



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

Chapters 13-21 May – July 2020



Week 9: To Greece, again, and back again!



SETTLING

Apart from Woodley (of course) is there a place to which you are always glad to return? Perhaps, a special place in your life story, a favourite holiday destination, a former home area. What is it about such a place that always makes you happy to be there? Spend a few minutes thinking about this and analysing the appeal of your special place.

FOCUSING

If you can, have a listen to Stuart Townshend's song "The Lord's my Shepherd" - <https://youtu.be/pN4tPkX0MG0>

Have a look at Psalm 23, John 10 vs 1-18; Luke 15 vs 3-7. The imagery of sheep and shepherd is familiar but take some time now to explore it, asking Jesus (the Shepherd) to speak into your situation as one of the "sheep of his flock".



Acts Chapter 20 vs 2 - 38 – The Third Missionary Journey Pt. 2

Read Acts 20 vs 2-6: Paul was more than ready to leave Ephesus following the riot in the theatre and then made his way northwards towards the port town of Troas, scene of his "Man from Macedonia" dream some years earlier. His motivation in revisiting the places where he'd started churches was partly pastoral (to encourage them) and partly practical, upon which 1 Corinthians 16 vs 1-4 might have a bearing. This "collection" for the suffering church in Jerusalem might also explain why Paul now has a troop of seven co-workers all originating from areas where he had planted churches, and sent by them as agents to assist Paul and also ensure that their offering was duly delivered to Jerusalem.

Luke allocates only a few sentences to the group's journey from Asia, through Macedonia and then their three months long visit to Greece. While travelling, and stopping, on his travels, Paul wrote the various letters that we have in the New Testament. Within the letters are some "throw away" comments that suggest Luke misses out quite a lot of detail about Paul's journeys. It is possible that from Macedonia he actually travelled westward to the Adriatic coast and spent time in Illyricum (see Romans 15vs 19) and then in western Greece (see Titus 3 vs 12-13) before making his way down to Corinth. This is supposition, based on some textual detective work, but it reminds us that Paul's ministry was multi-faceted; he evangelised, planted churches, encouraged believers by visiting them, wrote letters to correct errors and clarify teaching and organised the collection to help those suffering back in Jerusalem.

Pause for a few minutes to reflect upon the various “facets” of your own life-ministry. Are there any aspects to which you might give more attention – a letter to write, a visit to make, a situation or person for whom you might be praying?

It was during this stay in Corinth that Paul wrote his letter to the church in Rome. However, it seems that Paul has a growing awareness that he needs to get back to Jerusalem and confront the challenges that await him there. Clearly there are challenges too in Corinth for although ready to “head for home” Paul changes his plans to sail direct from Corinth, and decides to retrace his steps up through Greece as far as Philippi, from where he takes the five days long trip (must have been against the wind!) to Troas (Asia) where he is reunited with the rest of his team.

Read Acts 20 vs 7-12:

Luke has now re-joined Paul (us and we) and in his account of events, chooses to include the incident about the death and resurrection of Eutychus. Give some thought to this and consider what Luke might have had in mind when deciding to include this. Luke was a “doctor” and might have been fascinated by the restoration of Eutychus. Given the description, might Luke have witnessed an early form of CPR?

Read Acts 20 vs 13- 38:

Imagine that you were one of the Ephesian church elders, summoned to meet Paul at Miletus. How did the meeting with Paul: Inspire you; instruct you; challenge you; upset you; encourage you? Perhaps jot down on paper your responses under these headings.

Ponder the commands of verses 28- 31a.

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock

Be shepherds of the church of God

So be on your guard!

Consider how leaders in the church today can/should put Paul’s words into practice?



Paul knew a lot about suffering in his ministry and recognised it as an integral part of his calling. Focus on one person or group you know of and uphold them in prayer as they manage the challenges of living for Jesus. Ask God to strengthen them, equip them and walk with them through their difficulties.

Pray for Laurence, our Wardens and PCC as they fathom out how best to proceed with re-opening St James Church Centre, as the Covid 19 Lockdown eases.

Pray for all those who have suffered during the pandemic and those, who in the current phase, feel fearful of coming out of lockdown.

St James, along with many churches, has found ways to adjust to circumstances over the past few months. Give thanks to God for creative responses to not meeting together and ask for His wisdom for how we go forward. As you pray, ask God to help you imagine what the future “new normal” might look like for us as a church community in our worship, life, ministry and mission. Perhaps, for possible future reference, make a note of anything that seems to strike you clearly.