

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Read the Bible in a Year Challenge

Week 23

Monday	2 Chronicles 13-15	Psalm 125	Romans 16
Tuesday	2 Chronicles 17-19	Psalm 126	1 Corinthians 1
Wednesday	2 Chronicles 20-22	Psalm 127	1 Corinthians 2
Thursday	2 Chronicles 23-25	Psalm 128	1 Corinthians 3
Friday	2 Chronicles 26-28	Psalm 129	1 Corinthians 4
Saturday	2 Chronicles 29-31	Psalm 130	1 Corinthians 5

Sunday: *Enjoy the lessons from Scripture as they are read aloud in Sunday worship. The Bible study summary for each Sunday of the year is found as a separate document on the parish website, under "Adult Education, Bible Study".*

The 2 Chronicles readings:

1. See the weekly summary for week 22 for an introduction to 2 Chronicles.
2. The narrative continues of the kings of Judah-without-Israel.
 - a. In ch. 16 the account of the first dynasty concludes. Jeroboam's downfall (ch. 13) is depicted as resulting from apostasy.
3. Chs. 17 through 25 chronicle a century of social unrest. The essential struggle is about fidelity to the LORD, and is characterized with reference to Elisha's role in bringing about the overthrow of Omri's dynasty.
 - a. Judah's woes are linked to those of Israel, reflected in the reign of Judah's murderous and usurping queen Athaliah.
 - b. The troubles in Judah are also described in a literary fashion, for the tale of the Judean King Jehoshaphat's alliance with the Israelite King Ahab reads very much as would a mystery play, incorporating an obscure prophet (Eliezer).
4. The balance of this week's readings, beginning at ch. 26, provide the framework for the rise of "book prophecy," *i.e.*, the writings of the prophet Isaiah.
 - a. King Uzziah quite unusually has a priestly mentor, Zechariah.
 - b. Uzziah's military adventures are recorded only in 2 Chronicles, but modern archaeology has tended to confirm the record.
 - c. Uzziah's leprosy is depicted as punishment for his intrusion into the cult of the LORD. Cf. 2 Kgs. 15.5; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 9.10.4 §225.
 - d. 2 Chron. names the king as Uzziah (as in Isaiah), whereas 2 Kgs. names him as Azariah. It is possible that Azariah was a priest-regent acting for Uzziah during his debility.
5. Jotham is depicted in glowing terms, although he is an antagonist to Isaiah! Hezekiah is likewise depicted as an antagonist. In Isa. 37.6; 38.1 and 2 Kgs. 20.19, he is depicted as a weakling. 2 Chron. 29-32 portrays him as a noble reforming leader.

- a. Hezekiah's energies are focused on national defense and on ecumenism as a means of alliance.

The psalms: *The psalm numbering and versification system used throughout these study summaries is that found in The Book of Common Prayer (1979).*

1. The psalms encountered this week can all be classified as "Songs of Ascent," and include:
 - a. 125: A communal psalm of trust. The central theme is the stability of Zion (*cf.* Ps. 46).
 - b. 126: This is a communal lament, recalling God's past intervention in behalf of His people.
 - i. The people pray that this past intervention may serve as a motivation for God help in the present.
 - ii. "Then were we like those who dream" (v.1): The verb root here may also be translated as "those who are healed".
 1. Vv. 6 and 7 may represent a parallel proverb, using agricultural imagery to illustrate reversal of fortune.
 - c. 127: A wisdom psalm which can be compared with Ps. 128. The reference to the "house" is intentionally one that can apply to the Temple as well as the dwellings of individuals. The emphasis is on the centrality of the LORD in the life of His people.
 - d. 128: Appointed in the western monastic office for use at Vespers on Corpus Christi. This is a wisdom psalm paired with Ps. 127.
 - e. 129: A psalm of uncertain classification, which includes thanksgiving elements, but also those of lament.
 - i. The use of plowing as a reference to oppression may be compared with Mic. 3.12.
 - f. 130: A prayer for deliverance from personal trouble.
 - i. The "depths" from which the psalmist calls are the waters of chaos, a theme common in the Old Testament (as in Jonah).
 1. The word itself, however, is rare, appearing only in four other Old Testament texts: Isaiah 51:10; Ezekiel 27:34 and Psalm 69:2, 14.
 - ii. The prayer is both a direct appeal and a commentary on why the psalmist can appeal to God, because the LORD is merciful.
 1. The psalmist awaits the LORD'S "word," His prophetic hope. All of Israel must look to this hope.

The readings from Paul's Letter to the Romans:

1. *See* the weekly summary for week 20 for an introduction to Romans.
2. The letter ends with recommendations and commendations.
 - a. Paul commends Phoebe, "a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae," to the Romans, and enjoins that they aid her.
 - i. She is described as doing the Church's work.
 - b. Paul the switches to greetings:
 - i. What does "greet" mean?
 1. Word meaning is not controversial: "greet," "welcome," "greet warmly".
 - a. More unusual is the form:
 - i. 2nd person plural imperative: "you [all] greet so and so!"
 - ii. Normally 3rd person sing./plural indicative "so and so greets you" (*cf.* 16.21-23)

iii. Usually the 2 pers., pl., imp. is to “greet one another (with a holy kiss) or to greet another church (e.g., Col. 4.15).

