

Faith



LOVE



Flying Water



The Feet of the Cross



Good Shepherd - Lost & Found

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TO.....S
A CLOSER WALK



The Sower



Joyful

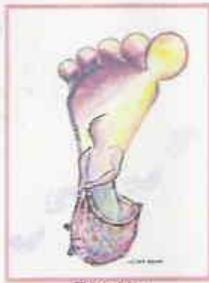


Wise & Foolish

WRITTEN BY CATHERINE PRICE
ILLUSTRATED BY CONNIE RHODES



Widow's Offering



Fishers of Men



Come Follow Me



Prayer & Care

INTRODUCTIONS



Hi! I am Catherine Price and I live in the small town of Aliceville, Kansas. I am a member of the Mont Ida Church of the Brethren. I have been married to my husband, James, for 28 years. I have just recently retired from Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corporation in Burlington, Kansas where I worked in the Accounting Dept. for 17 years. For the last 10 years, I have taught the Young Adult Sunday School Class and I also help to lead the singing. I began writing a newsletter for our church in September of 2007, shortly after my "inspiration" came at the Western Plains District Conference. Connie Rhodes' Footprint Art was displayed in the sanctuary of the McPherson Church of the Brethren and our theme was "Come...Follow Jesus." Connie has graciously allowed me to use her art in the Newsletter and I have done so through 2007 and 2008. In 2009, I published several newsletters that were consolidations of several months. My last newsletter was in August 2009. After this I felt God's calling to begin a Daily Devotional Book based on these Footprints. I talked to Connie about my idea and she was very excited about it and has been a constant inspiration in her willingness to share all of her art so freely. Since that time I have been working on each month's devotionals which, looking at the cover of the book, you can see on your top left, the theme of "Faith" and going across the top, you see the themes of "Love", and "The Foot of the Cross" "The Living Water -The Holy Spirit". Next, is "The Sower" and on down the right side; "The Wise and Foolish Virgins". This is the first Volume.

**Second Volume: May 1, 2013 Update: I am now finished with the Second Volume. These are the Footprint Titles: Prayer & Care; Come, Follow Me & I Will Make You Fishers of Men; The Widow's Mite (Giving); Joy; The Good Shepherd. I am very grateful to God for allowing me to learn these truths as I write down what He has given me to say. I pray that many of you will open up your hearts and allow ALL of His Love to Come In! In Loving Service, Cathy
If you have comments or questions, please feel free to call or text me at: 1-785-204-2938.**



Connie Rhodes would like to extend her greetings to you all. In the above photo, she is doing her art presentation before an audience at Salina, Kansas in April of 2008, at the Western Plains District Ladies Retreat. Her talents became apparent to many of the “Brethren” when we came to the District Conference in July, 2007. She had been given the task of creating art work that depicted the Conference theme: “Come, Follow Jesus” Each of her original designs were in the form of a footprint and artistically portrayed a Bible story or theme. The original paintings were displayed around the sanctuary of the McPherson Church of the Brethren where the Conference was held. As we saw at the Ladies’ Retreat the next year, she is so much more talented. Her presentation includes; painting a beautiful scene while talking to the audience. This usually takes about 30 to 45 minutes. She is a very funny lady. You can see all of her art work on her website: www.artbyrhodes.com. Connie has been a member of the Newton Church of the Brethren for 22 years (as of this writing) and is also the Church Clerk, as well as serving on the Church Board and teaching Sunday School where needed.

FOOTPRINTS TO A CLOSER WALK

SEPTEMBER DEVOTIONS

NINTH MONTH

"FISHERS OF MEN"



FOOTPRINTS TO A CLOSER WALK

SEPTEMBER DEVOTIONAL

FIRST WEEK

"GRIEF AND JOY"

DAY ONE.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....FIRST WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

DISCIPLES DESERTION

Scripture Reading: Chronological Bible Commentary: "At the end of the final discourse of Jesus, there is little time remaining for solitude or reflection. The time of betrayal is near. Very soon now Judas will lead the officers of the chief priests to Jesus and betray him in the presence of the other apostles. So the stage is now set, and the arrest is soon to take place. As the hour of betrayal fast approaches, the record begins now with Jesus leading his disciples to an olive grove known as Gethsemane, on the Mount of Olives, just east of Jerusalem. As they arrive in the quiet garden, Jesus' heart is clearly heavy with the prospect of the events soon to take place. Taking Peter, James, and John beyond the others, Jesus goes still further to a quiet place alone, where he agonizes in prayer with the Father. And his aloneness during this critical time is all the more reinforced when three times Jesus returns to the disciples only to find them asleep." The most amazing parts of this arrest scene that follows is that when the soldiers said who it was they wanted, and Jesus said, "I AM He," they all "drew back and fell to the ground!" Do you realize why? Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and they sensed the Glory upon Him! You could say that "they worshiped Him!" Then Peter cut off one of the soldier's ears, and Jesus immediately healed it. Awesome! The third thing that you may have never noticed was that one of the disciples, it doesn't say which one, was only wearing a light garment and when the soldier tried to grab him, the garment was torn from his body and he ran away naked; and all of the disciples deserted Him and ran. Later on, Peter denied that he even knew Jesus. He denied Him three times just as Jesus had predicted. Peter wept bitterly. Judas was filled with remorse and after throwing the thirty pieces of silver into the temple he hanged himself.

DAY TWO.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....FIRST WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

JESUS OFFERS HIMSELF AS A SACRIFICE

Scripture Reading from Chronological Bible Commentary: "It is sometime before noon when the procession reaches the outskirts of Jerusalem and the crowd gathers on a craggy little hill which is known as Golgotha—that s, The Skull. As Jesus is nailed to the wooden cross and lifted up, the scene below him becomes a strange mixture of emotions. On one hand he sees the bitter sorrow of his family and followers, and on the other hand he sees the carnival-like atmosphere of the soldiers and those who have demanded his death. As he awaits his death with increasing pain and agony, Jesus speaks briefly with one of the two robbers crucified with him. Then, seeing his mother, Mary, he directs John to care for her. By early afternoon the end is near. As unusual darkness covers the land, Jesus cries out his last words and gives up his spirit in death. The significance of the hour is marked by a series of miraculous events which fill the people with awe."

(Mt.27:50-56;Mk.15:41; Lk.23:45-49) Paraphrased: After Jesus said that He was thirsty and had received wine vinegar on a sponge from a soldier, He said, "It is finished. Father into Your hands I commit my spirit!" Then he bowed his head and died. The next moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. These were just some of the miracles that took place as Jesus was dying on the cross. We know the REAL MIRACLE was that at the moment that Christ died, He cleared a Path for all men to come into the Holy presence of God, signified by the tearing of the veil in the Temple. He became the Savior of the World at that moment He died for all of the sins of the whole world! Even in His agony, He took care of His mother and saved the thief on the cross next to Him. There were countless others, no doubt, who believed and were saved as they realized who He was, and those who were raised to life as Lazarus was, were all believers at this point and onward.

Prayer

Oh Holy Lord! Praise You for your sacrifice for me and for the world. Help me to keep on spreading the Word. In Jesus name, Amen

DAY THREE.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....FIRST WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

MINISTERS OF THE GRAVE

Scripture Reading: Mt.27:59-60; Mk.15:46; Lk.23:53,54; Jn. 19:38-42:
"Joseph of Arimathea, with Pilot's permission, came and took the body of Jesus away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 lbs. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. Because it was the Jewish day of preparation (for the Passover) and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away." The commentary on this follows: "Even in Jesus' burial a remarkable story unfolds involving two men whose names will live throughout History: Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. That anyone outside Jesus' family would have sufficient courage to ask for His body would be curious enough. The real surprise, however, is that it should be a member of the Council which had called for Jesus' execution. Yet the record notes that Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, is also a believer, and it is he who will bury Jesus' body in his own tomb. Joseph will be aided by Nicodemus, the Pharisee and Jewish ruler who had come to Jesus by night asking how one is to be born again. Although the record of that visit did not disclose the result of their discussion, the happy ending is that apparently Nicodemus has become a believer. It is fitting, therefore, that two men whose lives have been so touched by Jesus should now express their gratitude in this final tribute."

