

WEEK NINE

—Sunday—

You know my heart — I bow before you. I need your assurance — I can find it in this time of worship.



PRAISE GOD FOR WHO HE IS

“Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; Thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress” (Psa. 17:3). There are several marvelous qualities of yourself that I want to appreciate fully:

(1) You “prove” or test, or declare genuine or faulty the hearts of men. The heart is the mind, will, emotions and conscience — essentially the soul of man. (2) You are not troubled by fatigue therefore need no rest and night is the same as day with you. But when man is tired and weak and resting you come to see if he yet trusts in you. Or is your nocturnal visit to offer strength and help? (3) Man can be and is weighed in your scales — heated in your crucible. David is speaking of consistency, not perfect obedience, when he says “and shalt find nothing,” i.e., nothing lacking when David’s heart was tried, it was found trusting in and faithful to you. (4) Your word is the criterion for sinning or not sinning, i.e., we either keep it and do not transgress or we fail to keep it and sin.

PRAISE GOD FOR WHAT HE MEANS TO ME

I am tempted by Satan to simply give up! To *prove* my heart! But when I remember the test is only for the basic desire to love you and trust you, not to perfectly obey you, I am greatly encouraged. What happens when you visit me in the night? You will find me quite unresponsive — I am asleep. Dear God, I want to be able to openly welcome you at all times. Break through — penetrate fully my subconsciousness. Dear Lord, I do want to say with the psalmist, “Thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing.” No rebellion, no resistance, no hesitancy, no unwillingness — you can find much full of fault, but you will find a heart open and willing. If *purpose* keeps me from sinning, i.e., with my mouth, then indeed I do purpose. My mouth is the opening for sin. Dear God, I do purpose; deepen it!

How do you personally relate to the testing of God, and God who is Examiner? Speak it out or write it out.

CONFESSION OF SIN

Most of the above was a confession of sin. Dear Lord, I cannot even know my heart; it is too deceitful. You alone know it. However, I *can* and *do* control the input of my mind. I *can* and *do* control the decisions of my will. I *can* and *do* respond emotionally to what I understand and decide. I *can* and *do* program my conscience to react in approval or disapproval. I can therefore control the content of my heart. Right now I ask for forgiveness for terrible deficiencies in this area. I ask for the divine wisdom I need to best use the input.

“Pride in what is seen.” Dear Lord, what would I do if I could not “show and tell” with people? Help me to work for you and let people see for themselves! This is a serious juvenile sin. Forgive me!

What personal sins do you want to confess? We must speak them to remove them. Do it! Now.

SING A PRAYER TO GOD

Crown Him with many crowns,
The Lamb upon His throne;
Hark! how the heav’nly anthem drowns
All music but its own!
Awake, my soul, and sing
Of Him who died for thee;
And hail Him as thy matchless King
Through all eternity.

Open your hymn book and sing the rest of the verses — or even sing another prayer song.

HIS WORD

³³Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. “For the last fourteen days,” he said, “you have been in constant suspense and gone without food — you haven’t eaten anything.” ³⁴Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.” ³⁵After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶They were all encouraged and ate some food

themselves. ³⁷Altogether there were 276 of us on board. ³⁸When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

³⁹When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could.

⁴⁰Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. — *Acts 27:33-40, NIV*

READ HIS WORD TO HIM

Paul included you in the eating of the bread. I'm sure you never left after thanksgiving. Indeed you were present at the time and after the time or Paul would never have paused to acknowledge the source of all we are and have. How confident was Paul! What a source of strength and encouragement he was. It was all because he believed you! Luke was there as a participant in all that occurred. The grain would be of no use to anyone — it was only a burden. How totally inadequate are all our provisions unless you are in them. Simply because you promised they *would* run aground does *not* mean they need not do all they could to make it possible.

READ HIS WORD FOR YOURSELF

Can I position myself alongside one of the occupants of this ship? It has been two weeks of seasickness and hunger, of wonder and despair, of prayer and brief conversation. But there is someone who has not reacted as we have — his name is Saul of Tarsus or Paul the apostle. Why is he so different? Somehow he has identified with his God. Was Luke as confident as Paul? We believe he was. It is all working out even as Paul said it would. How wonderfully subtle are all your moves! It is always this way. A circumstance occurs which we could attribute to you. But there is *always* another explanation. If we listen we will soon hear the voice of humanism.

It is so important that you pause in his presence and either audibly or in written form tell him all his word means to you.

READ HIS WORD IN THANKSGIVING

(1) Thank you for fourteen days of sharpening up our sensibilities to receive the message of our Lord. A fourteen day fast can be a great conditioner. (2) Thank you for the common sense and spiritual emphasis combined in Paul. (3) Thank you for the reiteration of your promise. (4) Thank you for Paul's boldness in the midst of unbelievers (or were they now wondering about his God?). (5) Thank you for your direction to the island of Malta.

Give yourself to your own expression of gratitude — write it or speak it!

READ HIS WORD IN MEDITATION

"... they hoisted the foresail to the wind and make for the beach." There are indeed times in life when

decisions must be made and carried out regardless of the consequences. What are the feelings of the occupants of this ship? What about the prisoners? What of the soldiers? Who made up the 276 on board? Were most of them prisoners? All of life becomes very much like this voyage to Rome: (1) We are all on this journey — like it or not. (2) We encounter the unexpected in so many areas of living. (3) We know God's messenger has given us assurances and promises — but somehow in the storm we do not hear him. (4) There are times when we simply cut away the anchors and hoist the foresail to the wind and make for the beach. We cannot say that every time God delivered us safely without the loss of one. But we can say our voyage was (and is) constantly under his care.

READ HIS WORD FOR PETITIONS

Luke reports from firsthand observation on a desperate situation. We wonder what he prayed? Perhaps he prayed: (1) Continue to give Paul the practical courage he has now. (2) Thank you for his humble boldness in the presence of this company of people. (3) We are so glad we have food to give us the physical stamina we will need. (4) Thank you for the assurance of the angel's message of safety for us all. (5) Help me Lord, I can't swim. (6) Give us courage to do all we can and leave the rest to you.

READ HIS WORD AND WAIT — LISTEN — GOD SPEAKS

In the hours of the early morning speak to us: (1) "It is always appropriate to thank me for food." (2) "The promise of my protection does not eliminate your need for work." (3) "Men will do almost anything to save their lives."

