

Through The Bible In One Year

The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

Daily Devotional Companion

Week 29

Day 197. Read 1 Chronicles 22.1-23.32; Romans 3.9-31;
Psalm 12.1-8; and Proverbs 19.13-14.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: Even nails for the doors and fittings! So dear to David's heart is building a house for God, that he attends to every detail in providing the supplies for his son, Solomon, to build the temple after David dies. Dressed stone from the quarry! More cedar logs from Lebanon than could be counted! The temple that houses God must be magnificent like the One who dwells there, so his magnificence and splendor will shine in the sight of all the nations. Israel exists to beckon to the nations of the earth with God's glory and goodness. David organized the priests and servers for their temple duty, including the musicians and singers who, like David, praised God with psalms and holy songs. All was ready. In his old age, David made Solomon king, and charged him to build a house for the Lord, promising him success if he will but follow God's way seen through his Word. Truly, David did not need to build God a house, for God already had found something better: a home in David's heart. **Questions:** 1. If I could do one work for God's glory what would it be? What really excites me, when I think of doing it for God or for others for God? 2. How can I help another person or group successfully complete an undertaking for God? Is there someone or some faith group that has a vision and a work that I can help to come to fruition for God? 3. How can I help my faith community or church shine with God's love and presence for others around us in the community, so they are attracted to know God? How can I shine like that personally for the people around me so they seek and find Jesus?

Romans: The guardrail of the universe, it might rightly be called. The Law, God's order written into the fabric of the universe and also our very nature as human beings, is the boundary that when trespassed bounces us back...and hard. It will not yield, any more than a stone wall will if we try to run headfirst through it. It brings us up short...all of us...and shows us we're going in a destructive direction. It shows us that we are all the same—that all of us have fallen short of God's glorious character that we are created and called to share. There is no distinction between humans, because we have all hit –and broken—the guardrail law God put around us to help keep us on course with him. Some hit it full throttle, others with the force of a mere fender bender; but all have broken it.

We all have been stopped helpless in our tracks, unable to make our way to God on our own power. But now something more powerful, and more wonderful, has been shown: a perfection and purity that comes from God, as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ. God put him forward to be the sacrifice that forgives our transgressions and restores right relationship with God—all our hearts truly desire. The way is open to where we truly want to be, and that way is the faith and trust of the heart, not a perfect driving record.

Questions: 1. What do I consider my greatest strengths? How can they become liabilities or hindrances in my relationship with God? 2. How are the commandments of God—the Law—crucial for my life in God? How do they reveal my absolute need for God and the rightness that comes only from believing in Jesus Christ? 3. How do both the Law and the Gospel (the news that salvation comes simply through faith in Jesus) make me like everyone else in a very fundamental way? How do they rule out any sense of superiority on my part? How do they both make me more compassionate toward other people?

Prayer: God, more often than not, my heart wants to do right; but I end up doing something quite different. Why do the consequences still surprise me? I thank you for the learning opportunities you give me; I really do. I just wish I didn't have to spend so much time in 'school,' learning from my mistakes. God, help me to let go of the desire to be perfect—and all the problems of incessant worry and judgmentalism that come from it. Instead, give me grace...let me live in grace...for your forgiving love is sufficient for me. Amen.

Day 198. Read 1 Chronicles 24.1-26.11; Romans 4.1-12; Psalm 13.1-6; and Proverbs 19.15-16.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: What will be left to God to decide, and what will be up to humans to control? David wisely enlists the aid of two key figures from the families descended from Aaron, the first high priest, when he wants to organize the temple servers. How can they decide together who will serve when—who will get the prime time assignments and who the downtimes? Impartially. They cast lots. Even for the musicians and singers, lots are used as 'Young and old alike, teacher and student, cast lots to receive their assigned duties' serving in the tabernacle (tent of meeting) and later the temple. 'Rolling the dice' lets God have the say, not humans. What a way to organize things—a lottery! But David's doing so says something very profound: in God's eyes each person is equally important and equally called to minister. Martin Luther will call this the priesthood of all believers, following Peter who declares to the people of God, 'You are a royal priesthood...' Add 'priest' to your resume and job description. **Questions:** 1. How does it change my attitude and actions to know God has appointed me to be his priest? How does it add purpose and meaning to my life? 2. What am I called to do as God's priest?