There are many acts of kindness that go unnoticed in this world. But I think that God made sure that these men were honored for their acts of kindness to Jesus in this touching show of care and honor. The giving of the tomb, that Joseph had cut out of rock for his own burial, (reminds me of the scripture about the "cleft of the rock") is a precious sacrifice given in love to our Lord. Nicodemus did whatever needed to be done for His Lord, as he touched Jesus' broken and bleeding body, pouring anointing oils and spices on the linen cloths and covering the wounds, he wound and wound the cloths, perhaps weeping as he did so. Oh, how they must have rejoiced later when they found out what happened on Sunday morning.

Prayer

Oh My Precious Lord Jesus, how you suffered for me. How your broken body poured out the blood that cleansed me from all unrighteousness, I will never quite understand. Praise You, Amen

DAY FOUR.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....FIRST WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Scripture Reading: Mt.28:2-4; Mt. 28:1; Mk.16:1-4;Lk.24:1-3; Jn.20:1: "

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from Heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightening, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, " Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" But when they looked up they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. (Mt.28:5-7; Mk.16:5-7:) As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. HE HAS RISEN! HE IS NOT HERE! See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'he is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' " (Lk.24:4-8) While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " Then they remembered his words." Lk.24:12;Jn.20:3-10: : "So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

DAY FIVE.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....FIRST WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

THE WITNESS TO THE DISCIPLES

Scripture Reading: Mk.16:9; Jn. 20:11-17: "When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdelene, out of whom He had driven seven demons.) Mary stood outside the tomb, crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put Him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. "Woman!"

He said, "why are you crying?" "Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking He was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have put Him, and I will get Him!" Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned toward Him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher") Jesus said, "Do not hold onto Me; for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to My brothers and tell them, "I am returning to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God." Mk.16:12; Lk.24:13-27: "Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from

Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked, Jesus came up and walked along with them, but they did not recognize Him. (Later, after they invited Him to supper, as He broke bread after thanking God for it and giving it to them, their eyes were opened and they realized who He was.)

As you can well imagine, the reports of his appearances and all of the news coming in about his being alive, are all very confused. Each account may be similar, or some accounts are quite different, but at this very exciting time, things are not perfectly clear to the disciples, and they have reported what they heard, and seen with their own eyes. We have the information in the gospels. That is the main thing. Jesus is ALIVE! And he appears to each one of His followers, and appears to them when they are in a group. He even appears to them and helps them fish and then cooks the fish and they all eat together. This is a special time for the Disciples to learn so many more deep lessons about their Lord.

DAY SIX.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....FIRST WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

THE APOSTLES ARE GIVEN AUTHORITY

Scripture Reading: Mk.16:14; Lk.26:36-44; Jn.20-23: "While they were still talking about this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you!" They were frightened and startled, thinking they saw a ghost.

He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at My hands and My feet. It is I Myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." When He said this, He showed them His hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, He asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of broiled fish and He took it and ate it in their presence. He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you; Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Again Jesus said, Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you." And with that He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

This, to me, is the most mysterious part of the teaching of the disciples by the risen Lord. If they were going to be endued with power from upon high, after Jesus' ascension, on the day of Pentecost, then why did Jesus need to say at this point "receive the Holy Spirit?" (I have my own theory. Just as an incentive to ask me for more, I will try to get my book, "Thine is the Kingdom" finished and out there on line before the year is out.) cp 2013

And now the following commentary is necessary before the next awesome event takes place: "Jesus is next seen again with His eleven apostles on a mountain in Galilee. There they are given the special mission of evangelizing the world, a task to be accomplished through their personal testimonies regarding Jesus' Life, Death and Resurrection. Even as they are receiving this "Great Commission" some among them still have doubts about their mission. But the time is soon to come when, filled with God's Holy Spirit, each will stand strong in his faith and become a vibrant force in changing the hearts of men and women throughout the world.

Prayer

Oh Lord what an awesome time to have lived! To be His disciple at this time and be given the awesome mission to evangelize the world. Now, we see how important it is to help our favorite radio and tv ministries, so that the Word can be sent out all around the world, as You have commanded. Thank You for this great ministry going forward from every direction; N-E-W-S! In Jesus Name, Amen

DAY SEVEN.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....FIRST WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

THE ASCENSION

Scripture Reading: Mt.28:16-20; Mk.16:15-16; "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe; In My name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." Lk.24:45-49: "Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what My Father has promised, but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." Mk.16:19; Lk.24:50-61; Acts 1:6-11: "When He had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. They asked Him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them, "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven."

Prayer

Heavenly Father, Praise You for all of Your marvelous works! I can almost see heaven today, thinking about My Lord being raised up and raptured ("caught up") to Heaven and seated on Your right hand. Hallelujah! Amen!

FOOTPRINTS TO A CLOSER WALK

SEPTEMBER DEVOTIONAL

NINTH MONTH

SECOND WEEK

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

DAY EIGHT.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....SECOND WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

REPLACING A TRAITOR

Scripture Reading: Lk.24:52-53; Acts 1:12-22: "Then they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholamew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. In those days, Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about 120) and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus—he was one of our number and shared in this ministry. With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, "Field of Blood."

Peter said, "For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,' and 'May another take his place of leadership.'" Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection." So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two You have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." Then they cast lots and the lot fell on Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles."

DAY NINE.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....SECOND WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS

Chronological Bible Commentary: "As the Gospel account comes to a close with Jesus' ascension, the focus of Scripture turns to the work of the apostles and others in their efforts to spread the Good News about Jesus throughout the world, and to the beginning of the church, which is comprised of Christ's faithful disciples. The historical record of the church in the first 30 years of its history, commonly known as the Acts of the Apostles, is evidently written by Luke. Luke's writing records many of the acts of some of the apostles, principally those of Peter and Paul (who will become a special apostle), and also includes the work of others, such as Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, and Silas. More importantly, Luke records the work of the Holy Spirit in the church of the first century. After a brief introduction to his writing, Luke stresses the powerful manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the confirmation and spread of the gospel message."

It is now 30 A.D. It is the time of the celebration of the Feast of Pentecost. This Feast is to be celebrated 50 days after Passover. It is also believed to be the same time many years before that the Ten Commandments were given to Moses and the Israelites. This is an awesome discovery because it points out the fact that the Holy Spirit came to us to "fulfill the Law" as in Jeremiah where it says that this New Covenant would be given to change our hearts from stone to flesh. That we would no longer have to teach each other the Law, but that the Word would be in our hearts, (telling us what to do and where to do it!) Acts 2:1-4: "When the Day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." (Commentary adds: "This occasion heralds not only the special power of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of the apostles, but also the formal beginning of Christ's spiritual body, the Church.")

Prayer

Father, praise You for Your wonderfully accurate record given to us, so that 2,000 years later we are still reading the wonderful good news! Amen

DAY TEN.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....SECOND WEEK

(Devotion).....(Study)

FIRST MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:14-36: "Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women. I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above, and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Peter went on to expound upon the events that had taken place that were to be the building blocks of the Church and to which most churches use as their creed: 1. Jesus Christ performed numerous miracles..

2. Jesus Christ was crucified upon a cross; it was by God's set purpose and foreknowledge that He allowed it.
3. God raised Jesus from the dead, and it was impossible for death to hold Him. (As David writes about him in Psalms 16:8-11).
4. Jesus Christ has been exalted to the right hand of God and received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured Him out to those who believe.

The manifestation of the Spirit was in the baptism of fire, and of the "dispersion of languages" which is awesome, because it is another proof that the "Word" was given out in full measure!

We could say that those who were called to come and follow Jesus had now taken their first "great haul" of fish! They had now become "Fishers of Men!" The scriptures record that there were at least 3,000 who came to Jesus that marvelous Day of Pentecost populating the newly formed "Body of Christ! Paul explains this time as compared to the giving of the Law: the letter kills but the spirit gives life!" (as you recall 3,000 were killed in the Israelite's rebellion, as Moses descended the Mt.)