INTERCESSION FOR THE LOST WORLD

The Caribbean — Points for prayer: (1) *The relative stagnation of the Church* in the Caribbean is cause for deep concern. Once Caribbean missionaries played a major role in evangelizing West Africa. Why not again? In many churches there is much enthusiasm, but less depth and little outreach. There is much religion without personal faith in Christ, and various cults are making rapid inroads. (2) *The difficult economic situation* in most islands is a great challenge. Limited financial resources cripple church development and outreach. There are simply not the personnel with the training to cope with the serious moral slide and breakdown in family life. In some islands 85% of children are born out of wedlock. Often Christian leaders are part of the problem.

SING PRAISES TO OUR LORD

When morning gilds the skies,
My heart awakening cries:
May Jesus Christ be praised;
Alike at work and prayer
To Jesus I repair:
May Jesus Christ be praised.

WEEK NINE

—Monday—

*Please light my candle — I do so need
your illumination; your warmth. I look
forward to a real time of renewal.*



PRAISE GOD FOR WHO HE IS

“For Thou wilt light my candle; the Lord God will enlighten my darkness” (Psa. 18:28). How all men need to know this! All men are lights. How sad — more than sad — that some men, most of the world has never found the One to give them the fire of life! The new birth does just this. The renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) is the fulfillment of this beautiful verse. You do not want to leave one man to wander in darkness. It is your intention that every man will provide his own light, after you have given him the source of such light. The Holy Spirit has regenerated us at the time we were born of the water. He has given us his word to enlighten all the dark recesses.

PRAISE GOD FOR WHAT HE MEANS TO ME

Just for me — for my candle, lamp, spirit, my darkness. Dear Lord, I do believe you are the total source of all light — my spirit has been set on fire, fused with divine power to be the light of my life. How beautiful a thought: each life is lighted by you, but no two lights shine just the same. Each offers a charming new light or appearance; each enlightens the same areas but each in a new and bright way. Others are helped when they see what you have done for others. We cannot defuse the light or shine in the darkness of this world system as someone else can. But we have a lamp or light or candle they do not have and you have asked us to shine. It is *our* light and *your* light. For my individual darkness there is no light at all apart from you. Praise your name I claim your light for every dark place in my life today!

How do you personally relate to the light of God, and God who is Light? Speak it out or write it out.

CONFESSION OF SIN

Oh, wonderful Father, how is it we so often forget? I *know* why! We do not keep the switch on. It is in an open connection with heaven that your power can enlighten our lives — I refer to prayer and Bible study

and to sincere repentance of seeking false lights. There is in them no light at all. Forgive me! It is in the meditation on your word, day and night, that my darkness flees away! Light is equal to the absence of darkness — turn on the light! How I do want to absorb every word you have given me! All of it is light!

*What personal sins do you want to confess?
We must speak them to remove them. Do it! Now.*

SING A PRAYER TO GOD

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation
By water and the word:
From Heav'n He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died.

*Open your hymn book and sing the rest of the
verses — or even sing another prayer song.*

HIS WORD

⁴¹But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf. ⁴²The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. ⁴³But the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. ⁴⁴The rest were to get there on planks or on pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land in safety. —Acts 27:41-44, NIV

READ HIS WORD TO HIM

Dear Lord, how often do men run aground? How often are lives broken to pieces? But such is an analogy not at all a part of the text except in my own imagination. The surf still pounds on the shore, on the beach at Malta. How many of the 276 were saved? All of them were from the Adriatic Sea, but how

many were saved from the lake of fire? Dear Lord, you know. I would like to think Paul baptized all who needed you in the Adriatic waters before they left Malta. Once again, thou Lord knowest. I do not. All the prisoners owed their very lives to Paul. Why was Paul so valuable to Julius? Was it because Paul had a spot on the agenda of Nero or had Paul so befriended this centurion that he did not want to harm him? I am so glad to acknowledge your constant presence: "In the covert of thy presence thou hidest them from the plots of men" (Psa. 31:20).

READ HIS WORD FOR YOURSELF

I owe my life to others: I owe my life to the care my dear mother and father gave me when I was a child at home. I owe my life to a stranger who saw me drowning in the Pacific Ocean and jumped in and saved my life. I owe my life to the carefulness of several bus drivers who delivered me to school and back home, to hundreds of pilots of planes, to the peace of our country established by those in high places. Most of all I owe my life to the preacher who first told me the good news and my dear wonderful Savior, who saved me from hell to heaven, from death to life. I confidently expect to reach that eternal shore.

READ HIS WORD IN THANKSGIVING

This text is indeed a source of gratitude: (1) Thank you for every ship of life that has run aground within range of help by those who care. (2) Thank you that we can show those whose lives are being broken to pieces Someone who can put it back together again. (3) Thank you for every soldier who this very day is in the armed forces to protect our country from destruction — from within and without. (4) Thank you for men like Paul who love your word more than life itself. (5) Thank you for some of the strange ways you have saved us from ourselves and others. (6) Thank you for the testimony of those who were saved from the sea according to Paul's promise. (7) Thank you for the research on the island of Malta that establishes the accuracy of Luke's record.

READ HIS WORD IN MEDITATION

"In this way everyone reached the land in safety." In the first century only "some" could swim. No doubt real fear gripped the hearts of many, many on board that ship. The very thing that was going to be their place of death — the ship — was going to furnish the means of saving them. The storm that all but cost them their lives was now going to break the ship up into a form that would save their lives. How mercifully good God was to every one of them. This has not been the record of ten thousand ships that have sunk at sea. We want to meditate on this account for what it is — not what it is not. The frantic efforts of these men (and women?) to reach the land reminds me of our efforts to get safely through many a trying experience. We did not get there as planned — and we lost a great deal — but we are safe and alive and there is yet another day ahead of us, and you are in it all.

READ HIS WORD FOR PETITIONS

Saved at last! Were prayers prayed on the way to the shore? We can find requests in this text: (1) Extremity produces petitions: Paul: "I honor your word and praise you for your mercy." (2) Luke: "How beyond human understanding are your ways of preserving our lives." (3) Aristarchus: "Give me a deeper commitment to your love." (4) Paul: "Open the heart of Julius that he might understand just who Jesus is." (5) Luke: "Lord, help me to remember all of this for my second treatise." (6) Aristarchus: "What an example Paul is. Help me be more like him."

Please, please remember these are prayers — speak them — reword them!

READ HIS WORD AND WAIT — LISTEN — GOD SPEAKS

In this life and death situation speak to me: (1) "All of life will one day break up; be sure you have Someone who can save you." (2) "I will save other men because of you." (3) "I want all men to be saved."

