

Building the Bridge from Conversion to Prison

Last Sunday, we began our reading of the New Testament book known as the Acts of the Apostles or simply - Acts.

Acts tells us the story of adventures of the followers of Jesus following his resurrection and ascension.

The two main characters in Acts are Peter and Paul. Our readings through the next few weeks will focus on Paul.

Last Sunday, we learned of Paul who was Saul, before his amazing conversion experience on the road to Damascus (modern day Syria). Saul was a persecutor of the followers of Jesus, dragging them from their homes, throwing them in prison, supporting their executions, and all in what he believed to be "God's name". But then, as we heard, he encounters the "Voice" of Jesus in blinding light, and he has a radical change of heart and direction in life. Saul becomes Paul.

The central location of the early "Church" was in Jerusalem. This is where James the brother of John, James the brother of Jesus, and Peter along with the other Apostles are located. Paul goes to them. They hear his story, and their enemy has now become their equal.

All is well, sort of. Paul and another Apostle named Barnabas, working as a team, go out to spread the Good News. But in Chapter 15, they, and I know you will find this hard to believe, have a major conflict around whether or not to take another guy, John named Mark, with them. So they split, each going in different directions! Seriously, church conflict already!

Barnabas takes off with John Mark, and Paul takes Silas. In Chapter 16, we pick up with the adventures of Paul and Silas.