I have a little sign that says: YOU CATCH 'EM, GOD CLEANS 'EM!
Prayer--Praise You My dear Savior! I am so thankful for all that You did to bring about the New Covenant Church that would endure to the end of time and beyond! Amen

DAY ELEVEN.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....SECOND WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)
ESTABLISHING THE KINGDOM

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:37-41: "When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." (Vs.42-47)" They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

Hallelujah! How exciting a time to be living in! Oh, Lord! When we compare this to the way that things are in the church today, we can see that things are quite dramatically altered! Oh Lord! What will revitalize and resurrect us??? This is what we need to investigate in the remaining days of this study.

We are to be fishers of men! Let us examine what that could "look like" by watching "the Fishermen" from the book of Acts. This will also get us back to the original mission which was what we need to know to be His disciples—those spiritual disciplines we don't really seem to be too fond of, and of which we have still not acquired. Look at the above scriptures and take note of these vital things for a church to be "on fire". They devoted themselves! To be devoted is a good place to start. Now to what should we be devoted? The apostle's teaching and to the fellowship; meeting together to study the Word and eating our meals together and praying together. The first church actually met together every day. Surely that would not be possible in this day and time, unless we all lived in community together, selling all of our property, and moving together to adjoining lots and working together to have food and housing, hmm.

DAY TWELVE.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....SECOND WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

MIRACULOUS POWER EXPLAINED

Scripture Reading: (Acts 3:11-16) Before I quote the scripture here, I need to help us continue on our quest to learn the "secret" of the amazing success of the early church. We have already considered such things as was mentioned, such as, devotion, fellowship, unity, prayer, worship together daily. Now, the text states that there were many miraculous signs and wonders done.

I don't believe that is possible without the foregoing efforts; if we cannot achieve the first things, we certainly cannot see miracles in our lives. So let us read: "While the beggar (which was healed of lameness) held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. When Peter saw this, he said to them: 'Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see."

What makes our faith strong? Well, it helps to be around others whose faith is strong. It helps to hear testimonies of the things that God has done in a person's life. It helps to meet together with other believers and have a courageous leader who will preach the truth of God's Word. Sharing our needs with one another and making that a matter of prayer, and praying together out loud before God, will strengthen our faith. Peter continues his message: "Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his Holy prophets." Strong faith will manifest itself in boldness; to preach the Word in truth and sincerity, not regarding man's feelings but God's will. Praise You Lord for Your message to us today. Amen

DAY THIRTEEN.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....SECOND WEEK

(Devotion).....(Study)

THE RIGHT BAIT FOR OUR HOOK

Scripture Reading: Acts 3:20-26;4:1-4: "For Moses said, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people." "Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.

When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.'" The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand."

We, as would-be fishers of men, must study on how to be good fishermen. It all comes down to the bait. Even beat up old fishing rods make for very good fishing, but you can't just use any old bait. It has to be the right kind, the kind that those particular fish like. Peter knew that these men who were listening to this message were Jewish, therefore he mentioned all the right words that held their interest. He quoted from the Old Testament writings of Moses so that his words would be accepted. We must quote from the Bible scriptures, very tactfully, when needed. This is the authority of the scriptures that speak volumes to people. We may think in our own minds that they will be turned off if we quote scripture, but if we will let the Holy Spirit lead, we will be surprised how well He knows just what that person needs. But the real attraction to the bait is our joy and light just beaming in front of them. The love of Jesus wants to just reach out and touch them. Let Jesus love on them, be humble and step back and let the Lord take control. This is one of those times when He wants your transparency, so that the person sees Jesus, not you. Peter and John spent the night in jail, which gave them another chance to preach the gospel and there were many people who believed because of their faith and trust in the name of Jesus. Praise You Lord!

DAY FOURTEEN.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....SECOND WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

THE CHURCH GROWS DESPITE PERSECUTION

Scripture Reading: Acts 5:39-42: "(Gamaliel speaking) Therefore, in the present case I advise you; Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God." His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ."

It is so exciting to read about the early church and how everything was a brand new adventure. A believer was on fire for the Lord's Good News and they wanted to tell everyone all about Jesus and what wondrous things He had done for them. This is the Bait! This is what attracts people to the Gospel Message! Zeal! Joy! Excitement! Action! We have to see in these first 5 chapters of Acts that the most wondrous miracles that were being done was to heal people. This is smirked at nowadays. We think that when we hear of a "healing service" that this is surely a hoax due to all of those which were. But, they were healing people back then and these were real. Where have we gone wrong in this act of mercy and great faith? We pray for healing and sometimes it happens, but there is not the great outbursts of astonishment and praise that needs to happen. Perhaps if we would put the healing back into His hands and not give all the credit to doctors, then we would see more miraculous healings. I think it is a miracle for a doctor to be able to operate on someone and the patient comes out of it all better. That is wonderful! But we need to praise God more for it than the doctor. Always realize who is in control of it all. Tomorrow we will examine case by case some great heroes of fishing for men and find out some more tips for good fishing.

Prayer

Lord, be with me today, and guide and direct my footsteps as I venture into the unknown. I want to be a witness of Jesus' glory. Give me the words to say that will bring someone light enough to see Him so that they may receive Him as their Savior. In Jesus Name, Amen

FOOTPRINTS TO A CLOSER WALK

NINTH MONTH

SEPTEMBER DEVOTIONS

THIRD WEEK

"FEARLESS FISHERMEN"

DAY FIFTEEN.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....THIRD WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

STEPHEN'S VISION

Scripture Reading: Acts 7:54-8:1a: "When they heard (Stephen's sermon) they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus, standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragging him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was there, giving approval to his death."

Use your own discernment—think about why the vision was given to Stephen.

He preached a good sermon, one full of insight and knowledge of the scriptures. Think about it. Seeds were being planted. Someone received the message. Lives would be changed dramatically because of the words spoken that day. Was Stephen afraid of death? If he was, he wouldn't have kept preaching things that caused the men to become angrier and angrier. The bait he was using wasn't pleasing to the people around him, but it was a lifeline to someone there that day. Down through the ages, his story has been read by millions of people. AWESOME! In using the analogy of the fishing line, we see something that is quite common for fishermen to experience—sometimes they get something on their line that they did not set out to snag. Sometimes they bring up a turtle, or a snake, or even just some underwater weeds. This vision was such a profound Truth; he verified for the whole world that Jesus indeed was resurrected from the dead, ascended to heaven, and was exalted to the throne of God! Stephen was not only an eye-witness to Jesus' teaching, miracles, and death on the cross, but now he could tell the world that "there He was! He made it! He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings! There is always a cause and then an effect. Look at Acts 6:7: "So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." Do you suppose that those Jewish priests who had been a part of arresting Jesus and having Him crucified, could now have been forgiven and have repented and become believers? It is quite likely. They were surely witnesses on Pentecost of the infilling of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, who also began speaking in tongues; explaining what had happened.

DAY SIXTEEN.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....THIRD WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

PHILIP'S MINISTRY

Scripture Reading: Acts 8:1b-8; 26-35: "On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many; and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city." "Now, an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, 'Go to that chariot and stay near it.' Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me? " So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. The eunuch was reading Is.53:7,8. (summary of rest) Philip explained that this scripture was talking about Jesus, and he shared many things about him. Then they came upon a body of water and the Ethiopian was baptized by Philip and then the Spirit took Philip away and he appeared in Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea. (Acts 8:36-39)

Prayer

Lord, what a wonderful illustration to all of us, of how You would have each of us to be a witness of Your glory and greatness to the world. It was given to Philip in marvelous grace, as the Ethiopian man was already reading the scriptures. Oh what a wonderful opening for Philip to simply translate for him what the prophet was fore telling. Thank You for all of the wonderful openings that You give each one of us as we look for opportunities to witness and teach wherever we go. One study called it, "a person of peace" whom You will send in our way so that the door will already be opened for us and the soil will already have been prepared. Hallelujah! Praise You. Amen

DAY SEVENTEEN.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....THIRD WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

PETER AND JOHN'S MINISTRY

Scripture Reading: Acts 8:14-25; (Please read from the Bible on your own)