INTERCESSION FOR THE LOST WORLD

Eastern Europe — Point for prayer: Praise God for the growth of the Church in Eastern Europe. In the midst of suffering and trials, the Holy Spirit has worked in many areas. God reigns today — even behind the Iron Curtain! a) *Evangelical believers have ultimately increased* in every country of the region since the coming of Communism, with the possible exception of Albania and Bulgaria. b) *Young people* are turning to Christ in large numbers in parts of the USSR, Poland and Romania despite years of constant atheistic indoctrination, and the very real threat this brings to their future prospects for further education and employment. c) *The infamous "Gulags" or prison camps* have been places of intense suffering and martyrdom for many believers; but through them prisoners have been won to Christ and large areas of Siberia evangelized. d) *The thrilling growth of the church in Romania and parts of the USSR* has been with touches of revival too. In both lands the pressure of the authorities on the churches has been particularly severe. e) *The widespread impact of Christian radio programs* has been remarkable. One well-known radio preacher has an estimated audience of four million or more every time he speaks!

SING PRAISES TO OUR LORD

Praise ye the Lord, the Almighty,
the King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him,
for He is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear,
Now to His temple draw near;
Join me in glad adoration!

WEEK NINE

—Tuesday—

*The enemy is without and within —
renew my strength — reinforce my love
and commitment to you.*



PRAISE GOD FOR WHO HE IS

“For by thee I have run through a troop and by my God have I leaped over a wall” (Psa. 18:29). This is the response of the psalmist to your character, to your essential person. Several rather obvious thoughts present themselves to us: (1) We are in a warfare. The enemy troops are near enough to hurt us. (2) Deathless courage was given to David — perhaps this describes several battles you helped him win. (3) David did not have promised that he would split the troop — he charged and let you handle the result. (4) The situation is desperate — it calls for risk — put your life on the line (the battle line). Does all of the above describe my battle with Satan? Indeed it does! I would that all men would see the following qualities of yourself from this text: (1) Nearness — you are in the battle with us. (2) Knowledge — i.e., you *know* what is happening; you see *all* the circumstances. You *know* where the enemy is weak. (3) Power and strength not our own that you share with us!

PRAISE GOD FOR WHAT HE MEANS TO ME

What troop shall I break through? Over which wall shall I leap? Troops and walls show up every day! There will be no problem with troops and walls *if* I relate to you in the way I want to! Dear Lord, I want to intimately identify with your nearness. You are right here, right now! Blessed be your wonderful presence. I want to trust in your perspective. You see all that occurs. Nothing, utterly nothing, is hidden from your omniscience, absolute knowledge. Oh, my Father, I cast myself upon you and rest in your knowledge. At the same time, as I see opportunity, I will take it. I will lay my life behind my decisions — break a way for me with your Almighty Power!

How do you personally relate to the empowering of God, and God who is our strength?

CONFESSION OF SIN

What a problem I have in separating presumption

from boldness or faith! Am I saying what seems presumptuous to man is faith with you? Dear Lord, I want to *know*, I want to be humble-minded, to prefer others before myself. I want the honor and praise to go to you! How often such is *not* the case — help me! I claim the wisdom I need (James 1:5ff.). If I move ahead and let men see the works and not the worker, they will glorify you! Thank you!

“Disrespect.” What you respect I do not want to disrespect. You respect age, little children, public law offices, law and order, per se! In all these areas I set a guard by your help.

What personal sins do you want to confess? We must speak them to remove them. Do it! Now. There is no one else you have sinned against more than God. Tell him so!

SING A PRAYER TO GOD

True-hearted, whole-hearted, faithful and loyal,
King of our lives, by Thy grace we will be;
Under the standard exalted and royal,
Strong in Thy strength we will battle for Thee.
Peal out the watchword! silence it never!
Song of our spirits, rejoicing and free;
Peal out the watchword! loyal forever,
King of our lives, by Thy grace we will be.

Open your hymn book and sing the rest of the verses — or even sing another prayer song.

HIS WORD

28 Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. ²The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. ³Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. —Acts 28:1-3, NIV

READ HIS WORD TO HIM

How gladly do I take up this word. Dr. Luke was in the water. Those who could swim were the first on

shore. Were he and Paul two of the early ones? This was not the first shipwreck of Paul — perhaps Luke was with him. “A night and a day” Paul had spent in deep waters (II Cor. 11:25b). Perhaps it was in a cave or on the open beach the islanders had built a fire. Did they also have food prepared for them? (I am trying as best I can to see this incident as you do.) Was it in November? I would like so much to visit Malta in November — 1922 years later. But with you there are no yesterdays or tomorrows — only one eternal *now*, so this is happening now as all other events of man’s short sojourn.

A snake came from the brushwood as Paul tried to feed the fire. This is the only form of “taking up serpents” I find in your word. It was not taken up on purpose, but by accident. You had a purpose larger than a poisonous snake bite. It did become a sign to the unbelieving islanders.

READ HIS WORD FOR YOURSELF

Just for me — yes, yes. Probably the first question asked to those who met them on the beach was, “Where are we?” How very different this whole story could have been! There are several possible alternatives that we will not postulate — the same can be said for my life. I have not just survived a shipwreck (except vicariously with Paul) but I do want to ask others, myself, and most of all the only One who really knows: “Where am I?” There are so many things that could have happened to me, perhaps *should* have happened, but they didn’t. I am here; I am safe; I am saved, but right now I want to look out and see life as I have never seen it before and ask you, “Where am I?” There are several areas in which I want to make inquiry: (1) Where am I in my personal devotions. (2) Where am I in my personal knowledge of your word? (3) Where am I in real genuine evangelism. (4) Where am I as a father and grandfather? (5) Where am I as a husband? Dear Lord, I purpose to find out!

READ HIS WORD IN THANKSGIVING

(1) Thank you for the sure knowledge of your word that tells us just where we are at all times. (2) Thank you for unexpected kindness from unexpected sources. (3) Thank you for fire and water and their many uses. (4) Thank you for kindness from those we would expect the very opposite. (5) Thank you for shelter from the weather, for warmth from the cold. (6) Thank you for Paul who wanted to help anyone at anytime in anyway he could. (7) Thank you for the miracles of your record, all of which move us to believe in what you have said.

