

Learning from Pauls Journeys and his destination

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Date: 15 November 2015

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning. Good to see everyone and if there are visitors with us this morning and haven't had a chance to scan through yet, but if there are visitors this morning it's especially good to see team coffee served at the end of the service. All are welcome to come and join with us for that evening service at 6pm this evening.

The community fellowship meets afterwards at half past 7 here. Ladies Bible study meets at 8pm tomorrow evening and I understand it's going to be at Jiriquet.

Men's Bible study will meet at the target surgery from half past 6 to 8 o'clock on Tuesday this week and thereafter at the same time and place on the first and third Tuesday of each month.

There will be a Road to Recovery prayer meeting for those who have an interest in that and particularly on Tuesday in the CC committee to be the black hair and that's this coming week and the next four weeks.

First group fellowship meets Church of Scotland Hall Tuesday at half past 7. Women for mission meet in the Leberborough Free Church Hall at half past 7 on Tuesday. It's a busy Tuesday it sounds like.

[1 : 23] Where Kevin Norman MacDonald will give a talk on his visit to Sri Lanka and there will be a usual tea and coffee and bacon stall afterwards. Prayer week on Wednesday at half past 7 on Tuesday at half past 7 on Kilda Cruises.

Christianity Explore course continues in the Hotel Hebrides at 8pm on Thursday the 19th. There will be a church meal here in the community centre this coming Saturday November 21st at 6pm.

Thank you to all who volunteer to prepare food and assist anyone and assist and anyone who's still wishing to volunteer and who can help with food or whatever else needs to be done.

Thank you to all.

Services next Lord's Day will be at 11 and 6 as usual. I'm taking by myself God willing. And the last thing is there's a Christmas fun day.

[2 : 45] It's hoped to have a Christmas fun day for the children here in the community centre on the 12th of December from 10am to 1pm. To that end we're looking for volunteers to help.

We don't need just up front people but helpers in the kitchen, helpers to register the children at the door, helpers for craft activities etc. So please pray about this work and if you feel like you're able to help please put your name on the sheet that's at the door on the way out.

These I think are all the intimations. So let's begin our service now and worship God. And we sing to his praise from Psalm 100. Psalm 100.

The words on the stream. Also. All people that on earth do dwell. Sing to the Lord with a cheerful voice. Him serve with mirth.

His praise forth tell. Come ye before him. And rejoice. We stand to sing. All people that on earth do dwell.

[3 : 58] Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. Him serve with mirth.

His praise forth tell. Come ye before him. And rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed. Weanu without Me.

If it is Myself, He will save my life as He gets away. How and I will forgive me. O enter the wicked gates with praise, A brooch with joy in his horse unto Praise God and bless his name always, For it is simply so to do, For why the Lord of God is true, His mercy is forever true,

Heads to that altar, Buries to, And shall promise you, Each endure.

[6 : 16] Let's unite our hearts and care, let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this new day, We thank you for this new day, We thank you for this new invitation, New encouragement to come into your presence as your people, As a branch of the church of Jesus Christ.

We thank you for that calling that we reflect on week upon week, Where we are commanded to, we are encouraged to come. We thank you for the words of Jesus, That come so often to my, Come unto me, All who labour and are heavy laden, All who are weary and burned, All who are tired and worn down, And his promises that I will give you this.

We thank you for that this morning, We are given the encouragement of knowing that Christ is with us. We thank you for that the name of Jesus is intimated in his coming, In the name of Emmanuel, God with us.

And we thank you for that this morning, As we meet in the name of Jesus, We have the promise that you are here with us. And so we pray that we would know that, We would have that sense of your presence.

We pray that we would know the reality of God, Moving in this place and in our lives and our minds. To that end, Lord, we pray that you would prepare us, As we come to open your word, We ask that you would clear our minds of all, That would distract us and preoccupy us.

[8 : 14] And Lord God, that you would prepare us, So that we will meet with you, And so that we will hear you speak. We thank you that you are the God who loves us, The God who is good, And the God who does speak to us, And reach out to us in time.

And we thank you that we can come to you, With our petitions for ourselves and for others, For a world that is so broken. And this morning, Lord, we pray, In particular, For a world that shows so many signs of being sin sick.