There are so many scriptures that pertain to Peter and John's ministry in the book of Acts that one should study this on the side. This scripture above is an interesting event about Peter and John going to the Samaritan believers in order to give them the Holy Spirit by laying on of hands. I suppose that this is a very controversial part of scripture, because there are many other scriptures that indicate that the Holy Spirit came upon the believers whenever they were baptized in water. Read Acts 5:12-16, where we see that due to all of the miraculous signs and wonders of the apostles, the people brought their sick and lame into the streets and laid them on beds so that when Peter went by, even his shadow might fall upon some of them as he passed by (did that heal them?). On day twelve and thirteen of this month, I gave more scripture on the happenings of Peter and John, and here, we see that Peter explains what to do to receive the Holy Spirit—"repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. We also saw how they were imprisoned and how they miraculously were freed. This too, is part of their awesome story. We know that later on, these two Apostles wrote their letters to the church. These are some of the most encouraging and inspiring works in the whole Bible. These letters can only be described as "God-breathed!" But, before this, we see their boldness and their zeal in all of the "Acts" as the early church struggles to grow, and grow it does! This is our fishing lesson today. Be zealous! Be bold! Tread where no man has trodden before! Peter's words echo through the ages: "We must obey God rather than men!" Here are some of the "sub-headings" highlighting the awesome events taking place involving Peter and John: starting in Acts 9 thru 11) AENEAS HEALED OF PARALYSIS; DORCAS RAISED FROM DEAD; CORNELIUS HAS VISION; PETER HAS VISION;PETER GOES TO CORNELIUS;CORNELIUS IS BAPTIZED. This is an interesting twist in the baptism controversy—these people were already filled with the Holy Spirit and then Peter responded by saying that there was nothing keeping them from being baptized since they already received the Holy Spirit. Perhaps there are all of these different accounts so that we will not get too dogmatic about what should come first and then second. God does things His way! Not man's! Amen

DAY EIGHTEEN.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....THIRD WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

ANANIAS' VISION

Scripture Reading: Acts 9:10-16 (please read from the Bible)

First of all, let's get something straight. This is not the same Ananias that was struck dead in chapter 5. Ok, that's settled. The sad story was one of lying to the Holy Spirit. It not only affected him but also his wife. I always think of this story in connection with my own submission to my husband and how far God would have me go in that submission. And then, also, in what Peter has said about obeying God and not man. God has a lot of hard lessons for each of us to learn. Any way, let us think about what Ananias the disciple of the Lord did and how his obedience was very Key in the life of Saul and his conversion experience, intertwining these stories in today's and tomorrows devotionals. Ananias is told by the Lord to go to a certain man who has been praying and seen a vision of him! In the vision, Ananias is to come to him and restore his sight. Ananias does not want to come because he has heard about this man named Saul, who has done much harm to the church in Jerusalem. But the Lord insisted and said that he was His chosen instrument to carry His name to the Gentiles. "Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." I believe that this is all that we see of Ananias. There are numerous people in scripture that have one part to play and then we don't see them again. Isn't this just like our church? People come and go, and they have one part to play, but then some of them we don't see anymore. But Ananias was obedient to God. He did his part—which was really quite an awesome thing; he healed Saul's blindness, he laid hands on Saul and Saul received the Holy Spirit, and then Ananias baptized Saul. Don't you ever wonder what ever happened to these people in the Bible, later, after they have played their parts? We know that the Lord has blessed them for being obedient and they have gone on with their lives and done other amazing things for God. There is so much not recorded in scripture that is just as awesome as the things that are recorded. Ananias must have gone on to continue keeping up on what Paul was doing, and maybe they corresponded, who knows? We do hope that he got a copy of Paul's letters to the churches, because we sure do love to read them over and over again, even though we have never met Paul.

Prayer

Thank You Lord for all of these dedicated men who were obedient in writing down all of the happenings way back then that are so important in our lives today. In Jesus Name, Amen

DAY NINETEEN.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....THIRD WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

SAUL'S CONVERSION

Scripture Reading: Acts 9:1-9 (please look up in the Bible)

In the chronological Bible, there is a good commentary on this: "Saul will later become one of the most widely known and widely read of all the apostles. He will make three major missionary journeys establishing churches throughout what is known today as Turkey, Greece, and Italy. He will write at least 13 inspired letters of Scripture and preach Christ to high government officials. And he will suffer perhaps as much persecution for the sake of the Lord as any other who has defended Jesus' name. But for now Saul is known only as the great persecutor of the Lord's church. He is feared by all who regard the name of Jesus as precious. The events which lead to the radical change in this man Saul are truly remarkable. In one sense his conversion experience is like that of any other believer who commits his life in faithful obedience to Christ.

But Saul is destined to become a special apostle for the Lord, and that necessitates his ability to testify to the resurrection of Jesus. Therefore Saul's conversion involves a personal appearance by Jesus himself. Later in his ministry, in response to those who will question his apostleship, Saul (then to be known as Paul) will refer to this experience as the basis for his apostleship and the beginning of his special mission for Christ. Unaware at this point of what the future holds for his life, Saul is seen now relentlessly searching out believers in Jesus whose sect is known at this time simply as "The Way", in order to arrest and persecute them." On his way to Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," He replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." The men traveling with Saul were speechless and when Saul got up he tried to open his eyes but he could see nothing. So the men led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. Then he had a vision that showed him a man named Ananias would come and restore his sight. This came true and there Ananias was, laying hands upon him, and Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. He grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living there by proving that Jesus is the Christ. Read on in Acts 9:23-31. Good stuff!

DAY TWENTY.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....THIRD WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

CORNELIUS-THE FIRST GENTILE CONVERT

Quoting from the Chronological Bible Commentary: "As the church enters this period of peace and continued growth, the time is ripe for God's eternal plan to be implemented in still another major dimension—the extension of God's grace to the Gentiles. For hundreds of years God's dealings with man have focused upon the small nation of Israel and its Jewish people. Yet God had promised their father Abraham that through his seed all nations would be blessed. And Jesus himself continually proclaimed and demonstrated that his saving power was for all. But neither the apostles nor the early Jewish Christians have as yet comprehended the full implications of that message. God's eternal plan all along has been that all people of the world—Jew and non-Jew alike—should come to know Him through Jesus Christ. Until this time, however, only Jews, or Gentile converts known as proselytes, have been the subjects of early evangelistic efforts. To approach pagan Gentiles has seemed unthinkable. Even the apostle Peter still shares this narrow view. Thus it will take a special vision from the Lord to convince him that the Gentiles are also included within God's plan. The first Gentile recipient of the gospel message is a devout Roman military leader by the name of Cornelius. Because of Cornelius' continual prayers, God arranges for Peter to preach to Cornelius the good news of Jesus." We stop here, although the commentary goes on. Scripture Reading to be done by the reader at this point: Please read all of Acts 10. Because of Cornelius' obedience to God's direction to pray and give to the poor, the Lord chose him to be the recipient of the gospel message given by Peter; as he sent messengers to Peter to bring him into his house to speak to his family and friends. Consequently, Cornelius was saved and baptized and all there were also, and they were also filled with the Holy Spirit. This was the time in which Peter's eyes were opened to the fact that God wanted all people to receive the gospel message, and through the vision that God gave Peter about the different animals together in the sheet, Peter also came to understand God's meaning. Peter re-affirms what all happened in Acts 11:1-18. We see in all of this many more characteristics of good fishing! We must pray! We must be generous to the poor, too. We saw this in Cornelius, and in Peter we saw a willingness to be open-minded and include all people, no matter who it is.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for your lesson to us today. This is the most profound teaching that I have found thus far in the Book of Acts. I praise You for it.

