lord who brought them from up out of Egypt, and worshipped others gods, imitating the practices of the nations around them and following the customs introduced by the kings of Israel.' The king of Assyria brought peoples from other nations, each worshipping its own god, and settled them in Israel. They worshipped the Lord, too, but other gods as well. After the capital city of Samaria, these people will be called Samaritans and viewed as enemies forever by the people of Judah. As the darkness grows deepest before dawn, and the stars shine brightest in contrast to the deepest darkness, a king named Hezekiah arises in Jerusalem. More than any other king of Israel or Judah, he 'did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.' Hezekiah even removed the 'high places,' the shrines to other gods and goddesses that dotted the hills throughout the land. The tribute is simple but profound: "There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either

before or after.” Only one King of Judah will ever shine brighter or be purer in his love and following after God. That King will wear a crown of thorns and ascend... not a throne but a cross...to lead his people back to the Lord. **Questions:** 1. What compromises am I tempted to make (or have I actually made) with the world or with evil, out of pragmatic or practical concerns? 2. How am I impacting my “kingdom” (the area of influence God has given me in my home, workplace, community, faith community, etc.) for God? 3. What kind of spiritual legacy am I leaving in this world?

**Acts:** On the first day of the week, which means Sunday, they came together to break bread. This, from the time of Christ, is the custom of Christians. Every Sunday they worship God and, as the central acts of worship, hear God’s Word and receive Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper,. On one occasion, Paul, intending to leave town the next day, went on speaking a long time. Watch out, because worshipping God can be hazardous to your health. Paul speaks so long, in fact, that it literally kills someone. A young man falls asleep and then falls three stories out an open window. Paul went down, put his arms around him, and to the relief of all proclaimed, ‘He’s alive!’ No one can blame Paul for preaching so long. He is heading toward Jerusalem, not knowing what sort of persecution or fate awaits him there. Every parting is made more poignant and powerful because it may well be the last. His message is: ‘I am innocent of the blood of all people, for I have proclaimed to all the whole will of God.’ He has never hesitated to proclaim the whole word of God, whoever’s toes might have been stepped on. He has not compromised the message or the faith. His longing is to ‘finish the race and complete the task the Lord has given me of testifying to the grace of God.’ He wants to finish strong. He warns of ‘wolves’ (false teachers) coming among the flock of believers after his departure and urges the leaders to be shepherds of the church which Christ bought with his own blood. Commending them to God, he moves on toward his final and fullest witness for God: he will be as faithful in his death, as he was in his life. **Questions:** 1. How faithful am I in hearing God’s Word and receiving Christ’s presence in his Supper among the gathered, worshipping people of God? 2. As my time to depart this life approaches, am I ‘staying the course’ or weakening in my passion and purpose? What do I need to do to ‘finish strong?’ 3. Am I familiar enough with God’s Word and the truths revealed in it to recognize false teachings today? What can I do to be better versed in God’s Word, so as not be at the mercy of others’ interpretations or opinions?

**Prayer:** God, make me steadfast in your Word. Holy Spirit, enlighten and enliven your Word within me, that I may know the difference between right and wrong. Your Word is a lamp and a light to my path through this dark world. Shine this light for me, in me, and through me, so others may find and follow the path to life with you. Amen.

**Day 182.** Read 2 Kings 18.13-19.37; Acts 21.1-16;  
Psalm 149.1-9; and Proverbs 18.8.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Kings:** Thumb your nose at a world power? *THE* world power?! Hezekiah does when the king of Assyria sends his army to exact tribute and export the people to a foreign land. The emissary taunts Hezekiah with an ‘offer:’ a thousand horses for your army if you can find riders for them! The worst blow comes when he claims the Lord himself has sent the Assyrian army against this country to destroy it. Could it be? Hezekiah tears his royal robes as a sign of sorrow, puts on sackcloth instead of the delicate silk robes, and went into the temple, into the very presence of God, pleading to him for deliverance. The Word of the Lord came to Isaiah the prophet, ‘Do not fear. The king of Assyria will hear a rumor that will rouse fear in him and return in haste to his own country...and there himself die.’ With the complete accuracy of a report from the evening news after the fact, every word of the prophecy comes true. While worshipping in the temple of his god in Assyria, two of his own sons cut the king of Assyria down. Contrary to his bombastic claim, God had not sent him to destroy Jerusalem and deport God’s people. That would be the task of another. **Questions:** 1. Do troubles cause me to draw closer to God or fall away? Why? 2. What is the biggest threat or danger to my life in and for God right now? How can I rely upon God and God’s strength to overcome it? 3. How is God’s glory and greatness even greater in the face of my weaknesses and limitations?

**Acts:** What’s the big deal? The disciples urged Paul, through the Spirit, not to go on; but he dismissed their concerns. The whole community of faith turned out, knelt on the beach to pray with and for him and then sent him on his way. He and his companions stayed in Caesarea with Philip, the evangelist, and his four daughters who had the gift of prophesy from the Spirit. Another prophet predicted Paul would be bound and handed over to the Romans. The whole community pleaded with Paul not to go to Jerusalem. But Paul answered, ‘What’s the big deal? Why all this crying and carrying on? I am willing to be bound and even die for the name of the Lord Jesus.’ He would not be dissuaded; so the people assented saying, ‘The Lord’s will be done.’ It will be. It should be. Always. On Paul went, eager to finish his race strong. **Questions:** 1. What might have happened (or not happened) if Paul had heeded the persuasions of his friends? 2. When should I go against the caring counsel of others in order to follow the Lord completely? 2. How can I discern the difference between the caring counsel of others and God’s will, especially when the course of action seems difficult or even dangerous? 3. Am I willing to die for following Jesus, if necessary? Am I willing to live for Jesus fully, as is always necessary?

**Prayer:** God, this life is yours, not mine. You gave me this life. You made me. You gave this new life I now live, when sin and death had destroyed the first life. You redeemed through the death and resurrection of your Son. I am yours. Have it all. Every thought. Every word. Every deed. It is yours, all the time, and all the way. In every second, may you be first. Take it all, and may this little life bring you joy and praise. Amen.

# Through The Bible In One Year: Week 26

## Sunday Worship Lessons

First Lesson (Old Testament): 2 Kings 18.28-19.7

Psalm: 146.1-10

Second (New Testament) Lesson: Acts 21.7-14.

Theme: Listening To The Lord Alone

### Sunday Scripture Selection and Theme Explanation, Week 26:

Dark circumstances in life cause us to doubt and fear. At those times, it is as if there are conflicting voices calling to us, some offering false promises of easy security if we will follow their suggestions and threatening dire consequences if we don't. Such was the case with the people of Jerusalem when attacked by the army of Assyria. The emissary of Assyria promised the people ease and well being if they would only turn themselves over to the rule of Assyria. They would be deported to a foreign land. He threatened destruction if they didn't and taunted them by saying they should not depend on their God to deliver them, for the gods of no other nations had been able to stop them. Hezekiah, king of Judah, turns in prayer...and trust...to God, who promises deliverance...and delivers it! So also, in Paul's life, well meaning Christians urge him not to go to Jerusalem, pleading with him not to when a prophet predicts his arrest there. Paul is not deflected from his course. "What's all this fuss?" he says. "I am willing not only to be arrested, even to die if necessary for the name of Jesus." He lives with courage and confidence, trusting totally that God is in control, all-powerful; and what is most important, he knows best what is, in fact, the best. God offers us life with courage and confidence, including, and especially, in the darkest times.