As we think about the horror of what we have seen in Paris, Over these last couple of days, We pray, Lord, for all who are suffering, All who are grieving, All who are trying to deal with the trauma and the horror, And the scars that these things leave.

We pray for those who have lost loved ones, And who are needing to meet with you as the God of all comfort.

We pray for those who are living with bad sense of fear. And we pray that they would know that the Lord is our strength, And our salvation, And when we are trusting in Him, we need not fear.

[9 : 54] So we pray for the people of Paris, We pray for the people of Lebanon, We pray for the people of Syria, We pray for the people of Israel, We pray for so many people groups in this world, Who are suffering, And who are enduring conflict and violence day after day.

And where there is war, We pray that you would bring peace. Where there is suffering, We ask, Father, that you would bring relief. Where there is darkness, We pray that the light of Christ would shine in.

We pray in particular for places where there is Christless religion dominant. We pray for places where there is religious zeal, And we pray that you would bring peace.

There is no trace of the grace of Jesus. And we ask, Father, that into these dark situations, Jesus may break through.

He is the one who said, I am the light of the world. And we pray that his light may shine. We pray for your people in places where things are most dark at this time.

[11 : 09] And we ask that you would enable them, In the power of the Holy Spirit, to shine for Christ. To hear our prayers, Lord, for a world that so much groans under the weight of sin.

We thank you that Jesus is Redeemer. And when he returns, all things will be made new. And Lord, we pray that the force of the Christ, we would be found trusting in him.

The one who died to save us. The one who died to ensure victory over sin, over Satan, over death, over hell. We thank you that all who are trusting in Christ are secure.

And all who are trusting in Christ are able to say, Even in the midst of dark days, Oh, people have an attitude to us. Sing for the Lord with cheerful voice.

We thank you that the joy of the Lord is steady and is enduring. And you are the God who does not change. So hear our prayers, Lord, for this world that you love.

[12 : 21] Hear our prayers for the congregation of all who are gathered here this morning. You know our needs and we come to you as the God who knows us. And we pray that you would meet each one at the point of their need.

We pray for those in particular need this morning. And we think especially of those who are anxious for loved ones. For those who are anticipating procedures in the course of this week.

And we commit them to you. Especially for Katrina and for Farrakhan away from us today. And with the prospect of treatment and hospital, we ask that you, the great physician, would order all things.

And we are that you would be close and that all that's done would be effective in bringing health and bringing well-being. We thank you that you are the God who answers prayer.

And we thank you for those even this morning whom we missed for so long and were back with us. And we acknowledge that you are the God who hears and who answers our prayers. So continue with us now, Lord, we pray.

[13 : 29] Cleanse us from our sin, we confess it before you. Take away all that would seek to exalt ourselves, we pray. And fill this place and fill each of us with the Holy Spirit.

That we may know our sin, that we may see the beauty of Christ. And Lord, that we may have that faith to reach out and to trust him.

To hear our prayers and continue with us and lead us in the power of the Spirit. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Boys and girls, would you like to come out, please?

You are all very far away today. How are you all today? All fine?

One or two things to show you. Sweeties. Sweeties. We're going to play a game today called, who can keep their fingers?

[14 : 35] Who knows what this is? That's the parents chuckle somewhat nervously. We're not going to use the parents, we'll use the old people.

We're used to adults today, well we know we won't. But who knows what this is? Bethany? A mousetrap? Yes, a mousetrap. It's actually a cat. It catches other things too, doesn't it?

Catches rats too. We don't need these so much anymore since we have our three cats. But this is something that was in our garage before. How do these things work?

Do you know? Anyone know? Anyone know? How do you work these things? Yes?

Okay. Well I'll show you. It's probably easier than we just show you. Ever seen one of these work before? Well, if you were a rat, this is how it would work.

[15 : 43] If you were a rat that liked sweets, this is how it would work. Imagine, imagine this was cheese. Then what you do is you get the bit of cheese and you put the bit of cheese on there.

And the rat's in the garage and he's looking at the cheese and thinking, I like the look of that cheese. Not sure what it's sitting on. But I like the look of the cheese.

And then you do that. Okay.

Now have a hands up for Volta Pierce, please. No, it's not like Alistair. You can trust the minister too much sometimes. I'm sure we've stopped.