READ HIS WORD IN MEDITATION

“... a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand.” A viper called Satan has done the same thing to us. How often has that same snake fastened its poison fangs in your heart? Even when we were trying to do good, evil is present. When we are in the act of helping others we are hurt by the devil. Why? Why? Because hidden in all our efforts to do good,

deceit, selfish ambition, pride, the love of money are always at least potentially present. Snakes do not attack them who do not disturb them. It should be a comfort for us to know we have bothered the old serpent. Our response should be that of Paul. He made no show of it; he simply shook it off into the fire. Since this will be the ultimate end of the devil and his angels we can at least consign him there. We need suffer no more permanent injury than Paul — our great physician is able to heal.

Pause — wait — think — then express yourself in thoughtful praise or thanks.

READ HIS WORD FOR PETITIONS

In trying to help others you yourself are hurt. How shall we pray? (1) Since your hand is upon me why should I be afraid? (2) We have all found ourselves in a similar situation. Open the eyes of those who oppose you as to just who is innocent or guilty. (3) Deliver me from the serpent hid in some very ordinary pursuits. (4) Help me to be prepared for the evil the heat of your word drives out. (5) Thank you for the promised protection of Mark 16:17,18. (6) Thank you for the supernatural necessary to confirm your word through Paul. (7) May I be as ready to help in the mundane matters of life as was Paul.

Right here add your personal requests — and his answers.

READ HIS WORD AND WAIT — LISTEN — GOD SPEAKS

What do you say to me from these verses? (1) “There are many islanders who would gladly hear the good news if you would take it to them.” (2) “There are always problems when you try to help people.” (3) “There are snakes today who cannot stand the heat of truth.”

INTERCESSION FOR THE LOST WORLD

Eastern Europe — Points for prayer: (1) *The unreached* a) *Albania* is one of the least evangelized countries in the world. There is no known evangelical witness. b) *Large areas of Yugoslavia and Poland* are without an evangelical congregation. c) *Numerous East European minorities* remain largely unreached — the Jews, Muslims and most ethnic groups in Yugoslavia. d) *Numerous peoples in the USSR* are without a known Christian witness. This is especially true for Central Asian Muslim peoples and Siberian minorities. (2) [Note: *The events in Eastern Europe in 1989* took many people by surprise. Even now it is hard to tell what will be the ultimate result, but God knows!]

SING PRAISES TO OUR LORD

Praise ye the Father! for His loving kindness,
Tenderly cares He for His erring children;
Praise Him, ye angels, praise Him in the heavens,
Praise ye Jehovah!

WEEK NINE

—Wednesday—

*What a beautiful verse is before me:
"Your gentleness has made me great."
Make this clear to me in your closet!*



PRAISE GOD FOR WHO HE IS

"Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation; and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great" (Psa. 18:35). The qualities of our God are here set before us in a most poignant manner: (1) You have given all men (who want it) the protection of your salvation. Behind your shield we are safe from the fiery darts of the evil one. Who would not want the safety of salvation from the shaft of justice? If we stand unprotected before justice we are dead! (2) How weary we become in the long days of conflict! How good to hide beneath the protection of your strong right arm. Indeed we could easily transfer this figure to our Lord as the right arm of our God. (3) Your gentleness has made us great. This is a mother or wife-like quality. It is the softness and tender kindness in the midst of hurt that gives us strength and resources we never knew were ours.

PRAISE GOD FOR WHAT HE MEANS TO ME

Just for today: Just for today I want to find in you a hiding place, a shelter of safety, a shield of salvation. I need to be saved from much more than eternal hell. You are for me right now my deliverance! You are for me today holding me up and renewing my strength. It is your strong right arm underneath to lift up when I fall, to give me the strength to fight through just this one more battle! Praise your name! Most of all it is your gentleness that has made me great. I am not at all great by evaluation of talent, by power of promotion, by record of accomplishments, but "through your gentleness" all greatness has been placed within each of us by you. It is in the quietness of love and tenderness of personal care that such is released for expression.

How do you personally relate to the protective love of God, and God who is your Shield?

CONFESSION OF SIN

Dear Lord, there are those around me who are hoping for a gentle look, touch or word. Their greatness is

also released through this beautiful quality. Help me to be like you. Forgive me, I have been selfish and hurtful without much cause. I have been perverse and hard. Forgive, forgive me! My dear Lord had more than enough reason to be hard and harsh, and yet he was gentle, kind, thoughtful of others. Paul could have treated the Thessalonians in a stern and unyielding manner, but he says he was gentle as he worked among them even as a mother with her children. Dear Lord, I have less reason to behave in any way but gentle, i.e., where I compare what faces me and what Paul endured.

"Fearfulness." Is it a sin to be afraid? Yes, yes, when God has promised victory, it is a sin to be defeated. Dear Lord, I enter as a victor, not the victim!

What personal sins do you want to confess? We must speak them to remove them. Do it! Now. There is no one else you have sinned against more than God. Tell him so!

SING A PRAYER TO GOD

Savior, Thy dying love Thou gavest me,
Nor should I aught withhold, Dear Lord from Thee:
In love my soul would bow,
My heart fulfill its vow,
Some off'ring bring Thee now,
Something for Thee.

HIS WORD

"When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, 'This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live.'" *But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall over dead, but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.*

"There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably.

—Acts 28:4-7, NIV

READ HIS WORD TO HIM

Dear Lord, I do so very, very much appreciate all your word is saying to me. My purpose here is to read it back again to you and attempt to share your viewpoint. What appears as a large matter and full of importance is sometimes small and insignificant to you. It is not that you ignore the serpent fastened in Paul's flesh, but your perspective turns the incident in an entirely different light. First, the person must be accepted and then his message. This will become a means to that end. Since the islanders thought Paul a god, they would listen to him. I'm sure you didn't put the snake in the brush, or did you? How unusual that Publius was so hospitable — 276 guests?!!! Or was it only Paul and the soldiers? You know and one day I will.

Please express your response to this beautiful text. Put your expression in your own prayer diary.

READ HIS WORD FOR YOURSELF

Yes, yes, Dr. Luke was there to report first hand as a participator what happened. I would like to take his place or a place with him. Isn't it wonderful to see how God works? It is exciting to be a part of the moving of God's spirit in the circumstances of life. I know how deadly is the bite of that particular snake. There are hundreds of dead victims to confirm this fact. Paul will die, but not from a snake bite. I do remember something our Lord said about this! "These *signs* will follow them that believe: . . . they will pick up serpents." Paul had just done it — it was a sign (and advertisement) to make the Maltese wonder — which they surely did. Their faith in you came from the words Paul spoke to them. Dear Lord, I believe, not because of the signs but because of your word. These signs confirmed my faith, but did not produce it.

