



Resources for

Week 7.

*Finally - it's
Rome!*

*(but then on to
Spain, Turkey,
Greece and Italy?)*

SETTLING

With pandemic restrictions easing, at least a little, give some thought to perhaps next year and what trips you might consider taking. Perhaps fairly local or within the UK, or maybe to Europe or beyond? What are your reasons for thinking about these visits? What is motivating you to plan to travel? If in a small group, share your ideas and thoughts together.

FOCUSING

Read through the familiar story of the Lost Son found in Luke 15 vs 11-31.

The “lost” stories, in Luke 15, are introduced with these words:

By this time a lot of men and women of questionable reputation were hanging around Jesus, listening intently. The Pharisees and religion scholars were not pleased, not at all pleased. They growled, “He takes in sinners and eats meals with them, treating them like old friends.” Their grumbling triggered this story. (The Message)

We tend to find the first part of the story relatively easy to follow and recognise the love shown by the father in the story, as he welcomes the returning, and repentant youth, as a reflection of God’s love for those who turn to Him. The second part of the tale, concerning the elder son, is perhaps harder to understand. Reflect on the story, and if in a small group, discuss the idea that Jesus was trying to convey that God’s love extends to all people. Who do you think the elder son represents and why?

Perhaps use this song to help you spend a few minutes focusing on Jesus.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwNIEMJ8r3Y>



Read Acts Chapter 28 vs 11-31. Paul finally makes it to Rome as Luke’s two volume opus draws to a rather undramatic, and perhaps disappointing, conclusion.

The shipwreck survivors pass the winter of 60 AD on Malta and then join another Egyptian ship heading for Italy. They touch down on Sicily and then make their way along the west coast of southern Italy, disembarking at the port of Puteoli. Their journey then takes them across country, northwards toward Rome itself. About 30-40 miles from Rome, they are met by some of the believers who have travelled out to meet and greet them. Luke records: ***At the sight of these people Paul thanked God and was encouraged.***

Why is it nice to be met by someone you know at an airport arrivals gate or a train station ticket barrier?

Although a prisoner under guard, Paul is permitted surprising liberty to “live out of jail” and move around fairly freely. As usual, he seeks out the local Jewish community, and explains to them how he comes to be in Rome, and how the gospel message is really a fulfilment of all that God has promised them.

Luke records: ***Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe.***

Luke might have written: ***Some were convinced by what he said, but others could not believe.***

Try and explain the difference between the two statements.

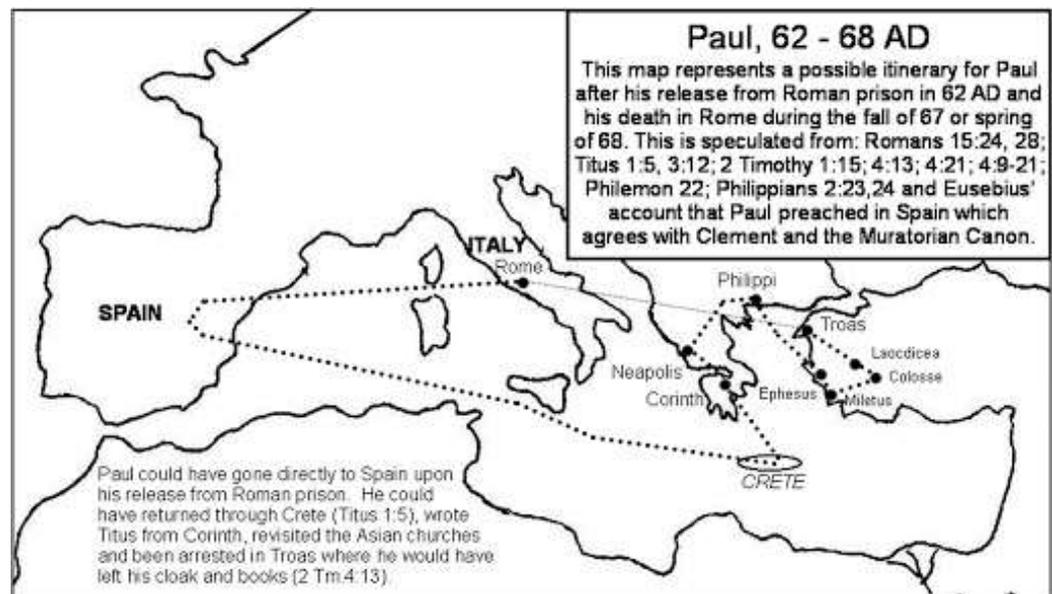
Paul’s words cause disagreement among the Jews, especially when he implies that Isaiah’s prophecy (Verses 26-27, quoting Is 6 vs 9-10) applied to them. The last straw, for some of the Jews, comes when Paul tells them that God’s salvation also extends to the Gentiles, who, unlike the Jews will listen, see, understand and turn to God, who will heal them.

Does Paul give up on the Jews? Isaiah’s words could easily describe many in our society today whose “hearts are calloused”, who “hardly hear” and whose “eyes are closed” when it comes to the gospel message.

Do we give up on them? How can/should we react when people just don’t want to know about Jesus?

Paul went on to minister in Rome, for the next two years, to all who came to visit him. And that is where Acts abruptly ends! So, did Luke run out of ink? Were the next few pages of Acts left on a bus? How might Luke have decided that this was an appropriate conclusion to his long and detailed account of the life of Jesus and the start of the church?

There is a school of thought that suggests after the two years in Rome, Paul is tried and acquitted and then sets off on a final “Missionary Journey” during the years 62-67 AD. This hypothesis is based on clues that Paul gives in some of his letters, along with records of early church tradition. The following map is what the trip might have looked like.



Give thanks to God for those who encourage you in your faith and pray that God will use you to do the same for others.

Pray for those who seemingly just don’t want to know about Jesus today. Pray for an individual you know as well as for our local community and nation.

Take the opportunity to pray about your own “next missionary journey”. Ask for God’s guidance as to the next phase of your walk with him.