



BAND of BROTHERS

SPRING SERIES 2026 – WEEK 8

Welcome to Jerusalem!

That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, “Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well.”

– Acts 23:11 NLT

- **God’s sovereign hand**

- God was intimately involved in Paul’s life
- From his birth
 - upbringing & education
 - calling
 - commissioning
 - and sending
- Every detail was orchestrated by God
 - Including...his travel itinerary
 - ...his ministry partners
 - ...the message he delivered
 - ...the reception of his audience
 - ...the letters he penned
 - ...his successes *and* sufferings
 - ...and the length of his life

- **A God-ordained famine**

- God’s sovereignty isn’t always obvious
- When he first arrived at Antioch...
 - ...some prophets traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up in one of the meetings and predicted by the Spirit that **a great famine was coming upon the entire Roman world.*** – Acts 11:27-28 NLT

*So the believers in Antioch decided to send relief to the brothers and sisters in Judea, everyone giving as much as they could. This they did, **entrusting their gifts to Barnabas and Saul to take to the elders of the church in Jerusalem.*** – Acts 11:29-30 NLT

- God's perfect timing
 - 44 AD – the prophecy of the famine
 - 44-46 AD – the funds were raised
 - 45-48 AD – the famine strikes
 - 48 AD – the funds were delivered
- Paul raised funds wherever he went
 - Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derby, Thyatira, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Corinth, Athens

*Now regarding your question about the money being collected for God's people in Jerusalem. You should follow the same procedure I gave to **the churches in Galatia**. – 1 Corinthians 16:1 NLT*

- And he gave them instructions

On the first day of each week, you should each put aside a portion of the money you have earned. Don't wait until I get there and then try to collect it all at once. When I come, I will write letters of recommendation for the messengers you choose to deliver your gift to Jerusalem. And if it seems appropriate for me to go along, they can travel with me. – 1 Corinthians 16:2-4 NLT

Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. – 2 Corinthians 8:1-2 NLT

For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. They even did more than we had hoped

*Since you excel in so many ways — in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us — **I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving**. I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches. – 2 Corinthians 8:3-5, 7-8 NLT*

- Paul saw giving as a grace gift
 - That reflected Christ
 - honed God
 - and built up the body

You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich. – 2 Corinthians 8:9 NLT

- Gracious giving is **contagious**

...the believers in Macedonia and Achaia have eagerly taken up an offering for the poor among the believers in Jerusalem. They were glad to do this because they feel they owe a real debt to them. Since the Gentiles received the spiritual blessings of the Good News from the believers in Jerusalem, they feel the least they can do in return is to help them financially. – Romans 15:25-27 NLT

*God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. **So then, brothers, stand firm...*** – 2 Thessalonians 13-15 ESV

- **Paul was more than a delivery man**

- He would deliver the gift
- But he had a bigger prize in mind

*As soon as I have delivered this money and completed this good deed of theirs, **I will come to see you [in Rome] on my way to Spain.** And I am sure that when I come, Christ will richly bless our time together.* – Romans 15:28-29 NLT

One of the things I always pray for is the opportunity, God willing, to come at last to see you. For I long to visit you so I can bring you some spiritual gift that will help you grow strong in the Lord. – Romans 1:11 NLT

I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. I want to work among you and see spiritual fruit, just as I have seen among other Gentiles. For I have a great sense of obligation to people in both the civilized world and the rest of the world, to the educated and uneducated alike. So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach the Good News. – Romans 1:13-15 NLT

- **Saul's ultimate goal: Spain**

- Rome was the global epicenter
- Spain was the “ends of the earth”
- The Great Commission realized

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere — in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria and **to the ends of the earth.**”* – Acts 1:8 NLT

- Paul was a student of Jesus
- And of the Hebrew prophets
 - He was familiar with the writings of Isaiah

*“So I will gather all nations and peoples together, and they will see my glory. I will perform a sign among them. And I will send those who survive to be messengers to the nations — to **Tarshish**, to the Libyans and Lydians (who are famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to all the lands beyond the sea that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory.”* – Isaiah 16:18-19 NLT

The dominant scholarly view identifies Tarshish with Tartessus, a Phoenician settlement at the mouth of the Guadalquivir River in southwestern Spain.

- Paul longed to go to “Tarshish”
 - He had made plans
 - But God had plans as well

*Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is **the purpose of the Lord that will stand.*** – Proverbs 16:21 ESV

*“I declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times what is still to come. I say, **‘My purpose will stand, and all My good pleasure I will accomplish.’**”* – Isaiah 46:10 BSB
- God had always planned for Paul to go to Jerusalem
- **God’s sovereign and unstoppable plan**

*“I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don’t know what awaits me, except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that **jail and suffering lie ahead.**”* – Acts 20:22-23 ESV

 - Paul was aware of the risk
 - And it would be confirmed by others
 - But he was willing to pay the cost

*But **my life is worth nothing to me** unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus... – Acts 20:24 NLT*

*I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, **whether I live or die.*** – Philipians 1:20 NLT

In Tyre

*We went ashore, found the local believers, and stayed with them a week. These believers prophesied through the Holy Spirit that **Paul should not go on to Jerusalem.*** – Acts 21:4 NLT