So here we go. This is the garage. Imagine you're all the rats. And you're looking and you're sitting there and you're thinking, that's a tasty looking bit of cheese. It's not on the floor though.

[16 : 53] It's sitting in an unusual place. I wonder should I go and look at that cheese? And so the rat gets a bit closer. Death of the cheese.

Gets a bit closer still. Gets a bit closer still. And then it gets a bit braver.

It just takes a wee lick of the bit of cheese. Nothing happens. And then it says, maybe I'll just have a wee... Oh, she's pretending to get a fright there.

And so the rat goes and it tries to get a bit of cheese. The cheese flies. The thing snaps. And the rat gets caught.

If you listen to Kenny Fish, he was telling me, the rats and our guys were so big, they would just have that thing with that rucksack and they would walk away. And throw it. But that's how the rat...

[18 : 12] That's how the rat trap works. They get tempted by the cheese. They go up. Sniff. Maybe a wee lick. And they go for a bite. Then... Snap.

Don't think we ever got any actually like that. Just in case you think we're cruel. We've got cats instead. Do you know... I was looking at that... this week.

And I saw it in the garage. And I thought to myself... that is a lot like... the way the devil works. You know there's a devil and he's real.

And he's horrible and he's nasty. And he likes to trick us. And you know what he does? He gets things and he makes sin...

look as hasty as possible. And it's like he... he puts it in for us. And he says... we should have a wee bite. Have a sniff.

[19 : 15] It's delicious really. And... for all of us... it's different things... that the devil catches his eye with. He always tells us... it'll be okay.

It'll be okay. It'll be very lovely. It'll be delicious. The devil makes sin look so... so tempting. And then we get too close... and too close...

and he loves... nothing better... than to see... things just go... snap. To see us get hurt. If that's what he likes...

do you think he loves us? No. Do you think sin is a good thing to play with? Absolutely not. Do you think Jesus loves us?

Definitely. And do you know... what Jesus said? He came to warn us... about sin. He came to warn us... saying...

- [20 : 16] yes, sometimes it'll look... very, very, very tempting. But it's... very destructive. It's not good for us. And so Jesus came to warn us...
- about the devil. He came to warn us... about the snap... of sin. And he loved us so much... that he actually came to fight...
- against sin. So that when we believe in him... the sin... that is in our hearts... he takes it out. and he deals with it.
- And he keeps us safe... in this world... and forever. And so we're able to say... when we're trusting in Jesus... we fear nothing...
- and no one... because we know how much he loves us. will we pray about that? Let's pray. Lord God...
- [21 : 15] we thank you... that you do love us... and we thank you... that as we think about Jesus... and as we look at Jesus... we see... how much he loves us. We thank you... that Jesus... came to warn us... about the danger of sin... and the snap... of sin. We thank you... that he came to warn us... about the devil... the one who... is like a sly old fox...
- the one who tries... to trick us... and trap us. We thank you... that Jesus is so... so much powerful... more powerful... than the devil. We thank you... that on the cross...
- Jesus... he overcame sin... and he overcame... the devil. We thank you... that his promise... is that when we trust in him...
- we are safe... forever. So I pray... that all the boys and girls... and all of us here... we wouldn't play with sin... we'd keep as far away...
- [22 : 07] from it as possible... but we would... cling to... and trust in Jesus... and we pray these things... in Jesus name... Amen. We're going to sing now...
- boys and girls... the words on the screen... it's a paraphrase of... Psalm 23... and it's 1008... the missing phrase... if you want to...
- use the book. The Lord's my shepherd... I'll not want... he makes me lie... in pastures... and we sing... in the chorus... I will trust... in you... alone.
- Acts chapter 21... is the passage... that we... have come to... in our studies... in the book of Acts... which takes us...
- to the end of... Paul's... missionary journey... that's chapter 21...
- [23 : 01] and we... read from verse 1... to verse 36... Luke writes... and he says...
- after we had... torn ourselves... away from them... we put out to sea... and sailed... straight to Kos... the next day... we went to Rhodes... and from there... to Patara... we found a ship...
- crossing over... to Phoenicia... went on board... and set sail... after... sighting Cyprus... and passing... to the side of it... we sailed to Syria... we landed at Tyre...
- where our ship was... to unload its cargo... finding the disciples... there... we stayed with them... seven days... through the spirit... we urged Paul... not to go on... to Jerusalem...
- but... when our time was up... we left... and continued... on our way... all the disciples... and their wives... and children... accompanied us... out of the city... and there on the beach...
- [23 : 53] we knelt to pray... after saying goodbye... to each other... we went aboard the ship... and returned home... we continued... our voyage from Tyre... and landed at Ptolemais...
- where we greeted... the brothers... and stayed with them... for a day... leaving the next day... we reached Caesarea... and stayed at the house... of Philip the Evangelist... one of the seven...

