

Faith Baptist Fellowship Bible Reading Initiative for September 6 – October 2

Reading Through Acts, By Dr. Luke – Part IV

We recommend you have a notebook and pen for answering questions and recording your thoughts and insights. Bring this notebook with you to Faith Group for discussions and prayer times. Select a quiet place and consistent time to read and pray. We also recommend you pray for a moment before you read God's word and ask for his illumination by the power of the Holy Spirit as you read. Be prepared to think carefully about what the author is conveying in the passage, what God's word is saying, and how you might apply it.

Abbreviations: TAI – *Think About It* PP – *Prayer Point*

Tuesday, September 6 – Acts 20:1 – 6

TAI: With constant references to this ministry in Acts, including here, why do you think “encouragement” was such a crucial and important activity in the early church? How important do you think it is in today's church? How do you practice encouragement?

PP: Ask the Lord to give you specific encouragements to offer believers in your sphere of influence. (Perhaps you could jot down a few names, and then pray for them as well.) Ask God to encourage you through these Scripture readings, to increase your faith.

Wednesday, September 7 – Acts 20:7-12

TAI: How many people have died so far listening to Pastor Dana's long sermons? ;) Why do you suppose Paul was so passionate to “speak long” on this occasion? Do you detect a bit of humor in the account of Dr. Luke here? Notice: he was “taken up dead” not “as if dead” – was this a miracle? Why would this be so comforting to the Christians?

PP: Express thanks to God for the miraculous works he does to comfort and lift up his people. Praise God that he is greater even than death, and for the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Ask God to make our church as eager as these believers were for the word of God.

Thursday, September 8 – Acts 20:13-24

TAI: Why do you suppose Paul sailed past Ephesus, but then called for the Ephesian elders to come and join him at Miletus? What two concepts seem to be the “sides of the coin” for Paul's preaching and teaching – the heart of our response to the gospel? What do you learn about the character of Paul in these verses? About his relationship to the Holy Spirit?

PP: Ask God to build in you gospel-saturated character, as he did with Paul (such as humility, perseverance, courage, boldness, etc.). Pray that Faith Baptist Fellowship would see the fruit of “repentance toward God and faith in Christ” in the lives of people, a true evangelistic harvest. Ask God to fill you with his Holy Spirit.

Friday, September 9 – Acts 20:25-38

TAI: What is the “whole counsel of God” do you suppose? Why would a preacher be tempted to “shrink back” from declaring all of it? What do we learn here in this paragraph about the ministry of elders in a church? What bad characteristics do you see here, which might be true of some false teachers today? Why do you think emotions were running so high when Paul departed? (Note: the concepts in this paragraph are so important; spend some time reflecting on them again over the weekend, please.)

PP: “God, protect your flock from false teachers who would lead people astray: teachers who teach half-truths without hard truth, who are money-grubbing, who do not proclaim the true gospel. Give to your people your whole counsel, and teachers willing to speak this truth plainly, without greed or self-promotion. Lord, may we learn again and again that it is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Weekend, September 10 & 11 – 9/11 10th Anniversary Acts 20 review

TAI and PP: Review this week’s chapter, and reflect especially on the vitally important warnings of the last half of the chapter. Also, reflect on your experience of 9/11, and prepare your heart for our special service on Sunday morning. A video will recall Faith folks who served in New York, and their memories; also, there will be special moments of prayer and an appropriate message from Pastor Dana.

Monday, September 12 – Acts 21:1-6

TAI: This passage requires some reflection. Go back and review Acts 19:21 & 20:22-24. Was “the Spirit” leading Paul to go to Jerusalem, or to stay away? Ponder this serious question: if the Holy Spirit warned you in some way of trouble ahead for the sake of the gospel, would you, a) go ahead anyway, thankful for the Spirit’s warning but ready to suffer for Christ; or b) not go, sure that the reason for the warning was to protect you and keep you away? In any case, one sure thing to do in any situation is pray (v. 5).

PP: On this “day after” the 10th anniversary of 9/11, let’s be sure to pray for all who are emotionally spent today and affected by great sadness (families of 9/11 victims, families of service men and women who have given their lives for our freedom, etc.). Ask God to minister to all who are deeply affected by the anniversary yesterday.

Tuesday, September 13 – Acts 21:7-16

TAI: Why do you think Luke draws attention to the fact that Philip was an evangelist? Or that he had four daughters who prophesied? (You might want to review Joel 2:28-29 and Acts 2:17-18.) Picking up on our thinking from yesterday, how did Paul receive the prophetic reenactment of Agabus, as a warning (“don’t go!”) or as preparation (“be ready!”)? This draws attention to the need for accurate discernment whenever “words from God” are given (I Thess. 5:20-21).