In Jesus Name, Amen

DAY TWENTY-ONE.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....THIRD WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

BARNABAS IS SENT

Scripture Reading: Read Acts 11:19-30

Barnabas was sent to Antioch by the church in Jerusalem after they heard how some believers in Cyprus and Antioch were speaking to Greeks there, telling them of the good news about the Lord Jesus. Since the Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord, Barnabas was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

Barnabas and Paul became a team. They went from Antioch in northern Syria and sailed from the port of Seleucia to Alamis, on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. After crossing the island to Paphos, they then sailed for the region of Pamphylia, on the southern Turkish coast, where they spent some time in the city of Perga. Traveling with them was John Mark, a young evangelist. At this point he leaves their party and goes back to Jerusalem. The people of Pisidian Antioch were very open to Paul's first recorded sermon, but the next time they met with them there were those there who were unhappy with them and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them from the region. So they shook the dust of their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium, and being filled with joy and the Holy Spirit, they spoke to the crowds there and there was division between the people and some liked the message and some did not. Even though they did many miraculous signs there, they had heard of a plot against them, so they went on to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, where they continued to preach the good news. (Acts 13-14:1-7.) Barnabas and Paul were actually "worshipped" in Lystra after Paul had healed a crippled man. But when Paul and Barnabas realized they were worshipping them, they tore their clothes and rushed out in the crowd shouting, "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who has made all things." Then some Jews from Antioch and Iconium came and incited the crowd against them and they stoned Paul. They thought that he was dead, but the disciples gathered around him, and he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

FOOTPRINTS TO A CLOSER WALK

SEPTEMBER DEVOTIONAL

FISHERS OF MEN

FOURTH WEEK

"MORE FEARLESS FISHERMEN"

(these devotionals will be two pages instead of one due to the importance of the content and time restraints)

DAY TWENTY-TWO.....CHAPTER NINE

NINTH MONTH.....FOURTH WEEK

(Devotion).....(Study)

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY TRIP

(Chronological Bible Commentary) "In order to evangelize the world outside Judea and Samaria, the Holy Spirit now directs Barnabas and Saul to set out on a tour of what is known today as Cyprus and central Turkey. Paul and Barnabas land at Salamis, on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. After crossing the island to Paphos, they then sail for the region of Pamphylia, on the southern Turkish coast, where they spend some time in the city of Perga. It is here that John Mark, who will later write one of the four Gospel accounts and who has apparently been traveling with them, returns to Jerusalem. Later in the historical record it will be seen that John's return causes some problems in the relationship between Paul and the young evangelist, but a reconciliation will ultimately prevail."

In these last seven days of this study on the work of the church, and a study on how to be good fisher's of men, I want us to focus on the letters that Paul has written while journeying, and while imprisoned (it was a good time to write letters—lots of time!) It is an awesome thing to behold, for all of us who would seek to follow Christ just as Paul did. His letters say it all, all that he was going through, all that God and the Holy Spirit were teaching him, and all of his personal feelings about it. This is a "Portrait of a Saint!" It is in this way that we can glean from all of it, everything we need to know about being His Disciples. Not only that! It also prepares us for that ministry. We must know the gospel message before we can share it with others, we must know many truths of doctrinal scriptures so that we will not be deceived by false doctrine; and we must be equipped with the Sword of the Spirit when we go out to do battle—GO FISH!

THE FIRST CHURCH CONFERENCE

Scripture Reading: Acts 14:24-28(summarized)

"They also went on to Attalia and from there they sailed back to Antioch and there they stayed for quite awhile, completing their missionary journey and reporting to the church all that had been accomplished."

Chronological Bible Commentary: "The tour through ancient Asia Minor apparently ends somewhere around A.D. 47. Paul and Barnabas probably settle back into concentrated efforts at teaching in the local area, but their respite does not last for long. By A.D. 48 there is trouble in the Church. Certain Jewish Christians from Jerusalem go north to Antioch, teaching the Gentile Christians that they must be circumcised, in addition to being baptized, in

order to be obedient to God. To the Jews the rite of circumcision is a sign of the covenant relationship which they have with God, so it is only natural that they should think the same act would be required of Gentile Christians. But their more serious misconception lies in their belief that circumcision is required as part of keeping the Law of Moses. They are not only urging Gentiles to be circumcised, but demanding that they keep the entire law, just as the Jewish Christians are continuing to do. The problem is temporarily solved by a conference at Jerusalem in which Paul and Barnabas meet with the apostles and elders. After study of the scriptures and reviewing the work of the Holy Spirit they all agree that circumcision (and by implication; the law itself) is not binding on the Gentiles. As a result of this agreement, unity will finally prevail, at least temporarily." Oh what a tangled web we weave, is the little line of the poem that seems to be appropriate here. It was all so confusing at that time, that Jesus Christ had come to free us from all of those rituals and symbolism which was created in the first place to get men to understand who the Savior was and what He had to come to the earth in the flesh to do. Now that His mission has been accomplished, and all believers are connected under one New Covenant, we are now joint heirs to His salvation and promises of everlasting life. But, there was much more conferences, prayer, writing of many epistles to each church, and visits by Paul, to help the New Church under this New Order to begin to understand things on the same page. Now, Laugh! We know from our own experiences in our churches that we are still not on the same page.

I am hearing all the time, from people who are caught up in this movement, or that movement, wanting to interpret the truth differently than the way that the Lord meant it to be. One scripture says (sorry I can't give ref.) that we should keep believing what we learned at first. That was probably for the early church. Now, there is too much water under the bridge. So, what we must go back to is the Words of Jesus. Get you a red letter Bible and READ THE SOURCE OF ALL TRUTH! JESUS' WORDS ONLY! Also, use several versions. There are too many other voices than the voice of the Shepherd being out there, confusing everyone. There is a lot of talk now about going back to the "Torah" which is the first five books of the O.T. Perhaps it's a call to return to our roots, to remember how God started it all and for what purpose. That is good, but when they start saying we have to go back to rituals and observances, then everything that was written by the Apostles of Jesus Christ become a lie. Everything that Jesus came to do becomes a mockery. We must see the progression of the scripture theme, bringing us slowly from obedience to the Law, where the people became more and more evil, and more rebellious, to the place where the Messiah came to set us free from all of that kind of "religion" to a new relationship of Love and Grace.

DAY TWENTY-THREE.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....FOURTH WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)
FREEDOM IN CHRIST

The freedom that the scriptures allude to is the freedom from law. This doesn't mean we are to be lawless. It means that Jesus is our Law now, and whatever He tells us is a commandment of Love to us, because it is for our best, if we follow Him we will have an abundant life. We are truly Free, the Truth (Jesus) has set us Free!! Another scripture (sorry no ref.) says that the church should pray for unity, that everyone would come to believe alike! That is a tall order, but God can do it!

James, the brother of Jesus, has now become a believer and gives a solution to the rest of the questions that Gentile believers had about certain Jewish customs and laws: Acts 15:13-21 Please read this interesting addition to the instructions to Gentile believers. Do you think that this is still in place in today's Church? Have we erred from the Truth?

PAUL WRITES A LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

Chronological Bible Commentary: "It is assumed that the letter to the Galatian Church was written in A.D. 50, shortly following the Jerusalem Conference.

The subject of the letter parallels that of the conference itself, which pertained to the problems created by those Jewish Christians who were insisting that Gentile converts submit to the rite of circumcision and observe other rituals to which the Jews were accustomed. In his letter, Paul strongly defends the Christian's freedom from the law, and proclaims the New Covenant relationship which Christians have through God's grace...Paul later urges that, as a specially chosen apostle, he received directly from God the good news of freedom in Christ."

Reading Galatians at this time would be very appropriate. Isn't it great to read the Bible in chronological order, it only makes good sense. Now, when someone tries to "Judaize" you, you will know where to tell them to go. No! To Galatians! I love the closing "Bottom Line" of Galatians: "May I never boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is (becoming) a new creation!" Yes, that is what counts. If only we could begin to develop a simple but very informative narrative that would be "our testimony" for people to become aware of what Jesus came here for in the first place. This would be a good

way to "bait our hook" when we go fishing for men. They need to know who Jesus is, and what He did, not what we did. I know a lot of people think that we need to tell them how bad we were and then what He did for us, but I think that the Spirit of God works best when we start with Jesus and then when we have introduced them to Jesus, we can start branching out in other areas such as what He did in my own life. I believe in the "Power of the Word" and using scripture verses in a simple, easy to understand interpretation for people who have never been exposed to the gospel. But have your Bible open so that they can see that that is what it really says, so that they won't think that you are just making it up.

Scripture Prayer from Galatians

Praise You, Father, for making us free because of what Christ has done. Help us to stay free by not falling into the trap of thinking that doing good will make up for our sins. We need Your help, Oh Holy Spirit, to keep us trusting in Christ and to clear away our sins and make us right before God. Amen

DAY TWENTY-FOUR.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....FOURTH WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)
PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Scripture Reading: Acts 16:1-3: "He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek."

