

Through The Bible In One Year

The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

Daily Devotional Companion

Week 28

Day 190. Read 1 Chronicles 7.1-8.40; Acts 27.1-20;
Psalm 7.1-17; and Proverbs 18.22.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: To the names of the genealogies are added the numbers without names: of the tribe of Issachar, 87,000 fighting men; of the tribe of Benjamin, 22,034 plus 20,200 plus 17,200 fighting men; of the tribe of Asher, 26,000 men ready for battle. Underlying all the counting is the awareness of the constant conflict in the world. In the midst of the naming and numbering, glimpses are given of the trouble, tragedy and triumph in the lives of the ordinary people. Two sons of Ephraim are killed by the people of Gath when they tried to rustle their livestock. Grieving for his sons, Ephraim has another son, who himself has a daughter, Sheerah—one of the few women mentioned by name in the genealogy not for being the mother of other sons, but for something she accomplished on her own. Sheerah built the towns of Lower & Upper Beth Horon and Uzen Sheerah, which bears her name. In the list of the tribe of Benjamin is Saul, the first king of Israel, and his descendants, 150 in all at the time they are taken into captivity. The names given in the genealogy put the human face on those people, and remind us that each number is a person precious to God and known to God, though human history might have forgotten their names. **Questions:** 1. How does it effect me to know that, though I may leave no recognizable lasting mark history, I am still known by God, as well as precious and important to God? 2. What gifts has God given me in order that I might do works for his glory, as Sheerah built up cities using hers? 3. What faith legacy will I leave for the people that come after me?

Acts: On the long and dangerous journey to trial in Rome, Paul acts like anything but a prisoner. During an early layover, the centurion guarding Paul permitted him to go to his friends in the city so they could provide for his needs. Paul offered advice to the centurion and the crew on their best course, warning them there will loss to the ship, cargo and people. They have other ideas and sail on. A storm with hurricane force sweeps down upon them. For days they are driven before the wild winds. The sailors even passed ropes under the hull to hold the ship together, so fierce was the storm. After day of seeing neither sun nor stars, the sailors and even the author of Acts himself gave up all hope of being saved from the storm. All except Paul the prisoner, that is. Paul, the prisoner on the

way to the trial of his life. **Questions:** 1. When I have been tempted to give up hope because of seemingly impossible circumstances? 2. Are my character and actions as a follower of Jesus Christ of such quality that even people don't follow Christ respect and trust me, as the centurion did Paul, his prisoner? 3. Who do I know is heading into (or already in) a storm that I am called to warn them about, as Paul warned his guard about the dangers ahead?

Prayer: God, in the storms life throws at me, and especially the storms that come from my following you, when the times are most difficult, help me to shine brightest just then with the character of Christ. May my courage and confidence and, above all, compassion shine so people might find encouragement. Most of all, may the find you and life through you, dispelling all their darkness. Amen

Day 191. Read 1 Chronicles 9.1-10.14; Acts 27.21-44;
Psalm 8.1-9; and Proverbs 18.23-24.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: The numbers of the people who finally resettle on their land after the captivity in Babylon are staggering...because so tiny. The people of Judah, only 690. Of the whole tribe of Benjamin, just 956. Of priests, 1,760. Of temple gatekeepers, only 212. What has happened to the nation that numbered over a million in the wilderness, or several millions in the promised land? The writer says simply 'The people of Judah were taken into captivity because they were not faithful.' The writer of Chronicles summarizes Saul's reign as king by relating only his death at the hands of the Philistines because 'he was unfaithful, did not keep the word of the Lord, and even consulted a medium rather than God. For this reason, the writer states, God turned the kingdom over to another. Another king is needed who will rule righteously. **Questions:** 1. When in my life has the going been tough because I was going the wrong way—away from God rather than toward him? When have I been held captive or carried into exile in a spiritual sense? 2. Which way am I going now, closer or farther away? What will I do next to strengthen my relationship with God?

