



St James Woodley - Resources for Journey through Acts (Part 2)

Chapters 13-21 May – July 2020



Week 3: "Wobbling but NOT falling down!"



SETTLING

Back in the 1970's you, your children, grandchildren or parents(?) might have enjoyed playing with "Weebles", little plastic egg-shaped toys with the signature ability to right themselves if knocked over. Thinking back to your own childhood what toys do you recall as being particularly special or memorable? Was there a toy or game that you really wished you could have had but sadly never came your way?



**Weebles Wobble
but they don't fall down**

FOCUSING

Quietly read through Psalm 22. There are several links in this Psalm to Jesus crucifixion - try and spot them. Interestingly, this is apparently the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament. David, the writer, follows a path from the deep despair of feeling isolated from God, resulting from the attacks of those who oppose him, to firm confidence in God. The events of Easter also reflect this same pattern, as the darkness and desolation of Good Friday give way to the hope and triumph of Easter Sunday. Ponder the Psalm and the Easter story. As you seek to develop a closer walk with God, take heart from David's experience and spend some time being open with God about your concerns and equally open to receive His encouragement, ministry and blessing.



Acts Chapters 13 and 14 – The First Missionary Journey (Cont.)

"shake the dust from one's feet" - means to depart in a hurry, especially from an unpleasant situation;

And that's where we left Paul and Barnabas last time, making a swift exit from Pisidian Antioch in a cloud of dust! After a favourable reception the Jewish leaders felt threatened by the gospel, and that gentiles could believe as well, and ganged up on the disciples to drive them out of town. So where next!

The general area where they were was called Galatia, and it is to the young churches in this area that the Letter to the Galatians was later written. It was part of the Roman empire and, as was their wont, the Romans linked their main settlements with good, paved roads (for which they are justifiably famous!). So having arrived in Pisidian Antioch, by way of the decent road up from the coast, it was a "no brainer" to stay on the good road, and see where it led; and where the good road (The Via Sebaste) led was to the town of Iconium, about 90 miles to the south east.

Read Acts 14 vs 1-7. Recalling our first series on Acts (Chapters 1-12) the Jerusalem church's pattern of witness was characterised by the three elements of **what was said, what was done, and the way they lived**. Try and identify how this pattern was repeated by Paul and Barnabas in Iconium.

As in Pisidian Antioch, the mission to Iconium was met with both acceptance and rejection. Consider the sequence of events vs 1-4 – what might we learn from this as we engage with mission in our own context? Think Weebles!

Eventually it seems that “discretion proved the better part. . .” and in the face of impending serious physical assault, the disciples moved on to Lystra.

Read Acts 14 vs 8-20. This looks like Acts 3 all over again! BUT with unintended consequences. Presumably Paul felt the Holy Spirit prompting him to minister to the lame man and obviously by His power the man is instantly healed from his life-long disability. This was consistent with the witness of “what is done” BUT in the context of Lystra, might the apostles have got it wrong?

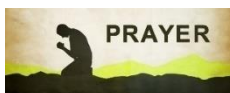
Zeus was big in Lystra where a temple was dedicated to him and local legend spoke of a day when Hermes and Zeus once came visiting the town together. Unknown to Paul and Barnabas, the locals, seriously impressed by the healing, thought they knew who they were dealing with and acted accordingly. Despite a fairly desperate and structured effort by P&B the people take some persuading.

Arguably Paul and Barnabas acted a little impulsively and had failed to appreciate the nature of the culture into which they were seeking to introduce the gospel. Is there a lesson here for us?

Manipulated by the well-travelled Jews from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium, the people of Lystra are incited to violence and turn on the disciples. Paul comes off worst, although “stoning” couldn't have been much fun for either of them, and is left for dead – a set-back indeed. This would certainly have been serious and although the new believers helped out, the two disciples wisely withdraw and leave town. Paul and Barnabas seem to be on a roller coaster – some people become believers while others become jealous and angry. Sometimes they are welcomed, then at others, they get rejected and abused. Although seriously “wobbled” they don't seem to “fall”!

Leaving Lystra behind and “licking their wounds” the two disciples choose a safer option by leaving the main road and taking a side road to the town of Derbe. (Read Acts 14 vs 21a) Little is included about Derbe, although “winning a large number of disciples” there must have been a great encouragement to P&B. You'd have thought that they might have decided to finish on a “high” and then nip across the mountains to Paul's town of Tarsus and then along the coast and back to Antioch. However . . .

Read Acts 14 vs 21-28. In a way, a quick return to Antioch would have left the job only half done. “Phase 2” of the journey saw P&B retracing their steps to the places where both good and bad things had happened. This time they avoided confrontations and focused on building up the groups of believers and establishing firm foundations for church life. Give some thought to what this “return leg” involved and try to tease out any lessons for us today, as individuals, small groups and as a church.



Read Romans 5 vs 1-5 but make it personal by reading “I” and “Me” for “us” and “we”. Turn over with God your own concerns at this time and especially your own need to not “fall down” when you “wobble”!

Remember all those in positions of leadership at this time, that in addition to the wisdom and courage they need, pray that they too might persevere when the going gets tough.

Pray for those who work hard to keep us safe in body, mind and spirit.