WHAT?? Please don't say that this is true!! But it says right there in the Bible! I would like to understand why Paul did that, when he has preached so adamantly against such a thing.

I found the explanation in the Wycliffe Bible Commentary: "Although the young man had been brought up by his mother in the faith of the OT (11 Tim.3:15) the Jews looked upon him as the uncircumcised son of a Greek. On the other hand, Gentiles would have regarded him as a Jew because of his religion. As a man professing adherence to the Jewish religion but who remained an uncircumcised Gentile, Timothy would have been offensive to the Jews Paul met in city after city and to whom he first preached the gospel. Paul circumcised him as an act of expediency and not of religious principle. No conflict exists in the fact that Paul steadfastly refused to circumcise Titus (Gal.2:3); for Titus was altogether a Gentile, and there was no cultural reason to circumcise him. Timothy was circumcised therefore not as a Christian, but as a Jew. This is an application of the principle that Paul expressed in 1 Cor. 9:20: "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law that I might gain them that are under the law."

Where no essential principle was involved, Paul applied the principle of expediency and of conciliation in a way that many later Christians cannot understand or appreciate."

Here is a lesson for us today. Here is a good fishing lesson for us as well. We have to meet people where they are, and not bring them to where we are. This takes a great deal of relying on the Holy Spirit's guidance. It is not that we are supposed to start cussing around someone who cusses and drinking around someone who drinks to gain their favor. But we are to understand where they are coming from and have compassion upon their circumstances and how they got there. Give them hope and all the help they need to reach up to a place that is better for them to be, without any condemnation or judgment. Pray for guidance and understanding of where this person is in their experience. Especially pray for all of our youth. These are dark days for so many who have

lost their way, some have never found it to begin with. Here is a poem I wrote about the youth as the hope for tomorrow's future generation.

THROUGH EYES OF YOUTH

Today our young people have awoken
from children's dreams, to reality shaken.
With vibrant hearts and tender needs,
They see with eyes afresh - new leads!
For answers to today's sick world,
the age-old sickness in which all are hurled.
Into every young generation,
God reveals His true invitation;
For love and peace, shared 'round the earth,
A goal that's been sought since time's own birth.
The youth will lead the throngs of tomorrow,
Will they bring peace and love, or sorrow?
Let's hasten to win the youth of the nation,
For through their eyes, God brings revelation.
"Oh Lord, bring all the youth new vision,
Help them to seek thy will in each decision.
Their hearts are fresh and fertile soil
Lord, plant your seed of faith so loyal.
Help us to care for all our youth
To respect and guide their quests for truth."
Amen

DAY TWENTY-FIVE.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....FOURTH WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

LYDIA IS CONVERTED

Scripture Reading: Acts 16:11-15: "From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis. From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us." Later in Acts 16:40(Living version): "Paul and Silas then returned to the home of Lydia where they met with the believers and preached to them once more before leaving town." Today's story is all about Lydia. She may have been a widow, we do not know. She was baptized with her family, so it could be she had a husband, but most likely she was a widow with children. Her conversion experience was one of complete acceptance of the message and the messengers. She opened up her home to them. From what we know, she later also opened up her home to other believers as well, so that they could all hear more preaching by Paul and Silas before they left town, as the magistrate had ordered them to do. Today's tip for the fishers of men: Be gracious, if someone invites you to their home, go with them, eat their food, even if this is not comfortable for you. If they think enough of you to invite you in, always accept that hospitality. It will put them at ease, that you have found them to be someone of value and someone who you would want to spend time with and perhaps share a meal. And of course, always, open your own home to anyone who comes your way and has a need.

THE MANY ADVENTURES OF PAUL

(so many we must condense)

Scripture Captions: PAUL AND SILAS IMPRISONED- PHILIPPIAN JAILER CONVERTED(Acts 16:19-34) SERMON ABOUT UNKNOWN GOD - MANY JEWS ACCEPT GOSPEL(Acts 17:22-18:11) Moving on rapidly because we are almost to the end of our month's study but not through the Acts of the Apostles! Next on the Chronological Bible's schedule of events is Paul's writing his first letter to the Christians at Thessalonica, somewhere around A.D. 51. CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLE COMMENTARY: "Paul passed through the city of Thessalonica on his way to Corinth. At some point Paul has sent Timothy back

to Thessalonica in order to establish more fully the Thessalonians' faith and to exhort them to steadfastness in the face of persecution. Paul's letter takes on the same purpose. Although Luke's historical record of Paul's visit to Thessalonica mentions only three weeks of confrontation with the Jews in the synagogue, Paul's letter clearly addresses Gentile Christians, probably Greeks, who had been converted from paganism. Paul reminds these new converts that they have turned from idols to worship the true and living God, and he exhorts them to continue in purity, love, and labor for the Lord. He also answers questions which have arisen in their minds regarding the second coming of Christ. After this, there is still some misunderstandings about the second coming so he writes a second letter as well. Now--We pick up again at Acts 18:12-17 and again just touch on the highlights: CHARGES BEFORE GALLIO - BEGINNING OF PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY - APOLLOS IS TAUGHT - DISCIPLES REBAPTIZED (Acts 18:23-19:7) EXORCISTS USE JESUS' NAME - SORCERY GIVEN UP - PAUL ANTICIPATES JOURNEY (Acts 19:11-22) At this time Paul writes his first letter to the Christians in Corinth, it is now A.D. 55-56. "Paul has apparently sent a letter to the church in Corinth by the hands of Timothy, who recently would have passed through Corinth on his way to Macedonia. In a second letter, written perhaps A.D. 55-56 Paul mentions the previous Corinthian letter and indicates that he has received a return letter from the Corinthians which has been brought to Ephesus by a group including Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus. Although the content of Paul's first letter is unknown, the letter which Paul received from the Corinthians evidently posed specific questions regarding marriage and singleness, food sacrificed to idols, spiritual gifts, and certain special contributions which the Corinthians were making. Paul answers these questions in his second letter (traditionally referred to as First Corinthians) and expresses concern about various divisions among the Corinthians which have been reported to Paul by members of Chloe's family. Additionally, Paul addresses some of the particular problems which these Christians are facing in the pagan city of Corinth, including matters pertaining to sexual morality and modesty, and the issue of fellowship with pagans."

Some of the sub-headings we see here are:

RIOT ENSUES - TOWN CLERK CALMS CROWD - PAUL LEAVES EPHESUS
(Acts 19:28-20:1)

Prayer

Lord, thank you for all of these wonderful stories of courageous men of God, and just ordinary people who were willing to listen to the Gospel message and share it again and again with everyone who would listen. In Jesus Name, Amen

DAY TWENTY-SIX.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....FOURTH WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

PAUL'S LAST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

CHRONOLOGICAL COMMENTARY: "The confrontation with Demetrius and the other craftsmen is undoubtedly not the only reason Paul left Ephesus.

Understandably, Paul must be anxious to hear from Titus regarding the Corinthians' reaction to his previous letter, so it appears that Paul decides to go on to Troas, where he hopes to meet with Titus. Perhaps disappointed at not finding Titus there, Paul goes on to Macedonia, where Titus joins him. There Paul writes his final letter to the Corinthians, probably about A.D. 56-57. In the letter he explains why he has not visited them a third time, as he had hoped, and shares with them at great length the sense of fulfillment he has in both his ministry and in them personally. This letter is sent with Titus and others who are returning to Corinth to receive funds being given for relief of the brethren in Judea who are in need of financial assistance.