Acts: When things got absolutely darkest and most dangerous, Paul stands up and says: 'I told you so!' And much more. He has fasted, and undoubtedly prayed, for days for God's intervention in the hurricane force storm. Now he bids them take courage, and makes them another, more amazing, prediction: not one person will be lost, only the ship. How can he be so sure? An angel stood beside him during the night to tell him the most encouraging message: 'Don't be afraid, you will survive the storm along with everyone else on the ship, because you must stand trial before Caesar.' This storm is not the trial of his life, that distinction awaits him in Rome. God is control of all the storms, the human caused kind as well as the weather kind. The ruler of this world must hear about the Ruler

of all the universe...from Paul personally. Paul responds to this reassuring (?) news by ending his fast. He blesses and breaks bread and eats, encouraging everyone else to eat. As dawn broke, so did the ship, because of the waves. But everyone on board survived, some by swimming and others by clinging to pieces of the ship, until they came to the shore. Paul has a destination—literally a place of destiny ahead of him. God will not allow him to be deflected until it is done. **Questions:** 1. When things are difficult for a friend, my family, workplace, or faith community, am I a source of encouragement and hope? Why or why not? 2. What do I believe might be my ‘destiny’ or purpose for God? How is God’s plan unfolding out in my life? 3. How much do I trust that God is sovereign over all the events and situations in my life? How is that trust demonstrated in my words and actions?

Prayer: God, I know that when the time comes for me to die, I will leave everything behind like the broken bits of a shipwreck, except my character. As hard as it is, I truly thank you for the troubles and trials that are building the character of Christ in me. Oh, it is not really the shipwrecks that do that, but your powerful Spirit using them as opportunities to mold and shape me like a clay in the artist’s hand. Form Christ in me, I pray. Make me more and more like the one who bore the full storm of death and Satan and sin for me. Do whatever it takes, for Christ alone is what endures...and prevails. Amen.

Day 192. Read 1 Chronicles 11.1-12.18; Acts 28.1-31;
Psalm 9.1.12; and Proverbs 19.1-3.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: The story leaps right into the saga of David, made king after Saul’s faithlessness. First of all forward to his conquest of Jerusalem, the city that becomes the capital of Israel, known forever afterward as the city of David. Then comes a flashback to the early, difficult years of David. Brave, battle hardened fighters rallied to David in the wilderness, stern faced warriors able to shoot arrows right or left handed, swift afoot, capable with both shield and spear. The names of David’s mighty men are listed, the ones who rallied to David during the darkest days when King Saul sought his life. Among the mighty men who stood beside David then, passing mention is made of Uriah the Hittite, with no mention of the adultery and murder that followed. For the Chronicler, David’s sin is not the main message. His faithfulness is. **Questions:** 1. Am I part of the ‘army’ (community of faith actively following Christ) or am I more like a soldier separated and isolated from the army? 2. Who are (or could be) in my ‘platoon’~ my small group or faith community I am (or could be) part of? 3. What are the weapons and armaments I have in my warfare for God (see Ephesians 6.10-17)? How current and capable am I with the armaments God gives for spiritual warfare?

Acts: You think your life is tough? How about surviving a killer storm and shipwreck only to be bitten by a poisonous snake, all while on the way to your execution? And

through it all, to still be mistaken for a god instead of a demon? On shore again after the shipwreck, the prisoner Paul is busy...not planning an escape or feeling sorry for himself...but ministering to the needs of the sufferers. He gathers wood for the fire that will warm the nearly drowned survivors when a viper fastens itself to his hand. The people of the island understand what is happening at once: the gods are punishing this prisoner, who will not be allowed to escape retribution. Paul shakes the snake off into the fire and...continues doing what is natural for him: serving. The islanders waited and watched him intently wondering whether he would swell up first or just keel over suddenly. And they waited. And waited. Finally they changed their minds: he must be a god. What was it about him that convinced them of that? Because he was snake-bitten and didn't die? Because he was a prisoner under the sentence of death and didn't try to escape? Or because, through it all, despite it all, he served...even his captors? What kind of human being can do that? They recognize there is a supernatural presence and power in Paul, the prisoner, on the way to his execution, unafraid and still loving everyone, even his 'enemies.' When he arrives in Rome, this prisoner who acts like no prisoner acts, is allowed to live by himself, with a single soldier to 'guard' him! For two years he is able to speak of Christ's love for all boldly without hindrance to all who came to see him. When in Rome...tell about Jesus Christ. **Question:** 1. Why do I sometimes slip into self-pity or anger when 'bad' things happen to me? 2. How have some events and situations in my life that seemed bad to me turned out for good for me? For others, because I went through that difficulty or trial? 3. In my actions, serving and words day by day, do people experience the loving power and presence of God? Who needs the special serving love of Christ through my actions right now? What is the next step for me to show them Christ's love in actions as well as words?