PP: Pray for those believers around the world who suffer for the name of Jesus and for the gospel. Ask God to give them great courage and boldness. Ask God to give *you* great courage and boldness for standing firm as a Christian before family, neighbors, and workplace.

Wednesday, September 14 – Acts 21:17-26

TAI: Whoa—this is a tough passage for us to understand today perhaps. It might help to first read and think about I Corinthians 9:19-23. Was Paul compromising the gospel when he submitted to this ritual? Why do you think he went ahead and did what they asked? Were the church leaders at Jerusalem planning to require this of Gentile believers?

PP: Paul was displaying a shrewd wisdom in this passage, something we should ask God for! Ask God to help you witness for Christ by wisely knowing how to “become all things to all people” around you. *Pray for your Sacred Seven, and for your witness to them.*

Thursday, September 15 – Acts 21:27-36

TAI: What similarities do you find between this mob scene and those who shouted (before Jesus was crucified) “Crucify him! Crucify him!”? Was the charge against him accurate? Why have Christians historically supported the legal tradition of “innocent until proven guilty”? How do you see the hand of God moving, working for God’s glory in this situation?

PP: Rejoice that God often works through sound human government to fulfill his divine purposes. Thank God for the “first responders” – honored last Sunday on the 9/11 anniversary – who serve in our community and across the nation.

Friday, September 16 – Acts 21:37-22:2

TAI: The tribune was clearly confused about the identity of the man before him. Who did he think Paul was? Why do you think the crowd hushed when Paul spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect (scholars believe he spoke then in Aramaic)? Note: Paul spoke in Greek to the tribune, then Aramaic to the crowd; truly he was fluent in multiple languages!

PP: Today let’s pray for believers who are called upon to speak courageously of Christ and their faith in public settings. Pray for those persecuted for their faith by governmental, ethnic, religious, or family structures. Ask for God’s help when speaking plainly of Christ in your spheres of influence (friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc.).

Weekend, September 17-18 – Romans 8

TAI and PP: This Sunday Pastor Dana begins his newest series of messages from what many consider one of the greatest chapters in the Bible – Romans 8. Prepare your heart for this Sunday and for this series by reading the chapter in your Bible. Notice major themes (repeated words or concepts; emphasis on “what God does” and “what we must do” in response). Pray for Pastor Dana as he prepares, and for God to work powerfully in our church family this autumn. Pray for our welcome to the many guests who have been coming to our church recently.

Monday, September 19 – Acts 22:3-16

TAI: In giving a testimony of God's grace in our lives, it is very natural to follow a simple 3-phase approach: first, our lives before we met Christ; second, meeting the Lord Jesus; third, our new life in Jesus Christ. That is basically the approach Paul takes here. How does he describe his life before meeting Jesus? Who was Gamaliel? In what did Paul take pride? How do you think his listeners responded to this first portion of his testimony?

PP: Remember areas of your life where you were proud prior to meeting Christ as your Lord and Savior. Have you ever confessed this pride to God as sin? Thank God for delivering you through his grace. This assumes he has delivered you! Have you trusted Christ as your Savior?

Tuesday, September 20 – Acts 22:3-16 (repeating yesterday's reading)

TAI: In part two of his testimony, Paul tells of encountering the living Christ. What stands out to you about this life-changing meeting? Notice the remarkable change of attitude, from 'pride' to 'humility.' What are the evidences of God humbling the proud Pharisee? Why is humility so crucial to a biblical faith? Read James 4:6 & 10 and Daniel 4:37.

PP: Pray a prayer acknowledging God's great glory. Humble yourself before the Lord. Thank God for his work of grace in you. Thank him for saving you from sin through Jesus Christ.

Wednesday, September 21 – Acts 22:12-21

TAI: Dr. Luke records Ananias as telling Saul/Paul that God has appointed him to 4 things. What are they? (Hint: *know, see, hear, and be*) In v. 16, it sounds as if perhaps Ananias is implying that baptism washes away sins. But the physical act of water baptism does not cleanse the heart; that is God's work of grace as the Spirit takes out our heart of stone and we trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Baptism pictures this; Ananias is speaking of the reality that baptism pictures in Saul's life. Why in v. 17 does Paul emphasize that this trance occurred in Jerusalem?

PP: Ask God to help you, through his word, the Bible, to 1) know his will; 2) see Jesus, the Righteous One; 3) hear the truth of Christ in the inspired word; and 4) be a witness for Christ. Thank him for cleansing you from your sin. Rejoice in your water baptism to picture this transformation. (Have you been baptized as a believer in Christ?)

Thursday, September 22 – Acts 22:19-29

TAI: Why do you think these last words of Paul to the angry crowd (vv. 19-21) once more incited them, even to want him dead? How would the vicious action of flogging be *an examination*? Paul's Roman citizenship is another example of God working through human governmental structures. Why are officials so shaken to learn of his citizenship? Why would this make the tribune afraid?

