

# Daily Readings

*Please note: This week we finish our study of the book of Acts. Read and reread each passage to get a sense of the total dependence these early followers gave to the Holy Spirit. In the month of September, our sermon series will cover much of the last sections of Acts as we looks at the Journeys of Paul.*

**Monday, August 17**— Read Acts 27:1-26 — Paul is now sent to meet with the Emperor. He is accompanied by a Centurion and some soldiers to watch over him. The guard is light, and Paul is able to converse with friends and associates at each port. Luke gives us a description of the weather patterns that indicate that they are traveling very late in the season. Since the ships were not able to withstand heavy storms, winter travel was avoided. Ignoring this conventional wisdom they set sail anyway. The ship is caught in a storm and just as it is about to sink, Paul reveals a vision he has received from an angel telling him that he is destined to meet with the Emperor and that everyone would be safe. Have you ever been in a life-threatening situation and felt a calm, confident peace? Do you think this was an affirmation that God still has something more for you to do?

**Tuesday, August 18** — Read Acts 27:27-44 — Luke tells the story of the shipwreck with great detail. The number of persons on board is reported. The manner in which they made it to shore is told in great detail. It's as if Luke were with Paul during the ship wreck. In some cases he uses "us" and "we" to describe those traveling with Paul. If Luke is not with Paul, then certainly Paul is not without some of his traveling companions who tell the story to Luke in great detail. God never leaves us alone. During these final chapters of Paul's life and ministry, it seems like he is surrounded even more closely with those who support and care for him. How has God surrounded you with those who love, support and encourage you? Who has God put in your life that needs your help and support?

**Wednesday, August 19** — Read Acts 28:1-16 — Luke tells us of the stay in Malta. They share the gospel and see many come to Christ. Paul continues to use every circumstance to share the gospel's power. When the storm season passes, they are able to get passage to Rome. When in Rome, Paul is allowed to live freely, under house arrest waiting for his appointment with the Emperor. Many followers come to be with Paul during this time. Luke tells us that those coming to see Paul gave him courage. Paul's noted lagging courage is very interesting. Up to this point Paul is reported as the strong, faithful, encouraging person of faith. His faith is a strong conduit for the presence of Christ. Now it seems that Paul needs encouragement and ministry from others. What strong person in your life may need you to give them courage?

**Thursday, August 20** — Read Acts 28:17-31 — Luke closes the book of Acts with Paul's realization that the Jews were not going to accept Jesus as the messiah. He quotes Isaiah 6:9, 10 in saying that the Jews would not understand or listen to the truth of the Christ. With this he says, **"Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."** Do you know those who have heard but can not hear? Have there been times in your life when you have been deaf to the gospel of Christ? How is today different?

**Friday, August 21** — Read Acts 27:1 — 28:31 — Read again the section for this week. What is God calling you to do in Christ's ministry for the world?



TRIETSCH

## STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, August 16, 2009

Gospel on Broadway (Week 2 of 4)

### Beauty and the Beast

#### **II Corinthians 5:15-20**

*The Word from the Bible (New Century Version)*

***The love of Christ controls us, because we know that One died for all, so all have died. Christ died for all so that those who live would not continue to live for themselves. He died for them and was raised from the dead so that they would live for him.***

***From this time on we do not think of anyone as the world does. In the past we thought of Christ as the world thinks, but we no longer think of him in that way. If anyone belongs to Christ, there is a new creation. The old things have gone; everything is made new! All this is from God. Through Christ, God made peace between us and himself, and God gave us the work of telling everyone about the peace we can have with him. God was in Christ, making peace between the world and himself. In Christ, God did not hold the world guilty of its sins. And he gave us this message of peace. So we have been sent to speak for Christ. It is as if God is calling to you through us. We speak for Christ when we beg you to be at peace with God.***

#### **The Love of Christ for All**

The primary reason Paul cannot live for himself is his keen apprehension of the love of Christ, revealed in Christ's death for all. The verb translated **we are convinced** recalls a conviction formed in the past. With this in mind, we can assume that Paul is referring to the first experience with Christ that brings conversion. From his conversion "formed in the past," new revelations are given to strengthen our relationship with Christ. Possibly Paul's first experience of the risen Christ led to the acknowledgment that the salvation of Jesus was for all.

**5:14b-15.** — In the phrase **therefore all have died**, Paul is referring to the death we all suffer as humans. Christ has died on our behalf, to repair the damage done by our separation from God. (I Corinthians 11:25; Romans 5:21; Galatians 3:13-14)

The double meaning of this phrase points to another death. When we reject self for the sake of God, we experience new life and resurrection. Paul is insisting that the consequence of Christ's death and resurrection is that Christians are bound **to live no longer for self but for him**. (Romans 6:6-11; Galatians 6:14; Colossians 3:3)

**5:16-17.** — As a result of the redirection of his own life, Paul claims he is now unable to judge anyone from a **human point of view**, literally **"according to the flesh."** Before his conversion, Paul was a prosecutor for the Jewish High Counsel. He would prosecute and judge those who had violated Jewish law, especially the traditions of Jesus' teaching and claims as messiah Paul viewed as blasphemous. The cross was a shameful thing, God's curse (Galatians 1:13-14; 3:13b). But after becoming a follower of Christ, Paul was convinced that God's new creation

had begun. As he wrote elsewhere, those who are in Christ Jesus no longer think or act according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit (Romans 8:1-8).