Romans: Wages are one thing, but a gift is something entirely different. Pay you earn...and deserve. A gift is something free, or it is not a gift. Abraham simply believed God—trusted him totally—and a right relationship ('righteousness') was given him...as a gift! But, wait a minute! Is it possible...just possible...Abraham actually earned the gift of God's forgiveness that restores relationship? After all, Abraham was circumcised, which is the sign of the (old) covenant. But he was circumcised after God declared him righteous because of his faith. Would God be so foolish as to 'pay off' his workers before the work is done? No, salvation is simply a gift that is given, and circumcision was for Abraham a response to the gift that was given. But, wait a minute! Perhaps the good fortune of Abraham and his being set right with God through faith is like a family heirloom passed down only to his physical descendants, excluding anyone not descended by blood from his line. Perhaps everyone else must earn their pay. Paul says simply, 'He is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised,' too. Everyone set right with God is Abraham's child in spirit, since everyone is set right with God as he was...by faith.

Questions: 1. What is my relationship with God based on? Am I a servant or a son (or daughter)? Do I try to earn or deserve a relationship with God through my actions, like a servant 'slaving' for pay? Or do I simply receive the gift like a child who is loved and loves in return? 2. Why do I so resist the idea (and reality) that I can (and need) do nothing to be in a right relationship with God but must simply receive it as a gift? Am I trying to keep the most important thing in life under my own control? 3. Why is it that if I try to secure my own salvation through my own actions, I actually become more insecure and anxious than when it depends on God's free gift through faith? 4. What do I do because I am anxiously trying to earn God's favor rather than out of a spirit of love and gratitude?

Prayer: A lottery, with me the winner? I don't deserve anything like winning this lottery—the lottery of eternal life. Yet, you pass out winning tickets to everyone who simply believes that you give out winning tickets to everyone who believes. And I do. Mostly. Most of the time. But not always. Forgive me, God, when I think and act otherwise....when I doubt your goodness in just giving me new life with you as a gift...when I try to do holy, hard things that you don't even desire. All you want is my heart free to love you in response, and a life that reflects the love of a child longing simply to bring joy to your heart. Look on my heart, even when it goes wrong as it often does, as the heart of the one who won this gift for me, the heart of the One I trust totally, Jesus your Son, crucified and risen. His heart is the one I trust. May his heart become mine. Amen.

Day 199. Read 1 Chronicles 26.12-27.34; Romans 4.13-5.5;
Psalm 14.1-7; and Proverbs 19.7.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: For the community of God's people to function fully and well, all sorts of people are needed to accomplish all sorts of labor. After the care of the temple and the worship is put in order, David appoints people to oversee the treasuries of God's house; for in ancient time, temples were not only places of worship but places of safekeeping for the riches. So, in the temple are stored the plunder taken in battle, along with things dedicated by the great figures of Israel, including Samuel, the last of the Judges, Saul, the first king of Israel, and army commanders like Joab and Abner. These heirlooms and treasures are entrusted to the care of one family. Officials and judges are appointed to help govern throughout the land. David organized his army under one commander into divisions of 24,000 soldiers, each division serving active duty every month on a rotating basis, which kept everyone effective yet, also, spread the guard duty around; so no one suffered all the burden. So, too, leaders were appointed to oversee the royal storehouses, field workers, vineyards, orchards, herds and flocks. David carefully ordered God's community, so all would work well to the benefit of all. **Questions:** 1. What is my part in God's faith community? How am I gifted to serve in the well-being and effective functioning of my community of faith? 2. Am I exercising my ministry among the people of God, contributing my part? 3. What could I do better to serve God's community of faith more effectively?

Romans: Though his own body was 'as good as dead' and his wife was barren, Abraham still believed God's promise and power that he would become the father of many nations. His faith is what made him so, because everyone who believes as Abraham did is Abraham's child. It was not following the legal code that restored right relationship with God for Abraham, but his trust in God which issued in following. Faith is the anchor that holds fast to the bedrock reality of Jesus' death and resurrection for our justification before God. Jesus Christ has established peace with God by dying and rising for our forgiveness. For everyone who trusts in Christ and his sacrifice for us, even sufferings lead us closer to God, forming the very nature and character of Jesus within us, which is the work of the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Our peace rests in who God is and what God has done for us, not our own strivings. **Questions:** 1. How does knowing I have peace with God through faith in Christ's death and resurrection for me and not through my own strivings change my attitude and actions? 2. Do I radiate the joy, generosity, and compassion of one who is truly free and at peace? How much does the character of Christ shine through my words and actions? 3. Whom do I know who does not yet have that inner peace that comes from a vital faith relationship with Jesus Christ? How can I show God's love toward them in action and invite them in words to know Jesus personally and find true peace?