PP: Pray today for Christians ‘in bonds’ around the world, such as jail, prison, house arrest, etc. Praise God that he is able to work through human governmental structures, even evil ones, to spread his gospel message and grow churches in amazing places (prisons often become ‘breeding grounds’ for training new Christian leaders where otherwise the gospel is ‘illegal.’) Read Philippians 1:12-14 to inform your prayer.

Friday, September 23 – Acts 22:30 – 23:11

TAI: What does the phrase “whitewashed wall” bring to mind? (Hint: check Matthew 23) It is ironic that two men, the one who spoke to the blinded Saul, and this high priest, have the same name! One is devoutly righteous and believes, the other a corrupt religious leader who does not. How did Paul use their own differences to divide this council? Even in this, Paul testified of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!

PP: Sometimes ‘religion’ is the most difficult obstacle to the gospel; pray for your religious relatives and friends who as yet have not trusted Jesus Christ for salvation. Pray that our lives would be a powerful testimony of the living Christ in us!

Weekend, September 24-25 – Romans 8

TAI and PP: Once again this weekend, prepare for the “Inseparable” series by reading this glorious chapter of the Bible, Romans 8. Work on memorizing a section of it! Pray for all our Faith University “professors” and the teachers of our children and youth, as well as for Pastor Dana. Rejoice that “the Spirit of God dwells in you” (v. 9).

Monday, September 26 – Acts 23:12-22

TAI: Can you think of a Scripture which explains why this mob of men would plot to murder Paul? What does this reveal about those who opposed the gospel? What can we learn from this about those who oppose the gospel today? How does God’s grace and protection show up in this section?

PP: Thank God for his protection of your life – often in ways you will never even know. Prayerfully ask God to protect and care for your family members, as well as our church leadership and staff, spiritual as well as physical.

Tuesday, September 27 – Acts 23:23-35

TAI: The tribune did not take the threat lightly. He marshals a large force to deliver Paul safely. Notice how detailed the account is from Dr. Luke. What does the writer seem to be emphasizing? Why do you think he is so concerned to emphasize this? Also, Luke is setting us up for something more...what do you think that is?

PP: Praise God for his sovereign grace and power! Rejoice in the way God orchestrated governmental structures not only to protect Paul but also to deliver him as a witness into the highest courts of the land, to testify of Jesus Christ. Delight that God is still doing this today! Pray for those who witness for Christ in our nation's government.

Wednesday, September 28 – Acts 24:1-9

TAI: Tertullus seems to combine two things in his accusation against Paul in Felix's court: flattery and falsehoods. Can you identify these in the text? Why would these men do such a thing? Can you think of examples of this happening in our day also? How can we be sure this will not happen to us (falsehoods spoken against us and flattery to cast us in a bad light)?

PP: In order to pray a response to this Scripture, review Matthew 5:10-12 and use this language to pray a prayer of rejoicing. Thank God that no matter how people speak about you, God is not surprised and he is not fooled. Rejoice that the kingdom of God is yours in Christ!

Thursday, September 29 – Acts 24:10-23

TAI: Once again Dr. Luke records a very detailed account. What do these details reveal as you study Paul's wise and lively defense? Why do you think Christianity was called "the Way" at this point? Why does Paul keep going back to the resurrection in his defense? What does Felix's response indicate about his attitude toward Paul?

PP: Rejoice that for you, Jesus is "**the Way**, the truth, and the life." Rejoice also in the biblical truth of the resurrection of the dead, and that through Christ you are assured of eternal life and resurrection hope. Pray for grace to "provide a defense" of your faith, should you have the opportunity to do so. Thank God that should that happen, his Spirit will give you words to say.

Friday, September 30 – Acts 24:24-27

TAI: What interesting details do we learn about Felix and his wife? Curiously, Felix seemed to have very mixed motives in dealing with Paul. What are those mixed motives? How is Felix's response to Paul's witnessing similar to the way many people respond when they come under conviction? Why do you think God left Paul in custody for such a long period of time?

PP: Let us pray for the salvation of Jewish people today. Pray for those who are witnessing to Jews in Israel, in the U.S., and around the world. Pray for your own witness to Jewish people you may know, asking God to move deeply in their hearts to draw them to Christ. Pray also for the salvation of "kings and those in authority" (I Tim. 2:1-2) in our country and overseas.

Weekend, October 1-2 – Romans 8

TAI and PP: Have you been memorizing a portion of this grand passage? We encourage you to do so. As you read again, what is God impressing on your heart and mind? Ask God to use these verses to strengthen your faith in Christ and give you courage in living the Christian life. Pray for all who will hear Pastor Dana's message this Sunday. Pray for our Faith Baptist young people to come to know Christ and grow in Christ. Pray for Pastor Moe and all who assist him.