he had four... unmarried daughters... who prophesied... after we had been... there a number of days... a prophet Agabus... came down... from Judea... coming over to us... he took Paul's belt...

tied his own hands... and feet with it... and said... the Holy Spirit says... in this way... the Jews of Jerusalem... will bind the owner... of this belt... and will hand him over... to the Gentiles...

when we heard this... we... and the people... they are treated with Paul... not to go up to Jerusalem... then Paul answered... why are you weeping... and breaking my heart...

[24 : 51] I am ready... not only to be bound... but also to die in Jerusalem... for the name of the Lord Jesus... when he would not be... when he would not be... the Savior... he gave up...

and said... the Lord's will... be done... after this... we got ready... and went... up to Jerusalem... some of the disciples... from Caesarea... accompanied us... and brought us...

to the home of... Manasseh... where we... were to stay... he was a man... who psyched us... and one of... the early disciples... when we arrived... at Jerusalem... the brothers received us...

warmly... the next day... Paul... and the rest of us... went to see James... and all the elders... who were present... Paul greeted them... and reported in detail... what God... had done among the Gentiles...

through... his ministry... when they heard us... they praised God... then they said to Paul... you see... brother... how many thousands... of Jews have believed...

[25 : 45] and all of them... are zealous... for the law... they've been informed... that you teach... all the Jews... who were among our Gentiles... to turn away from Moses... telling them not to...

circumcise their children... or live according... to our customs... what shall we do... they will certainly hear... that you have come... so do what we tell you...

there are four men with us... who have made a Bible... take these men... join in their... purification rights... and pay their expenses... so that they can have... their heads shaved... then everybody will know...

there is no truth... in these reports about you... but that you yourself... are living in obedience... to the law... as for the Gentile believers... we have written to them... our decision...

that they should abstain... from fruit sacrifice... to idols... from blood... from the meat of strangled animals... and from sexual immorality... the next day... Paul took the men... and purified himself...

[26 : 37] along with them... then he went to the temple... to give notice... of the day... when the days of purification... would end... and the offering... would be made to each of them... for each of them...

when the seven days... were nearly over... some Jews... from the province of Asia... saw Paul at the temple... they stirred up... the whole crowd... and seized them... shouting... men of Israel...

help us... this is the man... who teaches all men... everywhere... against our people... and our law... in this place... and besides... he has brought Greeks... into the temple area... and defiled this holy place...

they had previously seen... Trophimus... the Ephesian... in the city with Paul... and assumed that Paul... had brought him... into the temple area... the whole city was aroused...

and the people came running... from all directions... seizing Paul... they dragged them... from the temple... and immediately... the gates... were shut... while they were trying... to kill him...

[27 : 32] news reached the command... of the Roman troops... that the whole city of Jerusalem... was in an uproar... he had once... took some officers... and soldiers... and ran down to the crowd...

when the rioters... saw the commander... and the soldiers... they stopped beating Paul... the commander... came up... and arrested him... and ordered him... to be bound... with two chains...

then he asked... who he was... and what he had done... some of the crowd... shouted one thing... and some another... and since the commander... could not get to the truth... because of the uproar...

he ordered... that Paul be taken... into the barracks... when Paul reached the steps... the violence of the mob... was so great... that he had to be carried... by the soldiers...

the crowd... that followed... kept shouting... away... with him... and we'll leave it there... Amen... and may God bless that... of his...

[28 : 25] word to us... and ask Talon... to come and lead us... in prayer... in Galon... to come and lead us... to enter in the earth... Hello, Everything's While No-Veo was Unless One of heart continues, Nothing is called Asoikhi and thy yakukan quello Illuminativity.

does it not watch me for dinner when I am able so many people before living I'm going for you so they will offer that I have noependencyana should worship here.