From the commentary above we skip to the next scripture; "It is not long after the writing of this letter that Paul finally is able to make his promised third visit to Corinth and other parts of Achaia." Acts 20:2-3a: "He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece, where he stayed three months." Commentary continues: "During this short time in Corinth, somewhere around A.D. 56-58, Paul writes a letter to the saints in Rome, telling of his desire to visit them, but indicating his inability to do so at this time. He tells them that he must first go to Jerusalem in order to deliver contributions being sent by the brethren in Macedonia and Achaia. Anticipating that he will eventually be able to visit Rome on his way to Spain, and perhaps feeling the need to establish his credentials before his arrival, Paul first explains his understanding of the gospel, carefully contrasting the gospel with the Law of Moses. Paul then concludes with various practical teachings which necessarily flow out of the gospel message. The theme of Paul's letter is that those who are righteous through faith will be those who truly live. Paul begins by examining the judgment of God and the righteousness of God. Under God's judgment, even the man who thinks himself "righteous" is a sinner without excuse. Under God's righteousness, even the "sinful" man is justified and reconciled to God through grace. Paul then shows how, through Christ, there is freedom from judgment, sin, the law, and even death. Next, Paul discusses the unique problem faced by certain Jews who are having difficulty believing that the God of the Jews could possibly include the Gentiles in his promises made to Abraham. After laying a deep theological foundation, Paul concludes the letter with practical

applications for transforming one's life to Christian service, and for regulating one's conduct in relation to his fellowman, to civil government, and to those brothers and sisters in Christ who may be spiritually weak. The thrust of the letter is the superiority of obedient faith over futile attempts to earn salvation through strict law-keeping. Grace is not seen as a substitute for law, but rather as a higher motivation to obey Gods laws." "As the historical record continues, Paul's plans to leave directly for Jerusalem are abruptly changed, and a detour is made necessary. Paul begins his return to Syria through Philippi, Troas, and Miletus (near Ephesus) and tells them that he anticipates possible imprisonment and persecution upon his return to Jerusalem. Paul undoubtedly also warns them of the danger of falling away from the teaching of Christ—a concern which he will address at length in various letters later in his life. Sadly concluding his close association with the church in Ephesus, Paul leaves resolutely to face whatever outcome awaits him in Syria."

Prayer

Lord, help us to see the great effort that it takes to be Your disciples. Though our calling may not be to go as a missionary to many places in the world, we do have a calling in our own church, and in our own family, and in our own neighborhood. Help us to be diligent and obedient to Your calling on our lives and do the things that need doing in this needy world. Amen

DAY TWENTY-SEVEN.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....FOURTH WEEK

(Devotion).....(Study)

PAUL FACES MORE PERSECUTION

Scripture Captions: AGABUS PROPHECIES IMPRISONMENT - JOURNEY ENDS IN JERUSALEM - JEWS SEIZE PAUL IN TEMPLE - PAUL ARRESTED - PAUL ASKS TO SPEAK - DEFENSE TO THE CROWD - CONSPIRACY TO KILL PAUL - PREPARATIONS FOR TRANSFER - PAUL REMOVED TO CAESAREA (ACTS 21:7-23:35) PAUL'S STATEMENT IN DEFENSE - FELIX POSTPONES DECISION - IN PRISON TWO YEARS - JEWS ASK FOR PAUL - FESTUS HEARS PAUL'S CASE - PAUL APPEALS TO CAESAR (Acts 24:1-25:12)

All this time that Paul is going through trials and imprisonment he is able to speak to many people about the Lord. This is "spreading the Gospel"; when we are squeezed between a rock and a hard place "the oil pours forth" and the rock is Jesus and the hard place is persecution and the oil is—the Holy Spirit! We must realize that the persecution is coming, oh, that we would be ready.

Please read what Paul has to say in his defense in front of King Agrippa in Acts 26:1-23. Half way through his speech, Festus interrupts him and says "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane." Paul continues, "I am not insane, most excellent Festus, what I am saying is true and reasonable. The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do." Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains." (Acts 26:24-29) In verses 30-32: "The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. They left the room, and while talking with one another, they said, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment." Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar." Paul is actually enjoying this I think! He loves to be able to state his case because his case is all about Jesus' case. The more people that hear, the more people whose lives will be changed. Amen!

VOYAGE TO ROME

(could be considered his fourth missionary trip, by accident)

(Chronological Bible Commentary): "The time now approaches for Paul to be sent to Rome to make his appeal to Caesar. Paul is placed in the custody of a Roman officer named Julius, and is accompanied by Luke and Aristarchus, a brother in the Lord from Thessalonica. What follows is Luke's account of their almost disastrous voyage from Caesarea to Rome. Leaving Caesarea, they sail

north along the Syrian coast to Sidon, then west along the southern coast of what is known today as Turkey, past the ancient provinces of Cilicia and Pamphylia, to the port city of Myra in Cysia. At Myra, Paul's entourage obtains passage on an Egyptian ship bound for Italy with both cargo and 276 persons on board. Despite a warning from Paul that trouble awaits them, the crew sets sail and they soon find themselves in difficulty off the east coast of the island of Crete. Attempting to make a safe harbor at Phoenix, on the west coast, the ship is blown off course during a two-week storm and finally breaks apart as it approaches the small island of Malta (Melita), south of Sicily. By God's grace, however, all lives are spared. During the next three months Paul works among the people of Malta and heals many of their diseases. When it is once again safe to sail, the group sets out for Italy on another Egyptian ship which has been waiting out winter storms in the harbor at Malta. The remainder of the voyage is happily uneventful, and Luke records the warm welcome which they receive from the brethren in Italy." (Acts 27:1-28:15)

Continuing commentary: "As Paul arrives in Rome, there is no indication that he appears before any court or government official to press his appeal. Instead, it appears that he is placed under house arrest, being permitted to maintain his own living quarters while being guarded by a Roman soldier. Paul is given the freedom to continue preaching from his place of lodging. Luke thereafter records that Paul invites the local Jewish leaders to his house in order to tell them about Jesus and the kingdom of God. Characteristically, some believe while others do not, a result which Paul attributes to the openness of mind with which a person might listen to the good news about Jesus." (Acts 28:16-31) "During these two years of house arrest, generally believed to be about A.D. 61-63, Paul writes four letters which have come to be known as the Prison Epistles. Two of them, the letter to the Colossians and the letter to Philemon, are probably written at the same time. Although Paul has never visited Colosse, one of his companions during this time, Epaphras, has been preaching in the towns of Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. Epaphras has evidently informed Paul of the pagan secularism which threatens the churches in that region.

In paganism, virtue is not associated with religion. Religious practice is for the purpose of warding off demons and evil ancestors—not for the purpose of becoming a better person. Paul sees that this notion of religion can influence even Christian worship in which slavish adherence to supposed spiritual standards misses the point of one's being transformed into the likeness of Christ. To Paul, the Christian life is more than simply giving up bad habits. It is acquiring a newness of mind which comes from setting your heart and mind on Christ Jesus—who, as Paul says, is the image of the invisible God. Only a person with the mind of Christ can truly overcome the sins of the flesh and live according to the Spirit." Amen

DAY TWENTY-EIGHT.....CHAPTER NINE

NINTH MONTH.....FOURTH WEEK

(Devotion).....(Study)

THE PRISON LETTERS

Chronological Bible Commentary: "As Paul indicated, the letter to the Colossians was to be delivered by Tychicus and Onesimus. Another letter, of special significance to Onesimus, is also being sent. Before coming to Rome and being converted by Paul, Onesimus had been a slave of a Christian named Philemon. Onesimus (whose name means "useful") had run away from Philemon and had evidently taken some money or property belonging to his master. Paul now writes to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus and asks that Philemon accept Onesimus back as a brother in Christ. The letter to Philemon is an insightful study in personal relationships among Christians and contrasts the freedoms that come when one is under bondage to Christ." "A second letter was also to be delivered by Tychicus, but much less is known about its intended destination. Because there is some textual evidence that it was written to the church in Ephesus, the writing has been regarded traditionally as Paul's letter to the Ephesians. That would certainly be consistent with the direction of Tychicus' travel from Rome to Colosse, and of course Paul is no stranger to the Ephesians. But because there are no personal greetings (as might be expected, since the believers in the church there are well-known to Paul) it may be that the letter is one for general circulation to all the churches throughout the region. Whatever its intended destination, the message is universal. Paul writes about the exalted relationship between Christ and the church and the practical results which that knowledge ought to bring into the lives of individual Christians. He begins by summarizing how God's eternal plan is revealed through Christ, then proceeds to teach various lessons regarding the church, personal righteousness, earthly relationships, and the Christian's relationship with God." "While still imprisoned, Paul also reaches out to the Christians in Philippi, with whom he has maintained close ties since his three visits to their city. Paul clearly feels a special relationship to the Philippians, not only because of his close association with them in past years but also because they have often generously contributed to his support. Their latest gifts were brought by Epaphroditus, who had become seriously ill after staying to work with Paul. Paul is sending him back now with this letter to his Philippian brothers. In this letter Paul is writing to a small town congregation in which two women, Euodia and Syntyche, have had a falling out. As is so often the case when personality conflicts develop, their personal animosity is splitting the whole church. Therefore Paul pleads with the two women—and indeed all Christians—to learn to love each other more. Paul bases his appeal on the bedrock example of Christ's own humility in putting others' interests first, even

at great personal cost. The apostle urges them to sacrifice their selfish feelings and to commit themselves to working out their problems, particularly in light of the fact that their pagan neighbors are watching their behavior. He points out that his appeal is not based upon any credentials that he himself might have, but upon the compelling love of Christ which was demonstrated in his life and sacrificial death. This love, says Paul, is true, noble, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy—and the only basis upon which fractured groups or interpersonal relations may be healed.”

