

Resources for



Week 1.

*Wherever they
begin...*

*all roads
eventually lead
...to Rome!*

Welcome to the third, and final, part of our Journey through Acts.

In part one (Acts 1 – 13v2) the story of the early church was followed, up to the point where Saul and Barnabas are settled into the life and work of the new church at Antioch. The key verse for this section (and indeed for the whole book) is found in Acts 1 vs 8:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

“Being witnesses” was about what people **SAID**, what they **DID** and **HOW THEY LIVED**.

Part two covered the three journeys undertaken by Paul to begin churches in modern day Turkey and Greece. (found in Acts 13 v4 -21 vs26)

This final section picks up the rest of story. (Acts 21vs 27 – Acts 28 vs31) in which Paul has to fight his corner with various religious and civic authorities, eventually arriving in Rome to await an interview with the Emperor.

SETTLING

Either from memory, or by a quick scan through Acts 1-21, try and recall some of the events and stories from parts 1&2 that led up to the start of this final section.

FOCUSING

Have a listen to the song “Standing on this mountain top” by Matt Redman.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2CpU39tM0c>

Some of the song’s lyrics are these:

Standing on this mountaintop, looking just how far we've come. Knowing that for every step You were with us. Kneeling on this battle ground, seeing just how much You've done, knowing every victory was Your power in us.

Scars and struggles on the way but with joy our hearts can say, never once did we ever walk alone, never once did You leave us on our own. You are faithful, God, You are faithful

Scars and struggles on the way but with joy our hearts can say

Never once did we ever walk alone never once did You leave us on our own. You are faithful, God, You are faithful, You are faithful, God, You are faithful

Carried by Your constant grace, held within Your perfect peace, never once, no, we never walk alone.

Every step we are breathing in Your grace. Evermore we'll be breathing out Your praise. You are faithful, God, You are faithful.

Give some thought to your own experience of “walking with God”. Give thanks to God for His faithfulness and perhaps be open about times when you have, in fact, felt rather alone.



Read through Acts 21vs 17 to Acts 22 vs30.

Give some thought to the behaviour of the Crowd. Consider your own experience, if any, of being in a crowd and being swept along by the mood and actions of those around you. Does this only happen to other people? Why do you think “mob” mentality happens? “Going along with the crowd” is something that we often encounter. When is doing so something that we should question?

Paul is accused by the crowd who bay for his blood. He is rescued just in time by the arrival of the Roman soldiers who arrest him and try, in vain, to find out what the commotion is all about. He asks to speak to the crowd to explain who he is and what he is doing. Paul chooses to address the crowd in Aramaic (he could have used Hebrew) which was the most commonly used language among Palestinian Jews. By speaking to the mob in Aramaic he claims their attention and they listen to him.

Does this episode have anything to say to us about how we choose to communicate with contemporary society?

Paul basically gives his testimony and the crowd are attentive, up to the point where Paul mentions his mission to the Gentiles, after which the crowd resume their call for Paul’s death.

Oh dear! – first rule of addressing a Jewish mob - “don’t mention the Gentiles”. Why did Paul have to go and do that? Why not placate the crowd and extricate himself from the situation by covering the ground that was acceptable to his listeners? Why choose to confront “head on” the Jew/Gentile issue?

The Roman commander has the unenviable task of trying to work out why the mob are upset this time. Paul gets arrested and is hauled off to prison. The commander lets Paul have his say and then orders him to be taken off for flogging and interrogation. When it transpires that Paul is a Roman citizen the commander is a worried man and realising the consequences of mistreating Paul has him released pending further investigation. Knowing full well the consequences of playing his “Roman citizen” card, why do you think Paul did so?



Spend some time praying into one of the many situations across the world where we see the anger of crowds expressed.

Pray for those who witness to their faith in difficult and challenging circumstances.

Pray for wisdom and courage for all involved in the witness and ministry of St James.