READ HIS WORD IN THANKSGIVING

Indeed I do: (1) Thank you for the innate sense of justice that prevails in many cultures. (2) Thank you for Paul's immediate reliance upon you for your direction in his life. Did Paul know he would not die from the snake bite? It would seem to be a matter of indifference to him. (3) Thank you for the honest effort of the islanders to seek an explanation that included the supernatural. (4) Thank you for Publius who had a wide influence for our Lord when he became a believer. (5) Thank you for the marvelous preservation of your word down through two millennia. (6) Thank you for the same Lord — the same faith and the same hope we have today as Paul had then.

Give yourself to your own expression of gratitude — write it or speak it!

READ HIS WORD IN MEDITATION

"He welcomed us to his house and for three days entertained us hospitably." Why would this man do this? We can pose two or three possibilities: (1) It was customary and just a part of what would happen to any strangers who landed on Malta. This is not a very

real possibility, and most especially if he was entertaining 276 people. (2) He did it for the tribune who was with Paul as a representative from Rome. Since his island was under the rule of Rome, he felt it was to his distinct advantage. (3) He was told of Paul's encounter with the viper. We need to remember that Paul's life story was written by a doctor who is an eyewitness to what happened. Publius wanted help for his father who was sick. He received it.

READ HIS WORD FOR PETITIONS

The men of Malta were superstitious. Dear Lord, I want to be full of faith. (1) Lord, if I received justice it would not be heaven. Thank you for your mercy. (2) Satan has fastened his fangs in me more than once. I am glad for the deliverance of Satan back into the fire. (3) What a wonder to be delivered from death in trespasses and sins. (4) Thank you that we are sons of God, and the best is yet to come. (5) Give me the courage and contact to pray for those in high places. (6) Thank you for the kindness that fills the hearts of some who do not even know you.

READ HIS WORD AND WAIT — LISTEN — GOD SPEAKS

In these few verses speak to me: (1) "Judge not by appearances, but by truth." (2) "People are ready to accept feelings before faith." (3) "What do ye more than some unbelievers?"

INTERCESSION FOR THE LOST WORLD

Eastern Europe — Point for prayer: *Missionary outreach*. The Great Commission is just as valid for Eastern Europe. The ways and means of obeying His command may have to be unusual. Pray for: a) *An increase in missionary vision among believers in these lands*. Survival rather than cross-cultural outreach has been more prominent in the past. Many students from unreached ethnic groups and closed lands study in the cities of Eastern Europe. Numerous ethnic minorities in the USSR and Eastern Europe can only be reached by local believers, but few have the understanding or experience for such ministry. b) *An increase in dedicated workers from the Free World* committed to the evangelization of this vast region, and effective means of deploying them in vital ministries. c) *An effective long-term strategy* to evangelize, plant churches and provide the Scriptures for every unreached people group, area, city and country in Eastern Europe.

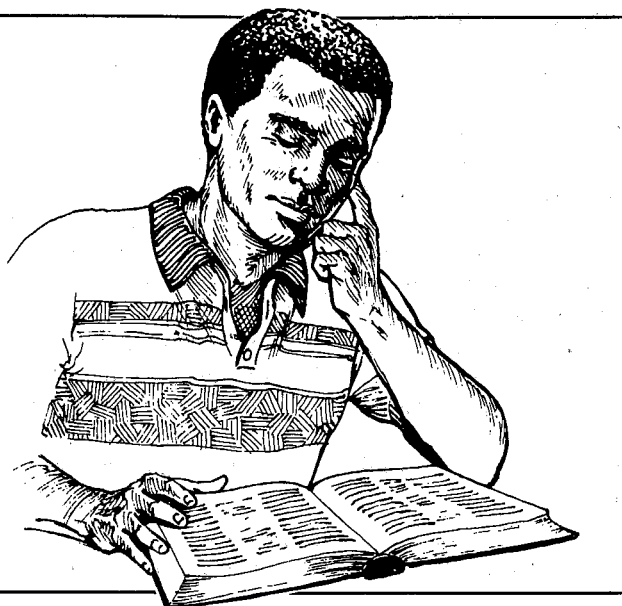
SING PRAISES TO OUR LORD

I have a song I love to sing,
Since I have been redeemed,
Of my Redeemer, Savior, King,
Since I have been redeemed,
Since I have been redeemed,
Since I have been redeemed,
I will glory in His name;
Since I have been redeemed,
I will glory in my Savior's name.

WEEK NINE

—Thursday—

Perfection and simplicity are seldom found in the same place — but with you and your word they are there! How very good to worship you!



PRAISE GOD FOR WHO HE IS

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (Psa. 19:7). Even as my words say much about my inner self, so your words describe your character. Your law, or word, is “perfect.” This is true from several perspectives: (1) Perfect in the sense of being without flaw or mistake. Blessed be your wonderful name — such would be the only conclusion if you were without flaw, then your word would necessarily express the same quality. (2) Your law is perfect in the sense of maturity, i.e., it expresses the thoughts of one who has total understanding. This is a strong encouragement for us to allow it to turn our lives around and put them on the right path. If we want to be wise, we will assimilate such wisdom from him who knows all.

PRAISE GOD FOR WHAT HE MEANS TO ME

Just for me. “The law of the Lord is perfect” for me! I am glad to acknowledge that I am persuaded that not one word of the 66 books of the Bible is in error in any form. The autographs were without flaw. I have no reason to think or suggest the existing copies are in any way changed from the autographs. Most of all, I want to say that the perfection or maturity I find in reading and meditating upon your word convinces me more each day that your law indeed is perfect. My life has been turned around and I am glad. I attribute it to *your word*. To yourself, but all I know about you is from your word. How simple and ignorant I am without your testimonies! How wise and mature I can become through them!

How do you personally relate to the word of God, and God who has spoken? Speak it out or write it out. It is so important that you establish your own devotional journal.

CONFESSION OF SIN

How sorely I have neglected a close personal meditation on every word you have spoken. In these last

days of my life, be they few or many, I want to repair this lack. Forgive me for being so late in fulfilling what is a real joy to do! Dear Lord, grant grace and strength, and heaven’s wisdom in this pursuit. Forgive me for any presumption on my part.

“Fearfulness.” Dear Lord, you did not give me a spirit of fearfulness, but of power and of love and discipline and a sound mind (II Tim. 1:7) When I am hesitant or afraid, be thou near. In so many areas we need courage — your courage — I claim it! Forgive my timidity.