Prayer: God, I hate the snakebites. It seems so unfair, when I am trying to follow you, seeking with all my heart to do your will, serve someone for you that I always get bitten I serve, and get ingratitude or rejection. I feel used, and I grow angry. I pull back into busyness and my own agenda. The poison is at work in me. And then I think of you, Lord, and how Satan, that ancient serpent, poured all his poison upon you. You took all his poison into yourself, and you crushed his head when on the cross you died of our poison and rose again, all so I might live with you forever. Might live like you forever. God, I still hate the snakebites that come whenever I serve, because they show how much I still need to die and rise with you. Keep raising me every time I stumble and fall into anger or self-pity from the snakebites. Raise me up to live anew in Christ, like Christ, for Christ. Amen.

Day 193. Read 1 Chronicles 12.19-14.17; Romans 1.1-17;
Psalm 9.13.20; and Proverbs 19.4-5.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: Day after day people defected to David until he had a great army, like the army of God, all bent on one thing: making him king over a united Israel. And so he became king over Israel. What would you do first, if you were made king? Root out any remaining opposition, perhaps imprison your foes who fought your becoming king? Amass an invincible army so your kingdom (and control) is secure? A huge public works program to assure your place in the people's heart as well as history? David's first major act as king is to bring the Ark of the Covenant, the moveable throne of God from which he spoke, to the capital city. He tries to put God at the center of his kingdom. But there is a problem. How can the Holy One of Israel come among unholy people without destroying them? As the Ark is being moved, the oxen pulling the cart carrying it stumble, and a man named Uzziah reached out his hand to steady the Ark, touched the ark, and for his trouble, died on the spot. Our un-holiness, our fallen-ness, has led to this: even our best intentions, even our religious reaching out for God on our own terms, is a barrier between us and God. Our human attempts at restoring relationship with God—our religion—actually gets in the way of what we truly want and need deep in our hearts and souls. God has provided the way we can come to him. The only way. The One who will describe himself as the Way, the Truth and the Life. **Questions:** 1. Do I do what I do toward God and for God because I am trying to earn his love and assure through my own actions that eternal life is mine? Just because I love him, as a response to his goodness? Both? 2. Have I truly put God at the center of my little sphere of influence, the 'kingdom' or relationships God has given me to influence others so they can become part of his Kingdom? 3. Are others attracted to my lifestyle because my words and actions reflect my King, the way people were attracted to David because of his character and faithfulness? Why, or why not?

Romans: Servant and...apostle? Apostle sounds like a powerful position. It means 'sent,' as in ambassador, a powerful person because of the power that sent them. But servant? That sounds like weakness. A servant is not in control. A servant has no power. But a servant is sent...a person under orders, too. That's who Paul is, a servant sent by God who showed his power by raising his Son Jesus Christ from the dead. When Paul says 'grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ' he speaks for the power behind the whole universe. He longs to impart the message—the gospel or 'good news'—this One sends, because it is the very power of God for salvation for all who believe. All who believe, be they the chosen people or foreigners. That news transforms all who hear and receive it, because quite simply it is a gift—those made right with God through faith in Jesus' death for them—and a gift always changes the one receiving it. It is a gift because God makes right with God simply everyone who simply trusts and accepts the gift. 'The righteous shall live by faith'. It's all a gift...received by faith. **Questions:** 1. Why is it so hard to accept that I am saved simply by God's free gift of grace in his Son's death on the cross and resurrection, rather than by my own actions and striving? 2. How does it change my attitude and actions to know that God's love is a gift, not dependent on my getting my act together first and earning his favor? 3. Do I really believe and live grace, so that others around me see the joy and freedom with which I serve? Do I talk and act like a servant sent by God himself, as Paul did, so people turn to the One who sent me and loves both me and them?

