

The only thing that matters is that you are reading God's word regularly. While that is still true with this schedule, the goal with this one is to get a better understanding of the entire story of the bible. There is no substitute for reading God's word. Keep reading! My website is at <http://graceofourlord.wordpress.com>. I encourage you to get the actual reading plan I am currently following. You can get it from the same place I do - at [this link](#). They have some great guidance for the reading plan there as well, and they have it all in both PDF and in Kindle format!

October 2012							
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October Week 2 (Week 41) Summary

Acts 11, 12, James 1, James 2, and Acts 13 - Click the chapter below to go to the ESV Bible passage for that chapter and read or listen.

[Acts 11](#) - Chapter 10 ended with Cornelius, his family, and friends receiving the Holy Spirit; and then "they asked him (Peter) to remain for some days." Just how long "some days" turned out to be we are not told. But by the time Peter returned to Jerusalem, news that the "Gentiles also had received the word of God" had already spread back to the other apostles and the brothers and sisters throughout Judea. In verse 2, Peter was getting criticism from the "circumcision party." This would be a group of Christians who probably had a strict "Pharisaic" background either personally or by association. They would likely expect that Gentiles who wanted to be Christians would have to first convert to Judaism, even going so far as to be circumcised and would need to live according to Jewish ritual law. Their indignation was at Peter having eaten with these uncircumcised Gentiles.

Peter responds by first telling them of his own vision, then that of Cornelius. He then relates how "*the Holy Spirit fell on them*" just as had happened to the apostles at Pentecost. That settled the matter - there were none present who could consider any alternative to the obvious conclusion. So "*they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."*" Though the matter would still be debated, God's will was clearly going to be done.

Verses 19-21 relate how a great number of those who had been scattered from Jerusalem after the stoning of Stephen had preached the word to others. But some had not exclusively taught Jews. Instead, many coming to Antioch had preached the word of Jesus to the Hellenists; and many had believed. When word of this reached Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas, who found them faithful. Barnabas, encouraged and full of the Spirit, went to Tarsus to find Paul; and together they taught in Antioch for a year. It was in Antioch, according to verse 26, where the disciples were first called Christians.

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, given to others by the Apostles during those days, was the gift of prophecy. One disciple with that gift foretold a great famine (verse 28). Historians believe that this famine that took place during the reign of Claudius (Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus), Roman emperor from A.D. 41-54) was in the years 45–47 A.D. This would be confirmed by Galatians 2:1, where Paul states that his second visit to Jerusalem referred to in verse 30 was 14 years after his conversion, which would be circa 47 A.D.

Acts 12 - Verse one begins with "*About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church.*" The words "about that time" obviously refer to a time period in which the events of the end of chapter 11 occurred. Secular history accurately dates the death of this Herod (Herod Agrippa I - grandson of "Herod the Great") in 44 A.D. Verse 2 continues in the KJV with:

"And he killed James the brother of John with the sword..."

Burton Coffman wrote concerning this verse: "*Only seven words in the Greek, translated by eleven in English, recount the martyrdom of the first apostle; and such restraint by the sacred historian shows how different are the words of inspiration from those of ordinary writers.*"

Indeed. If one was simply writing a story rather than the word of God, one would certainly have more to say about the death of one of Jesus' "inner circle," James the son of Zebedee, than these few words. The rest of the verse states that "...when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also." The Jewish religious leaders - certainly much of the Sanhedrin - would have been pleased to have gotten rid of one the twelve men who were so instrumental in proclaiming that Jesus was the risen Lord. This was during the Feast of Unleavened Bread; and Herod intended to bring Peter out after Passover and undoubtedly do the same with him as he had done with John's brother..

