Session 5 – following on from Sunday 6 February

Read Acts 21: 1 - 16

Twice, Pauls friends try and stop him going to Jerusalem (verses 4 and 12). There is a prophetic warning (verses 10 & 11) from Agabus a reliable prophet (see Acts 11:27-30). What is the difference in motivation between Paul and his friends?

What enables us to distinguish between what is good advice and what is Godly advice? Who would we trust to give us this advice?

What is the most difficult thing you have ever done for God? How did you get the courage and strength to do it? What resulted from your doing it?

Read Acts 21: 17 - 26

How do the Church leaders in Jerusalem respond to Paul’s reports of his work?

James reminds Paul of the letter sent to the gentile churches (see Acts 15: 20, 29 to remind yourself of this). Yet he then asks Paul to undergo rites of Jewish purification (verses 23 to 26). Why would James ask Paul to do this? Is Paul compromising by doing this?

Paul appears to show flexibility on ‘secondary matters’ in 21:23–26, related to his statement of principle in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23. How is this ‘principled flexibility’ to be applied? What does it mean to be all things to all people in order to win some? Have you ever had to make a compromise in order to lead some people to God? Where would you draw the line and refuse to compromise?

Read Acts 21: 27 - 36

Paul is the victim of deep injustice and unwarranted hatred in this section (verses 27 to 30). This is something that many minority groups have suffered many times in human history. How do we respond if we are on the receiving end? How should we respond when we see it happening to others?

God uses Roman military power to save Paul from being killed by the Jerusalem mob (verses 32 to 34). What encouraging truth about God does this illustrate?

Read Acts 22

In his account of his encounter with the Risen Jesus outside Damascus, Paul refers to the two questions he addressed to the Lord, viz. ‘Who are you?’ (verse 8) and ‘What do you want me to do?’ ( verse 10, put simply, the ‘who’ question, and the ‘what’ question. Would you agree with Dietrich Bonhoeffer who suggests that we cannot really put the ‘what’ question correctly until we have answered the ‘who’ question? How does this help us have a proper view on “good works”?

What can we learn from Paul about how we share the good news of Jesus with good people? What were the sticking points for the crowd (verse 20)? What are the sticking points likely to be for today’s society?

In what ways does this passage help us to think through what the difference is between loyal church membership and being a Christian?

Mission flows from worship. What mission is God calling us to as a church? How might we live this out? What might the cost be of doing this?