Prayer: Thanks for the gift, Dad? May I call you that, Father? I know I may...the gift says so better than words. That you would give your Son for me, to make me your child. I guess I could say, you gave me the gift of my Brother, that I might have a Father. Thanks for the gift. May I always use the gift—always draw near to you in confident love—and always live for you to all those around me, to whom you send me. You're your servant. I am your apostle. Send me, I will go...because I you have made me fully free. Amen.

Day 194. Read 1 Chronicles 15.1-16.36; Romans 1.18-32; Psalm 10.1-15; and Proverbs 19.6-7.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: There is only one way. This time David follows God's way. In those Old Testament times, there were specific people appointed by God...people descended from one of the twelve sons of Israel named Levi... appointed to mediate between the holy God and human beings. They handled the holy things that brought one into contact with the Holy One. This time as he brings the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, David has the Levites bring the Ark into Jerusalem. And so the holy God comes among his unholy people—people who are so precious to him he will do anything he can to be among them. Except change his holy nature, for that would not only be his undoing, it would be theirs as well. Then there would be no hope for them at all. He comes to the sound of music, dancing, laughter and song. His coming brings new life. And leading the dancing—leaping highest and happiest of all—is David himself. David, the king, acts like a little child on holiday. One close to him despises him for this unseemly display. There is always the accuser, the one who reminds us of the boundaries we've broken, who would return us to guilt and shame. But David dances for God, not for them. **Questions:** 1. Have I ever danced before the Lord—simply showered my love and devotion upon him in my words and motions, when alone with God? 2. What is it in me that always dampens my excitement and joy before God, so I live without the freedom and fullness of life God wants me to enjoy with him now and forever? Why do I listen to the accusations and warnings of society and Satan, rather than to God's word of forgiveness and love? 3. Who do I know who is bound by their guilt, shame, sense of duty and decorum, or by Satan's accusations, that I can help to discover the freedom and new life forgiveness in Christ brings?

Romans: It can't be nearsightedness that keeps people from seeing. The sign is written as big as the universe. A billion stars light it up in the dark. God's 'invisible' qualities—his almighty power and divine nature—are perfectly visible to everyone. All creation points to its Creator. It must be something else that keeps us from seeing...something sinister that blinds us. Claiming to know and be wise, we turned instead to illusion, substituting things

we can see...and control...for the One we cannot. And God...allowed us to do so. God gave us over to the desire of our hearts—desiring others in sexual impurity to fill the aching need inside for relationship with God, trading down from relationship with God the Creator for created things. Now women may lust after women, and men after men, for all are seeking through relationship with those who are in their own image, the fullness of life that comes only from relationship with the One who made everyone in His image and likeness for relationship with him. We make idols of other people, and really idolize our Selves. But really rewarding relationship can arise only in two who are alike...and yet different, who are ‘other’, unlike as well. Like children who play with the wrapping paper and forget the gift, we seek the gifts and forget the Giver, and good gifts became our downfall. Can God be loving to give us over to such deadly desires? Is it wrong for the Lover to give the Beloved what she desires? Even when what she desires is harmful or hurtful? Yes. Love never compels or coerces. Love desires the beloved to be free, even if the freedom leads to bondage. To be love, love must be free to choose to love what is undeserving of love. The very freedom God gives us to choose something...or someone...other than One worthy of love, is the freedom that will allow God to love us still when we love unworthily. **Questions:** 1. In what ways have I loved created things instead of the Creator? What consequences followed? 2. When the negative consequences come from my placing my love in the wrong things, why do I get angry rather than rejoice that God has set up the universe so that everything turns us toward him?

