



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

Chapters 13-21      May – July 2020



## *Week 7: When in Rome . . . (well Corinth actually!)*



### SETTLING

“**When in Rome do as the Romans do.**” The phrase means that it is advisable to follow the conventions of the area in which you are residing or visiting. Try to think of an example of this from your own experience. Consider the wisdom of the advice; does it always apply? Might there be times when it might not be the best course of action, or when for you, as a Christian, it might be unacceptable to do the Roman thing?

### FOCUSING

Paul had much to say to the church in Corinth and we have two of his letters in the New testament part of the bible. He wrote to them about various things and at times was quite harsh in his criticism of them and the way they were living. His heart though was clearly inclined towards the church and desperately wanted the best for them, so there was plenty of encouragement too. In his first letter he talks about the reality of the gospel message that he brought to them and how they needed to be really secure in their understanding of Christ’s resurrection and consequently their own.

One of the memorials in the churchyard at Sonning carries this quote from 1 Corinthians 15:

***If, for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.***

Take a few moments to ponder this verse and how it applies to you personally.

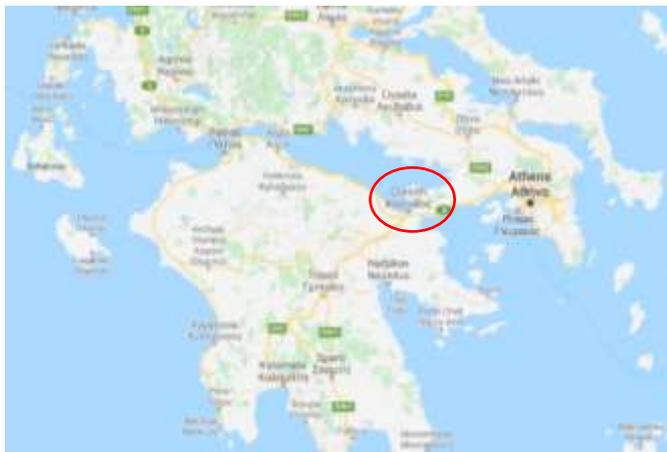
There are some who describe Christianity as “pie in the sky when you die”. Think through quietly how you might explain the error of such understanding of your faith in Jesus?



### Acts Chapter 18 vs 1-22 – The Second Missionary Journey Pt. 3

**Read Acts 18 vs 1-4: Corinth and fitting in there:** From Athens Paul makes the relatively short journey to Corinth. Although not far from Athens in distance, it is a world away in terms of people, character and economic life. Corinth lies on the isthmus (narrow strip of land) connecting mainland Greece to the region of the Peloponnese. Sea trade from the Eastern Mediterranean, on its way to Italy and Rome, had a long route to follow in navigating around the Peloponnese peninsular. Corinth was situated where a short overland trip, of just a few kilometres on a nicely paved road, saved a long and often dangerous sea voyage. This highly advantageous position meant that the city was dominated by trade, commerce, money-making, enterprise and ambition, and had grown rich on the proceeds. One writer observes: “Corinth was one of the great transport hubs of the first century. All roads may have led to Rome, but most of them went through Corinth!”

Arriving in Corinth Paul encounters another rather alien environment. This time he quickly makes contact with a couple of Jewish Christians, Aquila and Priscilla who have set up a business in the city. Aquila was from Pontus (Asia minor, now on the Black sea coast of northern Turkey) but he and his wife had been living and working in Rome. Following persecution from the emperor Claudius, Jews and Jewish Christians were forced out of the city and thus the pair came to Corinth.



For Paul the couple were a double blessing for, as well as being believers, they were also in the tentmaking trade, as was he. (For tentmaking read leather working, working in canvas, making tents and awnings, sun shades etc.) Since most small businesses operated from people's homes, Paul, not only found friends, employment, and somewhere to live, but also a base from which to exercise his mission. On Saturdays though, Paul was to be found, as usual, in the local synagogue arguing the case for Jesus with the worshipping Jewish community.

Does this imply that while in Corinth at this time, Paul was only a part-time, just on Saturdays, missionary? If the answer is "no", what does this say about how we should view our work or our use of time between Sundays?

**Read Acts 18 vs 5-7: Being FINE – Feeling in Need of Encouragement:** Once again Paul hits problems with the resident Jewish community many of whom firmly reject his teaching forcing him to declare his intention to turn his focus solely towards Gentiles. Although some Jews respond to the gospel message and many in Corinth believe and are baptised, might Paul have had a bit of a confidence wobble? Then God speaks to Paul in a vision.

Read Acts 18 vs 9-10: Carefully and consider the following:

- *Had Paul become really discouraged by his Corinthian experience?*
- *Was Paul coming to doubt his ability to continue as a missionary?*
- *Had fear of opposition subsumed us missionary zeal?*
- *If none of the above – why did God give him such an affirming and encouraging vision?*

In 1 Kings 19 we read of how the great prophet Elijah, after the staggering success of the "Carmel inter-deity bar-b-que challenge", crumpled at Jezebel's threat and ran for his life.

How can serious spiritual doubt be managed in our lives today?

**Read Acts 18 vs 11-22: Commitment, Timing and Accountability:**

Read Acts 18 vs 11: Paul carries on ministering in Corinth for another year and a half. Is there anything of significance for us to deduce from this "throw away" comment of Luke's?

Read Acts 18 vs 12-18: At some point Paul had taken a vow, possibly a temporary Nazirite vow (see Numbers 6 vs 1-21). No mention is made of when or why he embarked upon it. Since he ends it as he leaves Corinth, perhaps it related to being in that city. Any suggestions as to what it might have been about?

Read Acts 18 vs 19-22: Homeward bound, Paul takes Aquila and Priscilla with him as far as Ephesus and leaves them there to presumably work and begin the witness in this important and extensive city.

You'd have thought that finding some Jews who actually wanted to hear more about Jesus would have really pleased Paul and that he'd have been delighted to stay and pursue the opportunity. However, he declines the invitation but promises that he will return. Is there a lesson here about judging when the time is right to share with someone about Jesus?

Before he actually gets back to Antioch Paul touches base with the church in Jerusalem (implied in verse 22). Why is it important to be accountable to others in our work and ministry?



If you are currently in paid work, take time to pray about your job, the people you work with and how you show the love of Jesus in what you do.

If you are not currently in paid work, pray for those Christians who you know who are, as they seek to be "salt and light" in their work place.

Pray for those you know who are newly without paid work. Ask God to show you how you might be a help and encouragement to them at this difficult time.

Pray again for the 5 people you identified during the "Thy Kingdom Come season".

Paul stayed on in Corinth for a year and half – ask God to help you to patiently persevere in your life and witness for Him.

The bible would suggest that if you feel discouraged in your walk with God, you are in good company! However, take the lessons and encouragements from scripture and ask God to nurture you and affirm you in your faith.