There will be a way behind how progressive the young government would go and continue to reopen when we're opening is Most people sw lobbyists and the front will go nobody will leave been of the warmy somebody fight It's okay meals you command all

Valley land in ifailable or not ifasto is a hell of a pantlyalhy chat box why isasto we opening this the sorry 7v3 do a zero here okay now our Sometimes the place may be in the heart of the house to become a greatness.

When you arefte one who shall breathe uncomfortable rather than you will be everyone to do it. You have to join having's, to make sure that it is the way you are impacted by someone.

[32 : 28] We sing now in Psalm 62 in Galen verses 5 and 6 of Psalm 62, which we have on the screen with, My soul wait thou with patience upon thy God alone, On him dependeth all my hope and expectation, He only my salvation is, and my strong rock is he, He only my sure defence I shall not move be.

Peace. Two standards in Galen to God's praise. O man of the name, O man of the name, O man of the name, O man of the name, O man of the name, O man of the name, O man of the name, O man of the name,

O man of the name, O man of the name, Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[35 : 49] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Holy Spirit that he would be our teacher. As I speak and as we all listen, commanding the authority of the word of God, we pray that you, by the spirit, Lord, would be active and speaking as individuals to us, helping us to understand and helping us to know how these things relate to our lives.

So meet with us we pray for your glory and for our salvation and for our building up in the faith. And we pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, if you could turn in your Bible, please to the book of Acts and the chapter that we read, Acts chapter 21. Acts chapter 21.

[37 : 58] Acts 21. And I tend this morning to to move at a fairly high speed going through the verses really and that's just what we will do. We'll just step through the verses.

Interestingly, this evening we'll have the opportunity to almost look inside the mind of the Apostle Paul. Not that this is my engineering, not that I even noticed this until I began to study this week, but where we find Paul in Ephesians, the chapter that we'll study tonight, Ephesians 3, the beginning, we're taken behind the curtain of his mind as he was dealing with all the things that were going on in circumstance in the chapter that we've been reading here just now.

So really today what we do is we step through the Acts. We look at all that could be observed by the eyewitnesses in terms of this and then we'll think more about what was going on in Paul's mind than maybe what God was doing through Paul as we turn into the world this evening.

We'll aim for children, there's no children here, but we'll aim for the parents, we'll aim for the hour tonight again. Anyway, in terms of beginning this study today, it occurred to me by way of introduction that the first thing we were looking at in this chapter was a journey and on Thursday of this week, Mary and I were debating the wisdom of a planned journey that we had promised to undertake to use.

This had gone in the diary a few weeks ago and so it was something that the children were looking forward to and the cousins were looking forward to and so we planned to go to Euston then as the weather forecast became more ferocious and as Abigail began to make herself known and the wind began to blow.

[40 : 03] The big question that dominated Wednesday, Thursday and beginning of Friday in our house was do we stay put or do we undertake this journey?

And there's something of that going on in the chapter that we come to. Something of a debate about a journey was being worked out in the front end of Acts chapter 21.

Although for Paul in undertaking this journey the risks that he anticipated were much more formidable than some blowing gale. So four points.

We spend much more time on the first two and the first point is simply to note the journey. We see the journey. And we are given much in the way of detail really about the journey and all that was going on within it.

But then Luke, his purpose in writing this is not to write a travel brochure for us to know what it looks like in each place. He doesn't give us much in terms of the detail or the character of the visits but he tells us the names of the places and the people that Paul encountered on this journey.

[41 : 17] So we can scan the verses here and we can map the progress of this journey. And if you have a Bible that has maps at the beginning or at the end of it, you can actually go through and see all these places and mark out all the junctures that Paul came to in this journey.

We can see he went from Kos to Rhodes to Potara to Phoenician and he takes a course that's south of Cyprus onto Syria and then Tyre and there's a pit stop there in Tyre.

Cargo is unloaded, there's seven days of fellowship and worship with the disciples, verse 4. And from Tyre we can see him going on verse 7 to Ptolemais.

There's a day stop off there, some more fellowship and then we see him in Caesarea, verse 8. And in Caesarea he meets up with Philip and Philip's somebody that we've met with before in Acts, Acts chapter 6.

I think it's where we're introduced to Philip and we read here about his family, his four daughters and then verse 10. We have another name, Agabus.