Prayer: You have done it all, Lord! There is nothing I need do, and nothing I can do, to secure the peace I long for. You give it as a gift when I simply trust you and your word of promise. Holy Spirit, do your work within me. Form in me the character of Christ more and more, until the people around me don't see me but see Christ. The peace I know as a gift from you is too precious to keep to myself. Help me to give it away every day in what I do and say. Amen.

Day 200. Read 1 Chronicles 28.1-29.30; Romans 5.6-21;
Psalm 15.1-5; and Proverbs 19.18-19.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: At the end of his long life that went from shepherding a flock of sheep to shepherding the people of God as their king, David prepared his son, Solomon, for the ongoing tasks and the certain trials that were ahead. David gave him the plans of the temple, which the Spirit had put in his mind. But even more importantly, David put in Solomon's mind the way to prosper, which is to guard his personal relationship with God first of all. David urged him to serve God with wholehearted devotion and a willing mind, promising, 'If you seek him he will let himself be found by you,' yet warning, 'if you forsake him, he will forsake you.' As a godly father and leader, he bade his son Solomon, 'Be strong and courageous; for God is with you, He will not fail you or forsake you as you finish the work on God's temple.' Then David, godly father and leader that he was, sealed his words with his action. He gave his personal treasures to the work for God. Having set an example, he invited others to enter into the work with him. The people all rejoiced to see their leaders respond so willingly and generously. And so ended the life of David, whom scripture calls, 'a man after God's own heart,' in total trust in God. **Questions:** 1. What kind of faith legacy am I leaving those who follow after me? 2. Whom am I mentoring or discipling, as David mentored his son, Solomon? 3. Am I giving generously and wholeheartedly to accomplish God's work and build God's kingdom as David did? What is my next step in growth giving and serving?

Romans: At the right time Christ died for us. Not the 'right time' in the sense, when we had our act together, were ready and willing to receive him. He came at the 'right time' as in the 'nick of time.' When we were weak. When we were dead in our trespasses—totally helpless and hopeless as any dead person. This is the right time for God to love; for it is just then that the incomparable, incomprehensible love of God shines truest. 'While we were still sinners, Christ was crucified for us.' And for us all. Sin and death entered when the first man, Adam, went his own way rather than trusting in God. Ever since, sin and death have been handed down like some dread, family heirloom, from one generation to the next; everyone of us affected. Life and salvation entered again through just one man, the new Adam, Jesus Christ. Where the first Adam was disobedient, Jesus was obedient to his Father to the point of death, and the result is: all who trust in him are restored in right relationship with the Father. At the right time. Just in time, so we can share eternity in the love of the Father. **Questions:** 1. What was my life like before faith in Jesus Christ came? What would it be like without faith in Jesus? 2. How has the self-centeredness of the old nature expressed itself in me? 3. How has God changed my nature and my life to be more like Christ?

Prayer: You have turned my hopelessness into hope. You have turned my helplessness into purpose and power, giving my life meaning. Just in time, God, and not a moment too soon! The cross and resurrection have changed history and my life beyond all reckoning. That Jesus would die while I was still weak and helpless and hopeless, while I was still trapped in my self-centeredness that is living death, proves your limitless and endless love for me. This is you and your doing. It's all about you and not me. Thank you, God! Praise you God! Now do the rest of your work. Holy Spirit, form Christ in me; so that it is no longer I who live, but Christ, and Christ alone. May all my words and deeds this day and every day reflect the one who died and rose for me...at the right time, when I needed it most. May I live Christ to the others around me when they need it most. Amen.

Day 201. Read 2 Chronicles 1.1-3.17; Romans 6.1-23;
Psalm 16.1-11; and Proverbs 19.20-21.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: The temple is built atop a high hill on the site of a threshing floor. Here wheat would be taken at harvest time to have the grain separated from the chaff. The wheat mixed in with the chaff would be tossed heavenward; and the wind would carry the lighter chaff away, while the grain fell back to earth. As Solomon begins the task of building a temple for God, his own thoughts are being separated, wheat from chaff. 'The temple I build must be large and magnificent,' he says, 'because our God is greater than all other gods.' His weightiest awareness is the most humbling: 'Who is able to build a temple for God, since the highest heavens cannot contain him? Who am I to build a temple for him?' If he could only keep that sense of awe before God, all would be well. If only he can keep that personal relationship alive and well, he will be like the grain on the threshing floor where he built the temple: full of life and fruitful for his creator.