Prayer: O Love, that loves me enough even to willingly lose me, and loves me so much as to will losing your most Beloved that I may not be lost, love me still. When I turn away toward things less worthy, preferring your gifts instead of you, the Giver, give me your love still. For-give me. Turn me back to you, I who turned from you toward things still loved by you, despite my loving them more. In all this turning and returning, one thing is true: You...and your love. Let me have this love. Let me be this love. Amen.

Day 195. Read 1 Chronicles 16.37-18.17; Romans 2.1-24;
Psalm 10.16-18; and Proverbs 19.8-9.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: Build a house for God?! It is devotion that drives David...in the wrong direction. Even God’s prophet, Nathan, is convinced of the idea’s brilliance...for a time. The next morning the Word comes to him for David: ‘Did I ever ask for a house? Have I ever lived in a house? Who are you to build me a house?’ David feels guilty living in a house of cedar while God dwells in a Tent...the Tabernacle or Tent of Meeting God commanded in the wilderness to be the place where people could come into the presence of God. God tells him his own plan for David: “I will build you a house...a dynasty...so that one day, one of your descendants will sit on your throne forever. I will be his Father

and he will be my Son.’ God is prophesying to David, the shepherd king born in Bethlehem, the birth of the eternal King to be born among the sheep in Bethlehem’s stable, centuries before it happened. God doesn’t want a house, he wants a heart to live in. And whenever he finds a willing heart to live in, he builds that heart into a home worthy to be God’s dwelling place forever. Scripture says several times ‘The LORD gave David victory wherever he went.’ Of course David experienced victorious life. Everywhere he went, God was already there, at home within his heart, and that is the victory. **Questions:** 1. When I pray, do I pray to God as if he were at home in the temple of my heart, or as if he were infinitely far away from me? What difference does it make to pray as if he were dwelling in the center of my soul, rather than on the other side of the universe? 2. What would I like to do for God most, to bring him glory? How can I by using the gifts God has given me and the opportunities he provides me, best lift up his name by serving others?

Romans: Point one finger at another, and you have three fingers pointing back at yourself. When we condemn others—or ‘pass judgment’ as if we were prosecutor, jury and judge ourselves~ we automatically and irresistibly convict ourselves...of the very same wrongdoing! I must know anger myself, to convict someone else of unjust anger. To convict someone of stealing, I must know what it is to steal. So all are convicted whenever we convict another. And being convicted...now the opportunity to turn is given us...the opportunity to choose life instead of a life sentence. God does not show favoritism. All are convicted...and all can be set free. The universal laws are set immutable and unchangeable until the last moment of the last day. And harsh and uncompromising as that seems, it is incredibly good news, for until the very end of time going another way than toward God the Law will always bounce us back toward God like a guard rail will a car about to plunge into a chasm. The ‘loving’ God who creates a world with no consequences for error, or who changes the rules whenever he feels like it, is no loving God at all. **Questions.** 1. Why do I tend to think others’ faults and failing are worse than mine? Why do I tend incessantly to judge, find fault, and even condemn others, when I know I don’t like that when others do it to me? 3. How do I feel toward God when I remember he will never change or loosen his law? How does it change my attitudes and actions to know that while God will never relax the Law, he will always forgive when I turn to him for forgiveness in Christ’s name who my sin and its consequences upon himself so I might live with God forever?

Prayer: To live victoriously, I must be completely conquered by you. Your holiness and perfection is the impregnable fortress that I can never conquer. Thank God, I am defeated by your holiness, for only by being conquered by you will I have victory! Your limitless love, displayed in the death and resurrection of your Son as a sinner and for sinners, has captured my heart and conquered my pride. Because you have won, I am victorious! I praise you, my conqueror, my Loving Lord and God! Complete your conquest, so I may fully and finally free! Amen.