What personal sins do you want to confess? We must speak them to remove them. Do it! Now.

SING A PRAYER TO GOD

Saved by the blood of the Crucified One!
Now ransomed from sin and a new work begun,
Sing praise to the Father and praise to the Son,
Saved by the blood of the Crucified One!
Saved! saved! My sins are all pardoned,
my guilt is all gone!
Saved! saved! I am saved by the blood
of the Crucified One!

Open your hymn book and sing the rest of the verses — or even sing another prayer song.

HIS WORD

⁸His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. ⁹When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. ¹⁰They honored us in many ways and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

¹¹After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island. It was an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux. —Acts 28:8-11, NIV

READ HIS WORD TO HIM

How I do want to read these words as if I had never

read them before. Why did you heal the father of Publius? Why heal all the others of the island? Luke reports it even as it happened. He does not mention the obvious: i.e., that many islanders believed and became Christians. Is it at all possible these people — at least some of them — were already Christians when Paul landed? Luke has given a record of so many others who wondered at the signs and believed the message. Paul has not altered his purpose. For reasons best known to Luke and yourself he does not record the “head count” of those who accepted you and your Son. How I wish I knew more. I am so glad for the success of your servants amid the most trying of circumstances.

Please express your response to this beautiful text. Put your expression in your own prayer diary.

READ HIS WORD FOR YOURSELF

Yes, yes, I do. Apply these words to my life. When Paul visited the father of the governor, he did two things: (1) He prayed for him — how I would love to hear the voice of Paul in prayer; how I would listen so very carefully to every word he prayed. (I can read several of his prayers now in his letters.) (2) He placed his hands on him and healed him. He didn’t get better, he got well! Instantaneous restoration to full health is the impression I receive. What happened to one happened to all. There is no way to explain what happened without your supernatural intervention. How I do wonder just who is included in the pronoun “us,” i.e., “they honored *us* in many ways.” It would seem from the fact that all 276 people were detained on the island that the honors and provisions were for all of them. How Paul did “take charge” in this whole situation!

It is so important that you pause in his presence and either audibly or in written form tell him all his word means to you.

READ HIS WORD IN THANKSGIVING

(1) Thank you for the wonderful way you can use any and all circumstances for your good and your glory. (2) Thank you for the wonderful gift of healing used by Paul to point to yourself and your Son. (3) Thank you for the report of Luke that there were no unsuccessful attempts at healing. (4) Thank you for the provisions Paul supplied for the whole group that would not otherwise have been there. (5) Thank you for the whole three month sojourn on Malta — everyone learned much. (6) Thank you for supplying a ship going to the very place they wanted. (7) Thank you that time has a way of eliminating Castor and Pollux and retaining Jesus and yourself.

Give yourself to your own expression of gratitude — write it or speak it!

READ HIS WORD IN MEDITATION

“... an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux.” I wonder why Luke mentioned the figurehead of this ship? It does seem incongruous that God’s servants would sail aboard a

ship dedicated to the mythical gods of the Greeks. Castor and Pollux are the early counterparts of Saint Christopher of today. Of *late* Saint Christopher — the saint to protect travelers — has been canonized. We can find in all such mythology a principle truth. Our Lord is indeed interested in our protection while traveling. We are glad to give him the praise and credit for every safe trip we have made.

READ HIS WORD FOR PETITIONS

As Paul and his friends prepared to sail for Rome we can think of our preparations to sail for our eternal home. (1) May I help just as many people as I can to know you before I leave. (2) I know if just one is raised from death in sin many will be affected. Lord, lead me to that one. (3) Dear Lord, surely there are many I can reach with the healing love of my Lord; open my eyes. (4) How infinitely good you are to me — may your goodness lead me to repentance. (5) I know you know the day and method of my departure from this life — this is enough. (6) I am so glad I serve and worship a living heavenly Father. Thank you. (7) You have surely provided all I need for the eternal journey.

Right here add your personal requests — and his answers.

READ HIS WORD AND WAIT — LISTEN — GOD SPEAKS

What do you say in these verses? (1) “I might come before you leave.” (2) “Take as many with you as you can.” (3) “Behold, I come quickly.”

INTERCESSION FOR THE LOST WORLD

Latin America — Point for prayer: *Praise the Lord for the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in Latin America this century.* This has been one of the great success stories of modern missionary endeavor in times of persecution and severe economic stress. (a) *Evangelicals have grown* from an estimated 200-300,000 in 1900 to 34,300,000 in 1985. This will increase to 80,000,000 by the end of the century, if present growth rates continue. (b) *The regular church-going population* of Evangelicals in most countries now exceeds that of Catholics. (c) *The impact of the Scriptures on Catholics* has opened the hearts of millions to a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus. Many have become fervent evangelical believers, both within the Catholic Church and, increasingly, outside it. (d) *The value of Bible translation.* The pioneer work of *SIL* in providing NTs in indigenous languages, has sparked off gatherings of peoples into churches across the continent. In some lands the work of translation has been virtually completed. Praise the Lord for a task well done!

SING PRAISES TO OUR LORD

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, Holy, Holy! Merciful and Mighty!
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!

WEEK NINE

—Friday—

What beautiful qualities of yourself do I find in your word. Teach me — I am eager to learn. I enter your school room!



PRAISE GOD FOR WHO HE IS

“The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Psa. 19:8). As a man’s word represents the man, so do your words express your character. Dear Lord, I am glad and delighted to affirm with the psalmist that your precepts or statutes are always and in every place with everyone exactly what should have been done. The term *right* means the law or principle or advice perfectly fits the occasion. Life is like a jig-saw puzzle with several parts missing. We are given several offerings by Satan — each time we attempt to fit his pieces we hurt because they do not mesh and the edges rubbed are our nerves! When we get a good look at your statutes; when we turn them this way and that and see the whole and then try it in the open space, it is *right*! What a joy to our heart!

PRAISE GOD FOR WHAT HE MEANS TO ME

For me, just for me — your commandments are pure, they enlighten my eyes! I have noticed again just yesterday how authoritative are the teachings of my Lord. Jesus does not offer suggestions. He gives commands. He states it like it is. Dear Savior, I hear you. Your commandments are like a good pair of glasses: they perfectly fit my eyes — the eyes of my heart. I can only see very dimly life and its meaning (what else is there to see?). When I look at life through your commandments all is clear and sharply defined. What enlightenment your commandments have given me. I never tire of putting on your glasses. I do not enjoy the out-of-focus living I get when I forget to look through your commandments. You give me a trifocal view of all things. Bless your holy name!