In Caesarea

*Several days later a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, arrived from Judea. He came over, took Paul’s belt, and bound his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, “The Holy Spirit declares, ‘So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles.’” When we heard this, **we and the local believers all begged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.*** – Acts 21:10-12 NLT

*But he said, “Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! **I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but even to die** for the sake of the Lord Jesus.”*

When it was clear that we couldn't persuade him, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done." – Acts 21:10-14 NLT

A timeline

35 AD – Saul's "conversion"

46-48 AD – 1st missionary trip

49-52 AD – 2nd missionary trip

Galatians

1 & 2 Thessalonians

53-57 AD – 3rd missionary trip

1 & 2 Corinthians

Romans

57-59 AD – 3rd and final visit to Jerusalem

- **Two decades of faithful service**

- He meets with James
 - The half-brother of Jesus
 - The head of the Jerusalem church
- Paul recounts his ministry
 - James and the elders glorify God
- But Paul's detractors have been busy

*...the Jewish believers here in Jerusalem **have been told** that you are teaching all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn their backs on the laws of Moses. **They've heard** that you teach them not to circumcise their children or follow other Jewish customs. – Acts 21:21 NLT*

- The Jewish believers have spread rumors
 - They paint Paul in a bad light
 - They question his faithfulness of Yahweh
 - They want to disqualify his ministry
- James asks Paul for a favor

*We have four men here who have completed their vow. Go with them to the Temple and join them in the purification ceremony, paying for them to have their heads ritually shaved. Then everyone will know that **the rumors are all false** and that you yourself observe the Jewish laws. – Acts 21:23-24 NLT*
- Paul complies with James' request
 - But is he compromising his convictions?
 - Is he giving in to peer pressure?
 - Is he failing to stand firm?
- He is removing barriers to the gospel

*I have become a slave to all people **to bring many to Christ**. When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew **to bring the Jews to Christ**. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law **I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law**. – 1 Corinthians 9:19-20 NLT*

*When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; **I obey the law of Christ**. – 1 Corinthians 9:21 NLT*

- The law of Christ
“Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?”

*Jesus replied, “You must **love the Lord your God** with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: **‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’** The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” – Acts 17:3 NLT*

- **No good deed goes unpunished**

- Seven days later...
 - Paul shows up at the Temple
 - Some Jews from Asia grab him
falsely accuse him
and beat him
 - They try to kill him
As they were trying to kill him, word reached the commander of the Roman regiment that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. He immediately called out his soldiers and officers and ran down among the crowd. When the mob saw the commander and the troops coming, they stopped beating Paul.

...the mob grew so violent the soldiers had to lift him to their shoulders to protect him. And the crowd followed behind, shouting, “Kill him, kill him!” – Acts 21:31-32, 34-35 NLT

- Paul’s response
 - Remember what he said in Caesarea
*“For I am ready not only to be imprisoned **but even to die** in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” – Acts 21:13 NLT*
 - Paul shares his testimony (Acts 22)
 - It all goes well until...
*“After I returned to Jerusalem, I was praying in the Temple and fell into a trance. I saw a vision of Jesus saying to me, ‘Hurry! Leave Jerusalem, for **the people here won’t accept your testimony about me.**’” – Acts 22:17-18 NLT*

“But the Lord said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles!’” – Acts 22:21 NLT

The crowd listened until Paul said that word. Then they all began to shout, “Away with such a fellow! He isn’t fit to live!” They yelled, threw off their coats, and tossed handfuls of dust into the air. – Acts 22:22-23 NLT

- **God’s ways are not our ways**
 - Paul had longed to go to Rome
 - It was God’s will that He go to Rome
 - But God had a different travel itinerary
 - It would involve arrest and imprisonment
 - interrogations
 - false accusations
 - and death threats
 - Paul is almost killed by the Jews
 - But he has to be rescued by the Romans
 - He gets interrogated by the High Priest
 - And has to be rescued again
 - A group of Jews make a pact to kill him
 - And is sent to Caesarea for his safety

*That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, “Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, **you must preach the Good News in Rome as well.**” – Acts 23:11 NLT*

- **Discussion Questions:**

Paul wrote Romans 11:33 just before going to Jerusalem. How could this belief have prepared him for all that he faced in Jerusalem?

Why do we need to submit our will to God even when we think what we’re doing is right?

The Book of Acts never records Paul making it to Spain. What lesson could we learn from that fact?



A MESSAGE OF HUMILITY AND
HOPE FROM THE LIFE OF PAUL

THE *CHIEF* OF SINNERS

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SPRING SERIES 2026 – WEEK 9 HOMEWORK

WEEK 9 – The plot thickens

Now under Roman protection, Paul undergoes a series of interrogations to determine the nature of his arrest and the Jew's accusations against Him. Paul's Roman citizenship will come into play, as well as his knowledge of the feud between the Pharisees and Sadducees. We will also examine the Jewish and Roman views of "the way" and explore the various characters in the story.

- Read through pages 225-248 of the PDF containing Ken's Devotional™ on the Book of Acts.
- Read Acts 23:12-25:27.
As you read through these three chapters, simply write down examples of where you can see the sovereign hand of God at work. Look for those things that, at first glance, appear to be cases of good luck, fortune, or coincidence. You will have to wrestle with those situations where it looks like someone else is in control, but God's hand is working behind the scenes to orchestrate the affairs of Paul's life.