1. Why the difference here?

2. Who is to be greeted?

a. 24 individuals are named

b. 2 individuals unnamed; 9 are women.

c. At least five are Jewish, but probably more: Prisca, Aquila, Andronicus, Junia, Herodian.

i. 5 groups (house churches?)

ii. At least three house churches are referred to:

1. Prisca and Aquila (v. 3); Asyncritus *et al.* (v. 14);

Philologus *et al.* (v. 15); and possibly two more:

Those of Aristobulus (v. 10b); and those of Narcissus (v. 11b).

2. Women in Romans 16:

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, ² so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well. ³ Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, ⁴ and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles . . . ⁶ Greet Mary, who has worked very hard among you. ⁷ Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was . . . ¹² Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. ¹³ Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; and greet his mother—a mother to me also . . . ¹⁵ Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister ... (NRSV)

3. General comments about women:

a. Women are commended for their “hard work” (vv. 5, 12).

i. The Greek word *koriaou* (v.12) is elsewhere always associated with Paul’s own missionary labors or those of others (e.g., 1 Cor., 16.16; Gal. 4.11; Phil. 2.16; Col. 1.29; 1 Thess. 5.12; 1 Tim. 5.17).

b. Phoebe is described as a deacon, *diakonos*, which could mean “helper” or “servant,” or could refer to an office in the Church.

i. The latter is more probably intended, since she is identified as *diakonos* “of the church in Cenchreae”.

c. Prisca (an affectionate diminutive of Priscilla) with Aquila (her husband) is described as having “risked [her] neck” for Paul (*cf.* Acts 18, where she is described as Priscilla).

i. Priscilla is described as having taught Apollos.

d. Junia is a well-attested female (Latin) name. There is not a single reference to a Junias (masc.) in Greek or Latin.

i. No ancient translation of the Greek text gives a translation that shows an understanding of J. to be masculine. Not a single Christian writer of late antiquity thought this person was male.

1. John Chrysostom (turn of the 5th century): “Indeed, how great the wisdom of this woman must have been that she was even deemed worthy of the title of apostle” (*Ep. ad Rom.* 31.2).

- ii. Andronicus and Junia are almost certainly to be regarded as “notable *among* the apostles.”
- iii. “The apostles” are to be regarded as a limited group of authoritative Christian leaders.
 - 1. Thus, this text without comment bears witness to a woman at the highest level of leadership in the earliest stratum of the Christian movement.
 - 2. What this means for the contested question women’s ordination is debatable, but it is a datum that must be accounted for.

The readings from Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians:

1. 1 Corinthians is a complex reaction to reports received by Paul about the situation in Corinth, written while Paul is in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16.8), probably about the year *A.D.* 54.
 - a. Paul is reacting to a series of problems in Corinth, as related to him in a letter.
 - i. His discussion often, therefore, takes the *peri de* (“now concerning”) form, as a response to questions raised by the Corinthians.
 - b. He also reacts to unofficial reports (*e.g.*, from “Chloe’s people,” 1.11) of what is happening that the Corinthians do *not* consider problematical. These reports reveal to Paul certain basic flaws in the Corinthian’s understanding of Christian community.
2. The first four chs. of 1 Cor. are focused on teaching about divisions within the community, and what true Christian community is. Chs. 5 and 6 develop the argument into a teaching about the importance of the Body.
3. For Paul the Christian faith is lived in community. The individual can never have a relationship with God apart from the Body.
 - a. “Faith” is how Paul describes right relationship with God, with “love” being right relationship in community.
 - i. Love is a necessary expression of faith. Caring for other believers, building them up, warning them, etc., are not optional for believers. Faith requires these.
 1. Community requires give-and-take mutuality. The individual must be prepared to accommodate to the community (not a modern message!)
 - ii. Paul never, however, denigrates the individual identity of each believer. Difference is not sacrificed for the sake of the community, but is offered.
 - b. Paul assumes that believers must be responsible moral agents. Life is to be lived in an integration of morals, reasoning, and life in the Spirit.
 - i. All life must be lived as life ready for God’s final judgment, but as a life of gratefulness and thanksgiving, and not of fear.
4. The chs. in this week’s readings can be usefully outlined to include the following lines of argument:
 - a. 1.1-9: Introduction, greetings and thanksgivings.
 - b. 1.10-17: Discussion about rival groups in the community.
 - c. 1.18-31: God has different standards.
 - d. 2.1-5: The power of Paul’s preaching.
 - e. 2.6-3.4: True wisdom and the language of love.
 - f. 3.5-4.5: The right attitude toward pastors.
 - g. 4.6-13: The application of Paul’s metaphors (in this argument) to the Corinthians.
 - h. 4.14-21: The visit of Timothy.

- i. The importance of the Body (5.1-6.20):
 - i. 5.1-8: A case of incest.
 - ii. 5.9-13: Clearing up a misunderstanding based on an earlier letter (now lost).