But on the night before Herod was to bring him out, an angel of the Lord came to Peter as he slept between two soldiers, made the chains fall off of him, led him past two guards and compelled the iron gate to open on its own, as they walked through. And with that, the angel left. Up to this point, Peter had been thinking that he was having another vision. But in verse

11, he realizes that the Lord had sent his angel to rescue him "*from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.*"

Peter heads to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark (verse 12). The consensus of scholars is that this may be because of the personal attachment Peter had for John Mark, who would write the gospel of Mark (of which writing there are convincing arguments that Peter stood behind). At any rate, many of the church are gathered there. At first, none of them believed the servant girl that it was Peter at the gate. When they opened it, he cautioned them to be silent, then told them how he had been freed from prison. As he left, he told them to tell James (this James would be the Lord's brother) and the brothers what had happened.

When it was discovered that Peter was gone, Herod had the sentries executed. Then he went to Caesarea, where verses 20-23 describe the events of his death, relating that an angel of the Lord struck him down and in the end "he was eaten by worms." Some suggest that both he and his grandfather died of Fournier's gangrene, but the Scripture gives no other information that would verify this. His vanity and acceptance of the praise proclaiming him to be a god led to his death. Another purpose was served though, as he had already proved to be a dangerous enemy to the apostles.

Side note: In [this article by Todd Bolen of BiblePlaces.com](#), the author makes some very convincing arguments for the actual location of Herod Agrippa, when he was struck down, to have been at the city amphitheater, rather than the theater itself (where the historian Josephus wrote that it occurred). He also makes some interesting observations about the ruler and his predecessor's and the practice of the emperor being honored as a god. Very interesting reading.

[James 1](#) – We break away for the next two readings from the book of the Acts of the Apostles to the book of James. The majority of scholars believe that this epistle was written by James, the Lord's brother - rather than John's brother, who was the first of the apostles to be martyred (likely beheaded) in [Acts 12:1-2](#) about 14 years after Jesus' resurrection. According to the historian Josephus ("[Antiquities of the Jews](#)", Book 20, Chapter 9, 1), James the Lord's brother was stoned; and the historical accounts surrounding that event allow his death to be reliably dated around 62 A.D. The book is only 5 chapters long, but its wisdom and encouragement of faith has been written about in many volumes (James is often called the "Proverbs of the New Testament").

Verses 2-4 are a perfect example of the way that James so beautifully reminds of the teachings of Jesus ([Matthew 5:11-12](#)). The trials to which James refers are both the temptations of sin, and the adversities that one faces in this world due to hardship, persecution, and sometimes even tragedy. Macarthur noted that it is these trials "which Satan persistently uses to try to make Christians doubt they are indeed God's children and fellow heirs with Jesus Christ." As verses 13-15 remind us, God does not bring misfortune or temptation upon us.

The phrase "let steadfastness have its full effect" recognizes that we have a choice. We can "throw in the towel," giving in to temptation or deciding that there is no point - no hope - in our faith. But if we face even the afflictions that bring pain into our lives with the determination to

persevere and remain faithful to the Lord, we gain strength and the patience of courageous endurance that brings us closer to the perfection that Jesus taught us in [Matthew 5:48](#).

The wisdom to bear these burdens and to know how to persevere is available simply for the asking. But one must have faith, and this means learning to trust in the Lord, and not in the world or in our own capability. That does not mean that there is no need for action on our part. Neither does it mean that God will instruct us specifically on every decision we make in life. It means that He will give us what we need to know in order to bear our burdens, escape from temptation, and learn the divine truth of the way to our salvation.

Satan uses the "double-mindedness" that James refers to in verse 8 in other ways as well. Verses 9-11 refer to different mind-sets of Christians in regard to wealth or the lack of same. Those in humble circumstances are not forsaken by God, and the wealthy are not blessed by God. Barclay noted that "...the great peril of riches is that they tend to bring to a man a false sense of security. He feels that he is safe; he feels that he has the resources to cope with anything; he feels that he can buy anything he wants, and buy himself out of any situation which he may wish to escape or to avoid." We are reminded in [Luke 12:15-21](#) of the brevity of life, and the poverty of a different sort that awaits those who value the wrong things in life. Conversely, verse 17 assures us that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." So we must never neglect giving thanks to Him for any good thing that comes to us.