## ***The Sacrificial Love of Christ brings our Reconciliation***

In the new creation as in the beginning in creation, all things are the work of God. ***In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself.*** This reconciliation makes possible the overcoming of all that is rebellious concerning creation. Because of Christ, the brokenness of the world does not bring destruction but rather new life and a new creation through the work of Christ. Paul views the action of God through Jesus Christ as necessary because of human revolt and humanity’s addiction to self. God is the reconciler, even though God is the one against whom humanity has set itself.

Paul realizes the gravity of the human situation in the gospel of the crucified Christ — our hopeless complicity in Adam’s sin, banishment from God’s presence, subjection to God’s wrath, as well as the wonder of God’s reconciling work in Jesus Christ.

In Romans 5:1-11, Paul refers to justification by grace as the wonder of divine forgiveness. The event which made all this possible for humanity was the death of Christ. God’s unconditioned forgiveness and gracious act of sacrificial love, was shown at great cost.

## ***Application***

The continuing theme of Paul’s letters is the sacrificial, transforming love of Christ that is offered for all. In II Corinthians 5, Paul states it clearly, ***“in Christ we are a new creation, the old has passed away and the new has come.”***

None of us are beyond the reach of God’s sacrificial love. The beast within us is transformed by the power of love. Hope is born out of our willingness to give ourselves selflessly for others.

## ***Guiding Questions for this week’s sermon***

- What is the beast within you that is blocking God’s place in your life?
- Are you aware of your need for change?
- Can you see yourself in Christ’s offering of himself?

## ***Beauty and the Beast overview***

*Beauty and the Beast* is widely considered the best animated Disney feature — the only animated film ever to be nominated for a Best Picture Academy Award and winner of the Golden Globe award for Best Picture in 1991. Based on the classic French fairy tale, it tells the story of Belle, an intelligent young woman scorned by her townspeople for being a bookworm, weary of fighting off the advances of the arrogant Gaston, and dreaming of escape. When her father gets lost in the woods and captured by the forbidding Beast, a once-handsome prince turned into a monster by a witch, Belle goes off to rescue him.

Taken with her, the Beast agrees to release Belle’s father if she agrees to stay with him forever. Initially repulsed, Belle soon finds much to appreciate in the Beast’s hidden, tender nature. The Beast’s servants — a clock, a teapot, and a candlestick — see Belle as their salvation: if the Beast and a woman fall in love before his 21st birthday, he will be free from the curse. We see the transforming work of sacrificial love as Belle gives herself for her father and later the Beast risks his life, being wounded as he saves Belle from a mortal attack by wolves. (Partially taken from the Don Kaye review in All Movie Guide)

The story of love’s triumph over the dark side of human existence is as old as time. Originating around the 5th century in an oral form and then published first in France in 1740. The animated 1991 version was the fifth time the story had been put on film. In 1999, the musical version of the story opened on Broadway running consecutively until July 2007.

## ***The Gospel on Broadway***

The image of the Beast represents the distorted image of God within each of us. We are made to serve each other and to serve God. Yet, there is a beast within each of us, wanting to take the place of God and serve only self. There is something not quite right within us.

The Beast takes different forms. For some, it is a destructive behavior that blocks our ability to be genuinely human. For others, it is a self-consumed approach to living that forces others and their needs away from us — creating a lonely existence.

Traditionally, this self-centered behavior is often identified with the “seven deadly sins.” Lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride, which if left untended, will consume all that is in and around us leaving nothing. The Bible teaches us that God does not give up on us. The *Beauty* of God’s sacrificial love transforms the *Beast* within us – returning us to the God-intended person we were meant to be – genuinely human. While we may think the Bible is full of saints, in reality, the Bible is the story of sinners being transformed by the beauty of God’s sacrificial love.

## ***Prayer Focus***

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God. We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying. Remember... someone is praying for you.

This morning, let the spirit of God lead you in your prayers. Some prayers will come immediately to mind because of a known need. Let other names come to mind, pray for these persons even if you do not know why God is leading you to pray for them. Spend time counting your blessings and giving thanks to God for all God’s good gifts. If there is a difficult situation in your life right now, we invite you to release it to God during this worship service. It will be there after the benediction.

Please consider making the following part of your prayers this morning:

***Lord, guide my thoughts as I hear your word today... Show me that, no matter what kind of person I’ve been or what I’ve done, in you I always have the hope of changing for the better, of making a fresh start.***

***I pray for our nation and its leaders as it struggles to find its way economically and socially***

***For our world torn by war and strife***

***For our community and the challenges each household faces***

***For our Church –***

***That God will lead our church deeper into prayer***

***That God will lead each person here into deeper relationship with Christ through worship and study***

***That God will use our the coming concerts as an opportunity to reach others for Christ***

***That God will continue to provide adult volunteers for the children’s Sunday school***

***That God will bless and lead our church leaders, pastors, and staff***

***That God will lead every participant into a deeper walk with Jesus***

***In Jesus’ name, Amen.***