



**Acts 23:11**

**11 The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”**

**Special Music - Be Thou My Vision - 4Him**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xF737HlwbyM>

## *A Path Made Clear*

Walking on a well-worn path  
With confidence I stride  
O'er the top of a pleasant hill  
The sky stretched far and wide

Into a sun-drenched valley  
Filled with goldenrod and birches  
Where finches fly and sparrows cry  
And I find the path diverges

To the East the path is clean and clear  
Overgrown, a path leads West  
Which one to take, I did not know  
Which path for me is best?

Toss a coin and choose a side  
Pick a number, one to ten  
Toss the bones and cast the lots  
Change direction, start again

A bright young man just happens by  
And seeing my distress  
Stops and looks me in the eye  
And tries to ease my stress.

"May I help you sir?  
You seem so very lost."  
To which I answered, "I am confused  
By the fork that I've just crossed.

No sign to guide me  
on my way  
Afraid to choose  
that I might stray."

The young man paused,  
And then exclaimed  
"To the right lies favor,  
Fortune, fame.

To the left lies darkness,  
distress, and doubt.  
The choice is yours,  
Just pick a route."

With that,  
The young man gave wink  
And turning right  
He headed East

Still unsure  
And more confused  
I scratched my head  
And tried to choose.

A woman stops  
With her cart and mule  
Eyeing me  
Like I'm a fool

<p> <b>“What’s wrong, young man?  You look quite frayed.  Lost and tired  You seem afraid!”</b> </p> <p> <b>“I’m quite confused  By this choice to make  Right or left  Which one to take.”</b> </p> <p> <b>“If you take the right,”  She quickly shared,  “You will wind up  Coming right back here.</b> </p> <p> <b>If you take the left  And continue through  You’ll probably end up  Someplace new.”</b> </p> <p> <b>Saying that  She gave a click  Tagged her mule  And left right quick.</b> </p> <p> <b>I watched her leave  To parts unknown.  She took the path  That was overgrown.</b> </p>	<p> <b>Still I paused  To make a choice  And listened to  My inner voice</b> </p> <p> <b>East or West  Would both be new  But turning back  Would not be true</b> </p> <p> <b>The spirit called  From deep within  And pushed me on  To think again</b> </p> <p> <b>A breeze whispered  In my ear  A gentle voice  Soft but clear</b> </p> <p> <b>I felt at peace  My stress was gone  The fear replaced  By gentle song</b> </p> <p> <b>“The path you seek  Is not East or West  To choose which one  Would not be best</b> </p>
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**Nor is turning back  
The way you came  
For on that path  
There is no gain**

**Before you now  
a new path springs  
A path that only  
I can bring**

**A righteous path  
Not all can see  
The only path  
That sets you free**

**And then and there  
My eyes did see  
A path led north  
Beyond the trees**

**My heart at peace  
My mind at rest  
I had no doubt  
This path was best**

**I headed north  
Without disdain  
And ne'er did I  
Look back again.**

## **Paul's Third Missionary Journey**

- A. Paul started his third missionary journey in Antioch**
- B. He had a home in Antioch and it kind of served as his base of operations.**
- C. Both his first and secondary missionary journey's ended in Antioch**
- D. Paul's third missionary journey began in Antioch.**
- E. He did not take either Barnabas or Silas with him.**
- F. He covered many of the established churches and also a lot of new ground as well.**
- G. He ended his journey in Jerusalem.**

## **Paul has a difficult time in Jerusalem**

- A. He preaches the gospel and shares his testimony**
- B. Those who knew his story and disagreed with him, had him arrested and bound with chains**
- C. Paul asks to address the crowd.**
- D. When Paul tells the crowd that the Lord sent him to Gentiles to preach, they call for his head.**  
**“Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!”**
- E. They want him flogged and as the soldiers prepare to flog him, he plays the “Roman Citizen” card which stops everyone in their tracks.**
- F. There were several ways to become a Roman Citizen**

- a. You could buy your citizenship. It was very expensive. The commander of the soldiers that had arrested Paul had bought his citizenship
- b. You could do something extremely heroic in battle and be granted citizenship.
- c. You could provide some great service to the Roman Empire and be granted citizenship
- d. Or you could be born into citizenship. If you father was a Roman Citizen, then part of your birthright was Roman Citizenship.  
Paul's mother was a Jew, but his father was a Roman Citizen.

G. The commander is not about to flog a Roman Citizen, especially a citizen that was born into citizenship.

H. But the commander did want to find out exactly why the Jews were so angry with Paul so he takes him before the Sanhedrin.

- a. Paul does insult Ananias, the High Priest which makes everyone angry.
- b. Paul apologizes saying quoting scripture **'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'**
- c. Paul gets a little sneaky. He knows that some of the Sanhedrin are Pharisees and some are Sadducees.
  - i. Pharisees believe in the hope of resurrection.
  - ii. Sadducees don't believe in resurrection at all

- iii. He tells the crowd **“My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead.”**
- d. That causes a riot. The Pharisees want to let Paul go and the Sadducees want to kill him and the commander is worried that Paul will be torn apart so he orders his men to take Paul back to the barracks.
- I. It is at this point that we find our scripture for today. **The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”**

#### **Paul’s path is clear**

- A. The Lord made it very clear that Paul was going to testify in Rome
  - a. This answered a lot of questions for Paul
  - b. This validated his choices.
  - c. This gave him renewed purpose
  - d. This also shows him that God is not through with him yet.
- B. You have to know by now that Paul is pretty tired of people trying to kill him all the time.
  - a. Even after this revelation that he is going to testify in Rome, there is a new plot in Jerusalem to have him killed.
  - b. Over forty men take an oath that they will not eat or drink again until they have killed Paul and they set up an ambush for him.

- c. The plot is revealed to the commander and tells two of his centurions **“Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight. Provide horses for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Governor Felix.”**

**How do we apply this?**

- A. God has a plan for each and every one of us**

**Micah 6:8**

**He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.**

**And what does the Lord require of you?**

**To act justly and to love mercy**

**and to walk humbly with your God.**

**1 Peter 4:10-11**

**Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.**



**B. How do we approach God's plan?**

**Proverbs 3:5-6**

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding;  
in all your ways submit to him,  
and he will make your paths straight.**

**C. How will God equip us?**

**Hebrews 13:20-21**

**Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the  
eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus,  
that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything  
good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing  
to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and  
ever. Amen.**

**D. How do we pray for guidance?**

**Jeremiah 33:2-3**

**“This is what the Lord says, he who made the earth, the Lord  
who formed it and established it—the Lord is his name: ‘Call to**

**me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'**

**How will we know when we are in God's will?**

**Hebrews 10:35-36**

**So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.**

**You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.**

**Each one of us faces choices every day. Some are life defining choices. Most are not. But, as Christians, we need to seek God's input continuously in our lives so that He is always a part of the choices we make. We must allow Him to define our paths with the firm understanding that they may not be the paths that we, ourselves, would normally choose. If we feel that God is asking us to do something that we feel we are unqualified to do, we must trust that God will provide the insight, wisdom, knowledge and skill that is necessary to accomplish the task He has set before us. Noah had never built a boat before the ark. Moses had never led a nation of people. Paul was ill equipped to turn the world upside down. And yet each and every one of them said yes and rose to meet the task before them. They embraced the**

**impossible and trusted God to provide them with what was necessary to successfully complete their missions. We cannot allow the world to redefine what God has already defined as a path, true and straight, for each of us. Our God is bigger than any mountain we face, any river we need to cross, any task bigger than our own imaginations can conceive. We are the children of a mighty and profound God and given to his purpose.**

**AMEN**