The chapter concludes in verses 19-27 with the admonition that hearing (or reading, for that matter) is not enough if one does not do as the word of God says. One must stay unstained from the world, and a big emphasis is placed on keeping the tongue bridled. Verses 19-20 (be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger) remind us of [Ecclesiastes 5:2](#), [Proverbs 10:19](#) and [Proverbs 14:29](#).

[James 2](#) - This chapter begins with the warning about showing favoritism to the wealthy, or more to the point, less partiality to those of lesser means. God has always made it abundantly clear how much He cares for the poor. Besides idolatry, oppression of the poor was one of the main reasons for God's judgment of destruction and captivity on His people in the Old Testament ([Amos 2:6-7](#)). If we are the most Christ-like in all things, but show favor to some over others because of their station in life, we become accountable for all sin (verse 10).

James continues the same point in verses 10-13. God's word is to be followed in all things. Christians do not have the luxury of ignoring part of God's word. The example of one person abstaining from adultery but committing murder makes the point in the extreme.

Verses 14-26 are often misquoted and more often misunderstood. Paul says that we are justified by faith - James says by works. The problem, as is often the case, is that people tend to "section off" passages of God's word and either pretend that supplementary passages do not exist, or that they are in conflict. Coffman summarized these verses best:

"This paragraph is perhaps the most disputed and misunderstood passage in the New Testament; but the interpretation presented here flows out of deep convictions: (1) that here indeed we have the inspired word of God; (2) that this portion of the New Testament is as easily understood as

any other; (3) that the simple answers are the true ones; (4) that there is not the slightest contradiction between Paul and James; (5) that Paul's affirmation that we are justified "by faith" and James' declaration that we are justified "by works" mean simply that we are indeed justified "by both," and that it is a sin to assert that men are justified either (a) "by faith alone," or (b) "by works alone"; (6) that all of the alleged contradiction between the sacred writers James and Paul derives not from what either of them said, but from the false allegations of theologians concerning what they meant..."

The point, as expressed in verse 17 is that "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." Abraham's works referred to in verses 21-23 did not occur without faith, but rather they occurred *because of* his faith.

[Acts 13](#) - It is in verse 9 of this chapter that the Bible first mentions that Saul was also called Paul. The inference from that statement is that he had been called by that name, at least to some extent, for possibly a while. Some have theorized that the name change was by choice - in order to be more identifiable to the gentiles to which Paul was called to proclaim the word of God. But that speculation ignores the fact that others were known by different names (Peter, for example, was known also as Simon and Cephas).

Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit from the church at Antioch. This journey of Paul's is thought to have lasted about a year and a half. They traveled down first to Seleucia, then set sail to Cyprus where Barnabas was from, taking John Mark with them. They started proclaiming the word of God in the synagogue at Salamis. Then they went 90 miles to Paphos, the seat of Roman government on Cyprus. The proconsul was the highest ranking official in a Roman province. This one summoned Saul and Barnabas, wishing to hear the word of God. But a magician, a false prophet who was with him, was working against them, trying to turn the proconsul away. Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, rebuked the man and caused him to lose his sight. The proconsul believed after seeing this.

They then set sail again to Perga, where John Mark left them to return to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas continued on to Antioch of Pisidia. This is a long way from the Antioch that they started from - in Syria. This Galatian city was one of 16 cities that the Syrian king Seleucus had named for his father Antiochus. In verse 16-41, Paul delivers a sermon that begins with the wilderness wanderings, and ties the Scriptures to Jesus, his death, and his resurrection. They were received well and encouraged, and they begged them to come back on the next Sabbath to preach again. But the Jews saw the great crowds and were jealous. They started contradicting them and reviling Paul. Paul answered as follows:

"It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,

*I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth"*

When the gentiles heard this, They were rejoicing and glorifying the Lord. And many became believers. But the Jews stirred up persecution against them, and they were driven out, From

there they went to Iconium, rejoicing over the success with the Gentiles, and filled with the Holy Spirit.

Side note: [This article at Ferrell's Travel Blog](#) is about Pisidian Antioch and contains a modern photo of an ancient street there.