Day 196. Read 1 Chronicles 19.1-21.30; Romans 2.25-3.8;

Psalm 11.1-7; and Proverbs 19.10-12.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: Enemy after enemy falls before David, at least the earthly ones. Then, right in the middle of a string of victories, comes the strange scripture which says ‘Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to.... take a census.’ It really doesn’t seem like a terribly devious plan of the devil...encouraging the king to take a census. It might have been a bureaucrat that was Satan’s tool, some trusted adviser making a seemingly sensible suggestion. Why not a census...of the fighting men...or my military might? David bites, even though the commander of his army tries to dissuade him...and is bitten. Instantly, insecurity washes over him like a tidal wave. Security eludes the one who grasps for it tightly himself. Once again God is gracious. Consequences must come inevitably in a universe created by a holy and loving God. God gives David a choice of which consequence—a plague (which symbolizes the universal sickness of our seeking security in ourselves) limited to three days; a natural disaster (a famine, which symbolizes our starving ourselves by cutting ourselves off from God’s Word or directions for our lives) limited to three years; or a personal enemy bent on our destruction (lasting three months). A desperate choice, but David chooses wisely—he leaves the choice up to God. And God relents before the plague that comes even reaches the capital city. It’s always a good choice to turn control over to God. **Questions:** 1. What natural abilities or character traits of mine do I tend to put confidence in and reliance upon, so that I think my ‘success’ or wellbeing comes from them instead of God? How and when do my ‘strengths’ become my weaknesses? 2. What keeps me from trusting totally in God and giving complete control of my life, decisions, and deeds to him, especially in difficult times and situations?

Romans: Is God unjust in being angry with us and bringing consequences upon us for breaking the order written into the very fabric of our being by him who created us? Even though our unrighteousness serves to make his perfect righteousness and holiness shine all the brighter, can he be angry because we fail to live to the standard he made for us, however hard we try? Yes, for his perfect holiness demands it. But he has now given another way than perfect righteousness in all our actions to be in relationship with him. Knowing him and loving him is not primarily a matter of outward acts, however holy or religious they may seem, but of the inward character of the heart. It is a matter of the Spirit and not the written code. A person is right with God if their heart is ‘circumcised’—right with God through faith. **Questions:** 1. When I was younger in my walk with Christ, how did I show the natural tendency to put too much importance on outward religious activities rather than a real personal relationship of faith, love and trust in God? 2. How much of the conflict in my faith community or church is a result of overemphasis on indifferent external things rather than the attitude of the heart . 3. Are there areas in my walk with Christ where I am being legalistic or compulsive rather than following out of love and gratitude?

Prayer: God, I take your offers of relationship and turn them into religious rules or rites. Prayer with you becomes a compulsive duty rather than conversation with my Father. Worship for me becomes dispirited...empty. That is my creation, not yours. You created me for joyful, free life with you now and forever, and I take your invitation and turn it into a soulless routine. Even the emptiness I feel then proclaims your goodness. The hunger and hurt inside when I turn the opportunity of relationship with you into religion is itself a tribute to the thing for which I long. Your righteousness shines all the brighter because of my unrighteousness. Would it hurt if my heart were to glow a little brighter? Surely your righteousness and glory will blaze on no less bright if I reflect some of your love back to you. So set me afire with your love, and let us leave the religion, the rules, the rituals to be what they were meant to be: fans to raise the flame of love to white hot heat. Amen.

Through The Bible In One Year: Week 28

Sunday Worship Lessons

First Lesson (Old Testament): 1 Chronicles 13.1-12

Psalm: 8.1-9

Second (New Testament) Lesson: Romans 1.18-27.

Theme: God's Amazing Love That Creates, Convicts, and Sets Us Free

Sunday Scripture Selection and Theme Explanation, Week 28:

All creation proclaims the power and goodness of God. Every atom speaks of the Creator who made it. It is as if we have grown blind and deaf, for we have turned from the Creator to embrace the creaturely instead, as a child might set aside the Christmas gift to play with the brightly colored wrapping paper instead. We seek the creature over the Creator, the gift rather than the Giver. This is particularly true when it comes to relationships, since humans beings were created relational and will only experience full life in relationship with others, especially God. We seek and set up human beings, even from the same sex, to be the center of our lives, while the truth is that only when God is the center will we find the life we long for and were made for. Because God is love, God permits people even the privilege of rejecting relationship with him. Because he loves, God will give people over to the desire of their hearts, even to their hurt, rather than compel or coerce. Love, to be love, must be free, and God want lovers, not automatons.