Even though Paul was imprisoned, he was able to write these four letters, that have blessed us all down through the ages. They are so universal, that they touch upon every problem of the human heart, showing us God's awesome intentions in all of these acts of the apostles. They are our poster-children for how to be Jesus' disciples and catch men's hearts by delivering them from satan to serve the Living God. All of the letters that were written to the Church are certainly for us today. They are so treasured by all who adore the Lord, that they have been re-printed and expounded upon and interpreted in many languages and styles to help all to understand every marvelous word.

I think that the best lessons we can learn from all of this would be how the world is watching. Yes, the whole world is watching how Christians are behaving. That is the only book some of them read. I think about that a lot. I know that I don't seem too much like a Paul or Peter. But, I pray every day that somehow others will see Jesus in me. It will take a miracle, I know, but with God nothing is impossible.

Scripture Prayer from Philippians

And now, Lord, I pray that You will help us to live clean, innocent lives, as children of God in a dark world full of people who are evil and stubborn. Help us to shine out among them like beacons, holding forth the Word of Life! Whatever happen to us, help us to Rejoice, for everything else is worthless to us when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord! Thank You Father for helping us to become one with Him, teach us to count on Him alone, and give up on everything else. This is the only way we can truly know our Savior, and to experience that mighty power that brought Him back to life again (and us too) and to find out what it really means to suffer and die with Him. In Jesus name, Amen

FOOTPRINTS TO A CLOSER WALK

SEPTEMBER DEVOTIONALS

FISHERS OF MEN

FIFTH WEEK

"IN CONCLUSION"

DAY TWENTY-NINE.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....FIFTH WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

THE END OF THE RACE

Chronological Bible Commentary: "The historical record of Acts comes to an end with Paul's two years in Rome. What is known after this time about the work of Paul and other church leaders must be pieced together from other accounts. However, it appears that Paul may have been released from house arrest and permitted to be free for a period of time, perhaps up to two or three years. During this time Paul evidently travels to Crete, where he leaves Titus, and also again to Ephesus, where he leaves Timothy. Thereafter Paul apparently goes by way of Miletus and Troas on to the region of Macedonia, perhaps by A.D. 63-64." "It is probably from Macedonia that Paul writes to Timothy, who as a young evangelist is facing serious challenges to faith and doctrine within the church at Ephesus. Paul therefore deals with matters of church organization and conduct, particularly regarding prayer; the role of women, qualifications of elders and deacons; support of widows; and proper attitudes for Christian slaves. Paul gives Timothy personal instruction and advice on a variety of matters and warns him concerning both false doctrine and those who would teach false doctrine, whose only goal in teaching is either making money or achieving popularity. The entire letter reflects the tone of a father writing to his son, as indeed Paul apparently regards this young man, Timothy." "From Macedonia, Paul is about to leave for Nicopolis in Greece, where he has decided to spend the winter and where he expects Titus to join him. Before leaving, he writes a letter to Titus, whom he had earlier left in Crete. Titus is apparently facing some of the same challenges as Timothy in his efforts to preserve doctrinal purity and to establish effective local congregations. Therefore Paul's letter to Titus bears a resemblance to his letter to Timothy in its emphasis on false teaching, church organization, and instruction in Christian living." "Although there is no direct biblical record which sheds light on the matter, it appears that Paul may have been rearrested in either Nicopolis or Troas and returned to Rome under a sentence of death. This seems likely, because in a second letter to Timothy, written perhaps A.D. 64-67, Paul once again refers to himself as a prisoner and also mentions having made what was apparently a legal defense. The tone of Paul's last known letter indicates that Paul knows his time is short. Several of his supporters have deserted him in the face of persecution, and Paul wants Timothy to come to him as soon as possible. Tychicus, who has been Paul's messenger on other occasions, is being sent to Ephesus, perhaps to carry this letter and also to relieve Timothy so that Timothy can travel to be with Paul. Paul warns Timothy about the coming of opposition and encourages him to be

strong in defense of the faith. There is a sense of urgency in his exhortations, as if Timothy is Paul's last link with future generations of those to whom the gospel will be entrusted."

LET US PRAY TOGETHER PAUL'S LAST INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CHURCH, THROUGH TIMOTHY: 11 Timothy 3:12-17: " Father, thank you that you have taught us through Paul that all scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. Lord, we are encouraged that we have been given this charge—and to be reminded of this charge before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom: Help us all to Preach the Word! Help us be ready in season and out of season. Help us to convince, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and teaching. Help us to be watchful in all things, to endure affliction, to do the work of the evangelist and fulfill our ministry, for the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. Help us to keep our heads in all these situations, Dear Father, deliver us from every evil work and preserve us for Your heavenly Kingdom, now may the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with our spirits and to God be the Glory forever and ever AMEN

Paul tells Timothy farewell: 11 Tim. 4:6-8: "For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

DAY THIRTY.....CHAPTER NINE
NINTH MONTH.....FIFTH WEEK
(Devotion).....(Study)

THE OTHER LETTERS

Chronological Bible Commentary: "No records indicate whether Timothy was ever able to be with Paul before Paul died. Although the exact date and circumstances of Paul's death are unknown, early historical consensus establishes that Paul died a martyr's death. In any event, the second letter to Timothy apparently was Paul's last."

Now, there were the other letters that were written by James and Jude, the brothers of Jesus, and Peter writes two letters, the unknown author of Hebrews, John's three letters besides his Gospel account and then of course last but never least; Revelation. It is the last day of this study, and I am left with hardly anything to say. I guess you could say I am speechless. I should be, after all, the commentaries have said it all, about those who have really said it all. Nothing seems to have been left out about how we became Christians, how we are to behave as Christians, and what lies ahead for all of us. We began with the Gospel accounts, written by Jesus' disciples. Those who lived, ate, prayed, and traveled with Him. We know that they wrote these accounts perhaps as early as two or three years after Christ ascended to heaven. Just when everything else was exploding—the Holy Spirit came down and filled the believers and from that time on, things have been steadily progressing onward and upward. It is still going—as long as there is breath left in our bodies we will keep on keeping on proclaiming the gospel message, just as Jesus commanded us in His Great Commission: "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age!." Finish the course, win the race, claim your reward at the finish line. Receive your crown of righteousness, and then cast those crowns at the feet of Jesus when we all see Him face to face! The most beautiful thing that I can see up ahead awaiting all of us who believe, is the Holy Jerusalem coming down from heaven. The description of that Huge Building, called the "Lamb's Wife" is so awesome and so precious, well, just read it: Rev. 21:9-14: "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper,

clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." YES! THE TWELVE APOSTLES NAMES WILL BE ON THE TWELVE FOUNDATION STONES ON THE "NEW JERUSALEM!" WOW!

I must conclude this study with the most profound teaching that ties all of this together for all of us who are students of the scriptures and like to rightly divide the Word of God so that things which were hidden will now be revealed: Ephesians 2:19-22: "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean was given her to wear. (fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints) Rev. 19:6-8

Prayer from Ephesians

Holy Lord! When I think of the wisdom and scope of Your plan, Father of all in this great family, I fall to my knees in prayer, giving thanks for those who are already in heaven and for the rest here on earth, I want to pray that out of Your glorious unlimited resources You will give me the mighty strengthening power of the Holy Spirit, and I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in my heart, living in me as I trust Him more and more. In Jesus name,
Amen