



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

Chapters 13-21 May – July 2020



Week 8: Hearing the rest of the story.



SETTLING

What was the last live theatre production that you saw? Think back to this and other times that you have been to the theatre, what you saw, how you remember the experience, what impressed you, what, if anything, spoke to you, how did it make you feel?

FOCUSING

Look at Galatians 5vs 22 – 23. In this well-known passage Paul describes how a life filled with God's Holy Spirit should be lived. Take a few moments to consider each of the 9 "fruits" in turn. Allow time to reflect upon what each means and to what degree it is exhibited in your life and experience at the moment. Give thanks for the work of the "gardener" and ask for his help and attention where it is needed.



Acts Chapter 18 vs 23 - 20 vs 1 – The Third Missionary Journey Pt. 1

Read Acts 18 vs 23 – 28: It's not always easy to judge time from the way that Luke writes, but it seems Paul has a pretty quick turn-round in Antioch before he once more heads off to begin his third Missionary journey. While he revisits the churches that he founded on his first journey, another missionary has arrived in the great city of Ephesus. The living bible tells us that ***"While he (Apollos) was in Egypt, someone had told him about John the Baptist and what John had said about Jesus, but that is all he knew. He had never heard the rest of the story!"***

Apollos was a good man, using his time, gifts and talents to preach powerfully about the coming Messiah. Although God used him, neither he, nor those who responded to his message, knew or experienced the fullness of the good news of Jesus. Fortunately, Paul's trusted friends, Priscilla and Aquila were in Ephesus and were able to take Apollos to one side and explain to him what he had missed. Having welcomed the "full story" into his life, Apollos goes over to Corinth and God greatly blesses his ministry there.

There are people in churches today who faithfully serve but seem to have failed to grasp the fullness of the gospel of Jesus? Why, do you think, does this happen and what can be done about it?

Read Acts 19 vs 1-7: For the dozen disciples who encounter Paul on his arrival in Ephesus, everything changes as they receive baptism in the name of Jesus, and, as Paul lays his hands on them, are filled with the Holy Spirit.

A few years later Paul writes his letter to the Ephesians and includes this reminder:

Don't drink too much wine, for many evils lie along that path; be filled instead with the Holy Spirit and controlled by him. (TLB)

Linguistic scholars tell us that the way the phrase “be filled with the Spirit” is written, implies both present and continuous; once and on-going. Pause for a few minutes to assess where you are with this. If “being filled with the Spirit” is not something that you have experienced then perhaps resolve to pursue it. If you have been filled with the Spirit, is it an on-going reality in your life?

What might the idea of being “controlled by the Holy Spirit” actually mean? Is it a comfortable concept for you or does the thought cause you to be concerned?

Read Acts 19 vs 8-20: Ephesus was home to the *Tempe of Diana* – one of the famous 7 Wonders of the ancient World. In the city, where Diana was known as Artemis, her temple was the focus for pilgrimage and attracted visitors from all over the ancient world. Miracles, especially healings, were very much part of the scene. Ephesus were big on miracles and magic, and thus, when Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, ministers, and lives are changed, and people are healed, it gets noticed.

The account of the incident with the Seven sons of Sceva, and the attendant consequences, is quite chilling. How does this make you feel about how seriously we need to take the work of God's Spirit in our lives and the ministry of our church today?

Read Acts 19 vs 21-41: It seems that Paul has a growing awareness of where his future travels will lead him which becomes clearer as his current trip unfolds. However, before he takes Paul onwards from Ephesus, Luke treats us to an account of serious civil disturbance in the city, caused by the successful spread of the gospel message and the change it brings in people's lives.

Luke's comment in verse 32 is interesting. Being swept along as part of a crowd may not be part of our regular experience but being influenced by popular opinion or movements spawned by significant political, economic, social or environmental issues, is a reality that may come our way. Events, as in Ephesus, can easily get out of hand and the consequences can be serious. Consider how Christians might manage such pressures; do we avoid them or engage with them? Is this a case of being “in the world but not of it”?

Paul rather wanted to get involved, but the local Christians, as well as some city officials, persuaded him to steer clear. Perhaps there are times when we too need to weigh up the wisdom of the urge to “get stuck in” against holding back and allowing matters to play out without our involvement?

Read Acts 20 vs 1: Leaving Ephesus Paul now heads for Greece but decides to revisit the churches he founded in Macedonia on his second journey. (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea etc.) It just reminds us that as keen as Paul was to preach the gospel of Jesus to non-believers his heart was also set on the encouragement and the building up of new believers. It was both and, not either or. Is this a pattern that our church today should determine to follow? Nurture and evangelism – both and, not either or.



*Spirit of the Living God fall fresh on me, Spirit of the Living God fall fresh on me
Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the Living God fall fresh on me.*

Relax into God's presence as you pray these words from the familiar worship song. Pray the words through, phrase by phrase and ask God to show you what the words, Melt, Mould, Fill and Use mean for you.