

Bible Reading Challenge 45: THE CHURCH – TO THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH

Key verse: “These men who have turned the world upside-down have come here also . . . saying that there is another king, Jesus.” Acts 17:6b, 7b

Main Idea/Out Loud Intro: A big milestone is passed this week, so quietly we don’t notice it: a man appears to Paul in a dream and says “Come to Macedonia and help us.” Seeing this as a sign from the Holy Spirit who continues to guide Christians and spread the news of the gospel, Paul packs up and heads west, crossing from “Asia” (modern-day Turkey) into Macedonia (today’s Northern Greece). In other words, he’s in Europe, which will soon become the home of Christianity for the next 1500 years.

Lots of exciting things happen on this second missionary journey, as we’ll see. That’s true of the third missionary journey too, but we don’t have time to read the whole thing. Basically, Paul is arrested back in Jerusalem, but unlike Jesus, because Paul was a citizen of Rome, he could go to Rome and let Caesar decide whether he should be killed. That’s exactly what Paul did, and when we take up the story in chapter 26 he’s on his way to Rome.

Paul and his companions were accused of turning the world upside-down. In a way the charge was true, though Paul had done it with the help of the Holy Spirit. And through everything that happens, the Holy Spirit is convicting and saving sinners. Remember the curse that Adam and Eve got from God—their sin meant that people couldn’t be with God anymore, but instead their sin would cause them to die, and have all kinds of sadness and hurting. But the Holy Spirit is now undoing the curse of death all over the world! That’s the point of both the speeches you’ll read this week: *Jesus Christ has risen from the dead*. After so many years of death and sadness and confusion, life forever with God is coming to all the people of every nation. We’d like Luke to wrap it up with a conclusion, but maybe he wants to show us that the story goes on, and it’s our turn now

Reading for this week: Acts 16-17, 25:13-28:31

Further references: II Corinthians 11:23-30; Acts 9:15

Questions to Think and Talk about:

1. Why didn’t Paul and Silas escape after the earthquake? What was the result?
2. How does the Lord’s prediction of Acts 9:15-16 and Mark 16:17-18 come true in these chapters?
3. What was the Jews’ accusation against Paul? (See Acts 24:5-7) What is Paul’s version? (Acts 24:10-21) What does he say in his defense before the King?
4. How did all these events work together to get Paul to Rome? (See Romans 8:28-29)
5. Discuss why it is that some people believe and others, like Agrippa and Festus, don’t.
6. Is Acts 28:24-27 a discouraging message? Why or why not?

Activities:

- **Make a Boat:** Paul travels on boats during a number of his missionary journeys. Why not make a replica of them? Here’s a really easy way to make **Bark Boats** out of bark and leaves. If you want to read about different kinds of Roman ships or order a set, here is a great website: romanseas.com. There are plenty of other free how-to guides online for Roman ships, like this **popsicle stick version**, if you’ll just Google “how to make a roman ship”.
- **Act it Out:** Gather up some stuffed animals and a “ship” and act out the events of Acts 27:13-44.
- **Map It:** Print off a map of the ancient world and have your kids draw Paul’s missionary journeys. (Here is a **map** showing his journeys.) For even more fun, research some of these cities, as well as ancient ships and sailing techniques, and make a report.