Questions: 1. What gives me the greatest sense of awe and wonder toward God? 2. How can I take time simply to meditate in awe on God's majesty, power and love? 3. What does it mean to me that, as scriptures says, because of God's gracious love for me, I am a temple of the living God, with the Holy Spirit living in me?

Romans: When we are baptized, we are baptized into Christ Jesus. Not 'in' Christ Jesus. Into. Baptism is the mystical way God has given that all who believe might be joined actually to Jesus' real death and resurrection. We have already died with him in baptism, and in baptism we are already raised to new life with him. The baptized live differently. The baptized think differently. 'Count yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ,' Paul commands the baptized and believing. We have been set free from slavery to sin, only to become 'slaves to righteousness.' This is not our due. It is ours by gift alone. The wages of our living our own way apart from God is death. Eternal life in Christ Jesus is the gift of

God, something we can in no way earn and don't need to. No longer can we offer our bodies or our very selves as partners to sin and self-centeredness, but we offer ourselves as partners to God, part of his body. We walk in newness of life, we who walk with Christ in baptism. **Questions:** 1. How was my baptism like dying and rising to new life? 2. What does baptism mean for my daily living? How can I die to sin through daily repentance and rise to live like Christ anew, day after day? 3. What does it mean for me specifically to 'walk in newness of life?' What 'old nature' ways of thinking and acting do I need to let die or leave behind?

Prayer: I am yours alone, my gracious God and savior. You are the deepest desire of my being. Let me live every moment for you alone. Let me think in ways that please and honor you. Let me speak to honor and please you. Let me act toward others to please and honor you. Put to death in me all that is contrary to you; and resurrect Christ in me day by day, so I may walk with you in newness of life now and forever. Amen.

Day 202. Read 2 Chronicles 4.1-6.11; Romans 7.1-13;
Psalm 17.1-15; and Proverbs 19.22-23.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: The temple is resplendent. Everything glitters with gold. Color shines forth everywhere: crimson, blue, silver and bronze. The temple is finished...still and lifeless. Solomon calls all the elders of Israel and all the people to a festival celebrating the completion of the temple and the beginning of sacrifices. The screams of animals dying for the atonement of sins fill the air. The Ark of the Covenant is carried from the Tabernacle (the Tent of Meeting) and placed in the Holy of Holies. Inside the Ark there is nothing but two, cold, stone tablets, written with the Law. The sound of the singers fills the temple courts: 'He is good and his love endures forever!' And then it happens. God comes. As at Sinai, God comes in cloud so thick, the priests could not perform their ministry. The glory of the Lord filled the temple, and the sacrifices had to stop. Through the sacrifice God prescribed, the way to God is open. The Law cannot bring life; the dying of the sacrificed, alone brings life. One day a man who is God's own Son will be sacrificed for sins, once for all; and all sacrifice will end. Then the temple will be made not of wood and stone, not of gold and silver, but of human hearts indwelt and filled by the Holy Spirit, as the temple of Solomon was filled with cloud. **Questions:** 1. How beautiful a temple am I for God? What needs finishing? What needs cleaning? What needs to be added? 2. Do I pray to the Holy Spirit residing in me as if he really does live within me or think of the Holy Spirit more as God far from me? Why? What would help make the Holy Spirit more alive and real to me?

Romans: The very commandment that was intended to bring life brought death instead. The fence that was meant to be a protection became a prison and trap instead. Never good enough. Never perfect, as God is perfect. You must be perfect as God is perfect, the Law said. But to the helpless, help is given. To the hopeless, hope is provided. When we died to sin by dying and rising with Christ through our faith and baptism, we died to the Law also. The Law reveals my brokenness and need, and that is the beginning of the good. Only those who know they are sick seek the physician. Only those who know they need one, seek a savior. **Questions:** 1. In what ways have I felt inadequate or inferior in life? How has guilt and shame kept me from living freely and fully the life of a child of God? 2. How does the forgiveness that is mine through Christ's death and resurrection for me give me freedom and fullness of life now? 3. How can I focus on showing my love and gratitude for God by sharing his love with others in word and deed?

Prayer: Whew! Thank God I am dead already. Thank you, God, that in Christ I have already died and risen with him. I am dead to sin. I am dead to the Law. Now I am alive to you. You are all I want. You are all. Simply All. You are my life. Thank you, God. Thank you, thank you, thank you, God! Amen.

