

Supporting Notes & Questions

Week beginning Monday 1st February 2021

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Acts 20. Paul travels widely encouraging and strengthening the existing churches.

After trouble in Ephesus, Paul travels round Macedonia and Achaia, including Corinth, encouraging all the churches. Opposition disrupts Paul's plans, so he returns to spend the Passover in Philippi before going to the port of Troas where he fits in an all-night, goodbye sermon. Poor Eutychus whose name means Lucky! vv9ff.

Paul hoped to get to Jerusalem in time to celebrate Pentecost there. They take the island-hopping sea route. Paul invites the leaders from Ephesus to visit him at the port of Miletus where he encourages them and gives them final instructions. Paul asks the leaders to take notice of his motivation and lifestyle when nurturing the Christian community. He also warns of trouble ahead! You won't find the words of Jesus Paul quotes in v35 in the Gospels. Matthew 10:8 is the nearest.

SECTION FOUR: PAUL THE PRISONER.

Acts 21. Paul is welcomed by the Christian leaders, but their plan ends in Paul's arrest.

Paul visits several churches on his journey. In spite of many warnings of danger ahead he arrives in Jerusalem. Paul is warmly welcomed by James, the brother of Jesus, and the church leaders and tells them about the new Christian communities. James upholds the decisions taken at the council of Jerusalem, see Acts 15. A growing number of Christian Jews in Jerusalem feel that Gentiles cannot worship God simply on the basis of faith in Jesus the Messiah alone. James suggests that Paul demonstrates his faithfulness to Jewish faith by sponsoring four young men who have taken vows. All goes well until hostile Asian Jews arrive making false accusations, leading to a violent riot against Paul, who has to be rescued by the Roman commander.

Acts 22. Paul tells his story to his Jewish accusers.

Amazingly, Paul gains permission to speak from the Roman fortress to the hostile Jews in the Temple below. The Temple crowd listen as Paul tells his story in Hebrew; his background and his encounter with Jesus until he mentions his call, when praying in the Temple, to preach to the Gentiles. The Jews are not willing to share their Messiah with Gentiles. Again Paul is rescued by the Roman Commander. A Roman Citizen could not be beaten, bound, or executed without a fair trial and their accusers had to appear in person at any trial. They also had the right to have their case heard before the emperor.

Acts 23. The Roman commander continues to rescue Paul.

Paul's appearance before the Sanhedrin did not help the Roman commander find out what he was accused of. Although the Jews were a people chosen for a purpose, see Isaiah 42:6 & 49:6, they could not believe that Gentiles could be loved by God or have any part in His kingdom. Paul's vision gives him reassurance and guidance. v 11. Paul is escorted to Caesarea for his own safety.

Acts 24. Trials before Felix in Caesarea but Paul remains in prison for two years.

Ananias brings a skilled lawyer to make the case against Paul. Paul makes his defence: He is both a loyal Jew and a follower of The Way. He points out that the Jews from Asia, who made the original accusation, should be there to give evidence. Emperor Claudius made Felix, a former slave, the procurator of Judea from 52-60 AD. Even after a session with the Roman commander from Jerusalem, no decision is taken. Paul's friends in Caesarea, see Acts 21:8ff, provided for him v23.