How do you personally relate to the statutes of God, and God who has given them?

CONFESSION OF SIN

It is one thing to put down on paper, or speak out in public my prayer of affirmation, of approval and

commitment to your statutes and commandments; it is quite another to fulfill this in the daily routine of private living. This is a good example of what we have just said. It is altogether “*right*” to confess my sins — what *enlightenment* such a command gives to the eyes of my heart! The *doing* of what you have said is a part of the expression itself. There is no life or fruit without doing.

“Disbelief.” Surely this is all we can really do other than obey you! I know I have selfishly thus sinned. Please forgive me!

What personal sins do you want to confess? There is no one else you have sinned against more than God. Tell him so!

SING A PRAYER TO GOD

Thou, my everlasting portion,
More than friend or life to me;
All along my pilgrim journey,
Savior, let me walk with Thee.
Close to Thee, close to Thee,
Close to Thee, close to Thee;
All along my pilgrim journey,
Savior, let me walk with Thee.

Open your hymn book and sing the rest of the verses — or even sing another prayer song.

HIS WORD

¹²We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days. ¹³From there we set sail and arrived at Rhegium. The next day the south wind came up, and on the following day we reached Puteoli. ¹⁴There we found some brothers who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we went to Rome. ¹⁵The brothers there had heard that we were coming, and they traveled as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. At the sight of these men Paul thanked God and was encouraged. —Acts 28:12-15, NIV

READ HIS WORD TO HIM

How always glad I am to enter this phase of worship.

When I attempt to see these verses as you do it always gives fresh and new meaning to the text. What happened during the three days at Syracuse? What evaluations are the travelers making of Paul's God and his Son? What meditation is going through the mind of Luke? We have heard nothing of Aristarchus since we left Caesarea — what happened to him? How rapidly and fully had your word spread! In only thirty or thirty-five short years the good news was preached in the far outreaches of the empire. The devotion of the saints of Rome was an example to all (cf. Rom. 1:8). Only you can answer some of these questions, but it has done me good to ask them.

Please express your response to this beautiful text. Put your expression in your own prayer diary.

READ HIS WORD FOR YOURSELF

I want to be a traveling companion of Paul. How I would like to ask him one hundred questions. One day I shall — if when I see him the answers are not already mine. Here are a few of them as related to this portion of our journey: (1) "Has your thorn in the flesh bothered you on this journey?" (2) "How did you handle this eternal sitting around?" (3) "How could you find companionship with these Gentiles who had not knowledge or appreciation of your Jewishness?" (4) "How could this journey be so leisurely? I.e., spending a week with Christian brothers?" (5) "Didn't the centurion and almost everyone else become a Christian?" I am humbled to the ground when I attempt to follow Paul's example of devotion.

It is so important that you pause in his presence and either audibly or in written form tell him all his word means to you.

READ HIS WORD IN THANKSGIVING

There is so much here for which we can thank you! (1) Thank you for the safe journey all the way to Rome from Malta. (2) Thank you for what seems to be a transference of authority from the centurion to Paul. (3) Thank you for the thousands of Christians of the first 30 or 40 years of the history of our Lord's called out ones. (4) Thank you for all the mutual joy and love that must have been shared at Puteoli. (5) Thank you for the willingness of the Christians at Rome to walk over 40 miles to see Paul. (6) Thank you for Paul's spontaneous gratitude upon seeing the Christians from Rome. (7) Thank you for the completion of Paul's long time prayer and desire to be in Rome.

Give yourself to your own expression of gratitude — write it or speak it!

READ HIS WORD IN MEDITATION

"At the sight of these men Paul thanked God and was encouraged." We wonder if Paul thought the cause of our Lord had been defeated in Rome, or if he thought false reports had preceded him to Rome. Why was Paul so thankful? It could be that in a sense he was full of relief — Rome at last! For how many

years had he planned and longed and prayed that he might be able to visit Rome. In spite of the fact that God had repeatedly promised that "he would bear witness in Rome" Paul wanted to express his personal appreciation for answered prayer and fulfilled promises. How warm must have been the greetings! How many inquiries were made concerning this one and that one!

Pause — wait — think — then express yourself in thoughtful praise or thanks.

READ HIS WORD FOR PETITIONS

Four stops on the way to Rome: what requests arise from this journey? (1) Paul seemed to be in no hurry to reach Rome — neither am I to reach heaven — I want to learn all you have for me along the way. (2) How I do wish I knew what was said in the three days at Syracuse — thank you for mutual interests in our Lord. (3) Did Paul hold a week's evangelistic crusade at Puteoli? Luke doesn't tell us. Thank you for Christians at this Italian town. (4) How good to read of Christians in almost every stop — how can we so increase your word today? (5) May I today be the source of encouragement to my fellow travelers. (6) May I find today in my brothers a reason to be encouraged. (7) More than 40 miles is a long way just to greet and strengthen a brother. May I learn from this.

Please, please remember these are prayers — speak them — reword them!

READ HIS WORD AND WAIT — LISTEN — GOD SPEAKS

What do you say to me as I journey through the land? (1) "I have people in places of which you never heard." (2) "You can always speak a good word for me." (3) "I went further than 40 miles to tell you I loved you."

INTERCESSION FOR THE LOST WORLD

Latin America — Point for prayer: *The Roman Catholic Church* has passed through 30+ years of tumultuous change. The traditional monolithic structure that once dominated the continent has gone for ever. The impact of the Vatican II Council, theological diversity, emphasis on Bible reading, and the influence of the charismatic movement, have been enormous. Pope John Paul II has pulled the Church back from political and doctrinal extremes to a more traditional Catholicism.

SING PRAISES TO OUR LORD

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation
By water and the word:
From Heav'n he came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died.

WEEK NINE

—Saturday—

*There is a wholeness and a rightness
about all you say — about all you do —
I pause to be transformed by the
renewal of my mind!*



PRAISE GOD FOR WHO HE IS

“The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether” (Psa. 19:9). Once again: the qualities of yourself are seen in yourself and your actions. How can I fear you? This is to ask “how can I reverence you?” Does this reverence or “fear” carry in it the thought of punishment? Yes, but it is only one of the qualities for which I reverence you. In what sense is my reverence or fear of you clean or pure? In two ways: (1) It should be whole or one or single. Your overpowering character should at all times be in force and be the single most significant attitude of my heart. Dear Lord, I *want* this to be! (2) If this is true then the second meaning will be mine. I will be clean or pure or wholistic in my living and in my inner attitudes.