Day 203. Read 2 Chronicles 6.12-8.10; Romans 7.14-8.8; Psalm 18.1-15; and Proverbs 19.24-25.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: A king, kneeling in the plain sight of all the people? Kings don't kneel before the people; people kneel before kings, except when the people are before God. Everyone kneels then. Everyone is equal before God, whether king or commoner. Solomon kneels and asks—begs like any commoner might beg him as king—God to simply keep his eyes open from heaven toward this toy house of a temple Solomon has built for him and hear the prayers of the people in heaven. Even for the foreigner who comes and prays at the temple, Solomon asks God to hear and heed his prayer, 'so that all the peoples of the earth may know you and stand in awe of you.' The purpose of the temple is to help everyone, literally everyone, come to a personal relationship with the invisible God. When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice; and the glory of God filled the temple, so the priest could not enter the temple. Prayer has power, because God hears prayers...and provides all that is needed for people to come to him. **Questions:** 1. What are my habits of prayer? Am I in frequent conversation with God enough to maintain a personal relationship? 2. When have I been hindered from worshipping, and why? 3. What 'foreigners,' or people who don't have a personal saving-relationship, with God do I know? How can I lift them in prayer to God? Will I respond when God answers my prayers for them and gives me opportunities to serve and witness to them? How?

Romans: I am a puzzle to myself, if I will be totally honest. I do things I later despise myself for, hurting the ones who are closest and most caring of me. I don't do the good things I intend to do. They are easily put off and forgotten. Worst of all, I can't get beyond this doing of things I don't want and not doing the things I want. It just continues no matter how hard I try, or how guilty I feel. And even so, I am a victor. I am a conqueror. Not me, but Christ in me. There is no condemnation, no guilt and shame, for anyone who is in Christ Jesus. None. Zero. It's as if they never even existed. God did this by sending his Son to be a human being just like me, as the perfect sin offering for me; so that his perfect righteousness might be mine. His love for me has broken the power of sin over me. It still lingers like the after-effects of an illness once the crisis has come and passed, but its power is broken. Because he conquered sin and death by dying for sin, I am victorious. **Questions:** 1. Do I live more the life of victor or of a conquered slave? Why? 2. How would my thoughts and actions be different if I truly and completely believed that there is absolutely no condemnation for me now that I believe in Christ Jesus? 3. What especially keeps me from believing there is no condemnation toward me? The world, which tells me I am only as good as I am useful and productive? The devil who tells me I am beyond God's forgiving love? My own self who doesn't want to admit I need forgiving or can't believe forgiveness is truly mine in Christ?

Prayer: Solomon prayed that you would hear the prayers of people who prayed toward your temple, God, even foreigners like me. Jesus said, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise another not built by human hands' ~meaning his resurrected body. I pray to you through him, God, knowing that for his sake, you will listen to me. And for his sake I know that you will grant me everything that is good for me. In Christ I am free and fully forgiven. No more condemnation. Let me believe you above and before the world, the devil, and my sinful self. No more condemnation. Let me never be a source of condemnation to others now, since there is no condemnation for me. Amen.

Through The Bible In One Year: Week 29

Sunday Worship Lessons

First Lesson (Old Testament): 2 Chronicles 6.32-39, 7.1-3

Psalm: 14.1-7

Second (New Testament) Lesson: Romans 3.19-30.

Theme: Free For Life In Christ

Sunday Scripture Selection and Theme Explanation, Week 29:

Solomon dedicated a glorious temple he had built as a place where people might seek God. Even as he dedicated it, he realized that God could not be contained in any building made of wood and stone, however magnificent. The whole universe cannot contain the God who created it. He humbly prayed, kneeling in the sight of all the people gathered to dedicate the temple, that God would hear the prayer of anyone who came to the temple or even prayed toward the temple. He asked that God would hear and answer the prayer even of foreigners who prayed at the temple or toward it, so that everyone might know him in a personal way. What Solomon saw in a shadowy way, Paul proclaimed boldly and clearly: God has provided a way in which everyone can come to him personally for true freedom and fullness of life: Jesus Christ crucified and risen. All that separates us from God is forgiven and removed through faith in Jesus Christ. He is the perfect sacrifice that atones—that literally makes us ‘at-one’ with God—so that all the sacrifices and works required under the Law, which we never could fulfill, have been satisfied once for all. Now all who live in Jesus may live full and free lives as children of God, showing forth the nature and character of Christ, God’s true Child. Life, joyful and free, is ours as a gift from God through Christ.