Express yourself in adoration for this quality of God. Speak it audibly or write out your praise in your own devotional journal.

PRAISE GOD FOR WHAT HE MEANS TO ME

Just for me. I try to praise you in the above expression as a personal representative of principles applied to or for all men. In this area I want to apply your word as relating to yourself just for me! How I do want to hold you constantly before me as my meditation day and night! I can only do this as I memorize and internalize your word! I will never be clean or whole until this happens! I am much closer today than last year, or ten years or twenty years ago! I take courage in the fact that my pursuit is like what is pursued — “it endureth forever.”

How do you personally relate to the fear of God, and God who is holy? Speak it out or write it out. It is so important that you establish your own devotional journal.

CONFESSION OF SIN

I have sinned and have fallen far short of your character. This is *not* to say I have first fallen far short of your expectations for me for this is *not* my

first thought! It is yourself that is first to be disgraced by my sin. I believe with all that is within me that if I seek first your rule in my life and your acceptance among men my attitudes and actions would follow as light follows day. I fail so miserably — please forgive. Thank you for letting me see what could be and for the Spirit-prompted desire to fulfill it.

“Praying to be seen of men.” When this is our primary purpose, we are sinning, not praying. It is almost impossible to pray in public, i.e., to lead in public prayer, or to pray with the public in heart, without including them or being aware of them. Dear God, I want only and always to address you, pray to you, for you, through you.

SING A PRAYER TO GOD

O worship the King, all glorious above,
And gratefully sing His wonderful love;
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of days,
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.

HIS WORD

¹⁶When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself with a soldier to guard him.

¹⁷Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: “My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. ¹⁸They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. ¹⁹But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar — not that I had any charge to bring against my own people. ²⁰For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.”

²¹They replied, “We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of the brothers who has come from there has reported or said anything bad about you. ²²But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect.” —Acts 28:16-22, NIV

READ HIS WORD TO HIM

It would be a real experience to seek out and find the house where Paul lived in Rome and pay him a visit. I know you never left him and were indeed with him. I hope to get their impressions of him. What was the purpose of Paul's words to the Jews in Rome? Dear Lord, I read these words to understand the mind of Paul — which is the mind of your dear Son. This is a defense: "I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors." "... I was not guilty of any crime deserving death." "... not that I had any charge to bring against my own people." Paul loves his people, the Jews! I know you do too. What a tremendous influence they could be if all were your children!

Please express your response to this beautiful text. Put your expression in your own prayer diary.

READ HIS WORD FOR YOURSELF

Just suppose I was Paul in Rome in 60 A.D.! How would I react to the confinement? Since I had been repeatedly treated so very badly by the Jews would I now call the leaders of them to me? What would I say to the soldiers who guarded me? Would my defense convince anyone? What would I anticipate as I appeared before Nero the emperor? What would I do day after day after day in the house when I was confined? How would I react to the use of the term "sect" as applied to my faith? I guess what I am saying is that I can learn so much from Paul by way of love and patience.

It is so important that you pause in his presence and either audibly or in written form tell him all his word means to you.

READ HIS WORD IN THANKSGIVING

Who was it who said "in everything give thanks"? Who was it who wrote later from this very place "rejoice in the Lord — again I say rejoice"? If Paul could, surely we can: (1) Thank you for the accommodations of Paul, which could have been far worse than they were. (2) Thank you for Paul's desire to clear his name and the name of our Lord with the Jews. (3) Thank you for the term "brother" applied in sincerity to both Jews and Christians. (4) Thank you for the fairness in the laws of the Romans. (5) Thank you for the saints in Rome who were beloved of God and also of Paul. (6) Thank you that the saints in Rome "belonged to Jesus Christ and we do too." (7) Thank you for the faith of the Roman Christians that was "proclaimed in all the world."

READ HIS WORD IN MEDITATION

"... people everywhere are talking against this sect." It makes one wonder just in what context this question was asked: (1) Were these Jews (at least some of them) Christians and they wanted to hear one of their own defend Christianity so as to reinforce their faith? (2) Were they interested in getting more information so they could become Christians? I.e., they had a real genuine interest in knowing about Jesus as the Christ.

(3) They were "ever hearing but never understanding" and thus were only seeking to oppose our Lord. From what follows as a result of Paul's speaking we could believe there were some of each. Surely in our audience of unbelievers we find the same type of listener. May we be as faithful as Paul.

Pause — wait — think — then express yourself in thoughtful praise or thanks.

READ HIS WORD FOR PETITIONS

Paul was ever and always full of concern for those with whom he associated — especially his own people. (1) Give me the same concern. (2) Dear Lord, I want to become all things to all men that I might win some of them to you. (3) I want to learn from the example of Paul's speech to the Jews: he referred to them as "brothers." (4) He was completely frank with them. (5) He considered his Lord as the only hope that the Jews or anyone else had. (6) He did all he could to give adequate time to explain his position. (7) Dear Lord, in all the above areas give me grace to be like your servant Paul.

Right here add your personal requests — and his answers.

READ HIS WORD AND WAIT — LISTEN — GOD SPEAKS

What do you say to me out of this text? (1) "Paul as a prisoner had more freedom than those to whom he spoke." (2) "Paul used all means available to reach men with the good news." (3) "Men will always be curious — use this capacity for me."

INTERCESSION FOR THE LOST WORLD

Middle East — Points for prayer: (1) The home of the early church is now the most needy mission field in the world. Spiritual decline and the Muslim conquests between the seventh and fifteenth centuries have steadily reduced the percentage of Christians in the region. Centuries of discriminatory legislation and taxation and, at times, outright persecution have led to many nominal Christians converting to Islam. (2) Islam has become the greatest missionary challenge to the Christian Church. a) Muslims are convinced that Christianity is divided, decadent and in decline, and that their religion is the answer to mankind's problems. b) The new confidence that independence and oil wealth have given Muslim nations is giving greater incentive to spread the message of Islam and thwart Christian missionary efforts. c) Islamic fundamentalism has brought revolution to Iran and tensions right through the Muslim world. Pray that the harshness and extremism often manifested may cause many Muslims to consider the claims of Christ.

SING PRAISES TO OUR LORD

I love Thy Kingdom, Lord,
The house of Thine abode,
The Church our blest Redeemer saved
With His own precious blood.