[42 : 29] We read about the fellowship that they had there. We read about this dramatic presentation that Agabus gives as he makes a case for Paul to stay.

We read about warnings, we read about tears, we read about goodbyes. And then by the time we get to verse 16, going into verse 17, we are under no illusions that the Apostle Paul is determined that he is going to take this journey all the way to Jerusalem.

So that's a very very quick overview of the journey. And in terms of journeys, I'm not somebody who's travelled very widely, but I know some of you actually have.

And journeying can be a very rich experience in terms of our life. A journey, especially after a track of a journey, can be a time where you learn a whole lot about the world and about yourself and about various people in the whole experience.

Journeys are often times a real learning. And when you meet somebody after an extensive journey, they can be actually quite different. And as we step back from this just now, the question I want to think about is what can we learn from this journey that Paul and his companions were on?

[44 : 07] I'm sure there's much that we can learn, but let me just suggest two things. Two things that we can learn as we think about this journey.

The first thing that we can learn is that we can have confidence in the Bible. A while back, I was given one of these Bibles which has a particular kind of interest in archaeology and history and the details of what was going on in the biblical context.

So you can look at a passage and you can see maps and you can see pictures and you can read about the archaeology and things that have been found over the passing of the years that bear witness to how true the Bible ends.

There's constant reminders chapter by chapter and diagram by diagram that this all happened in history. And that's the point I want to just highlight here.

It's not the easiest chapter to actually figure out what has this got to do with us? But one of the points that I think we must not miss here is that this is history that looks recordless.

[45 : 24] This is not a magical mystery tour, some B to Lest kind of adventure. This was not a journey to never never land.

This was history. And so we can read through the verses and we can look at maps and we can see real places. We can chart the progress on a map.

A map that still we can relate to in this day and this age. And we can be assured that these names that we're given, hard as they are sometimes pronounced, they're there for a reason.

And they're there so that we will understand these are real people who lived in history. They had names, Philip, Agabus, Manansu, that's how you say his name.

These are families who have stories to tell. There are things going on that we're given a snapshot into. And so this is a very simple point, but don't overlook it.

[46 : 36] Bible is history. It's an important point for us to underline in an increasingly antagonistic age. I heard a comment in the course of this week.

It was about some of the plans that these are churches considering. And one person passed a comment on the plans, which I have no problem with them passing a comment on the plans.

The comment was along the lines of what they plan to do is as incredulous as the beliefs that they hold to. And that's the kind of comment which is so typical of someone who's never studied the Bible.

I don't know who said that. I heard it second hand. It's a kind of comment I hear time and time again from people who when I pressed them I discovered they've never actually read the Bible.

Never checked this. This journey happened. Acts 21 happened. It's all chronicled here.

[47 : 46] God the Holy Spirit took hold of Luke, a detailed man, man. Because he wanted him to record the details and preserve in time what actually happened.

And over the years it has been preserved despite so many efforts to bury the Bible. And over the years it has been proved and is still being increasingly proved to be accurate despite so many campaigns to rubbish it.

The Bible is accurate. The Bible is reliable. So I want to say to you in this day and this age be encouraged to read and to study and to have confidence in Scripture.

The life of the Scriptures, the people that you fear the most, are invariably the people who have never opened them. Simple point, have confidence in the Bible, what is recorded, facts, figures, places, times, maps.

Second point, in terms of application, have confidence in the gospel message. Some people you can meet, they are absolutely fixated with conspiracy theories and cover-ups and fabricated stories.

[49 : 17] Some say of Scripture and in particular in terms of the gospel message of the resurrection, some people will say the resurrection is just a conspiracy. The resurrection is a story that was cooped up by the early church when they were finding themselves under pressure and they didn't quite know how they were going to survive this.

That's the claim that's so often made. Has been made, I still hear it being made. Think that one through just for two minutes with me.

Have you ever made a journey and you spent time and you spent money and you spent energy and getting from A to B planes, trains, automobiles, whatever it is you've journeyed and you get to the destination point and realise it was a waste of time.

I've journeyed all this way for nothing. How infuriating is that? I remember once I wanted to buy a car and I was scouring around for the car and I remember eventually I found a car, it was an Audi A4, it was an older car but it had a good write-up, it had nice pictures.

I did the research, I asked all the right questions and I took this journey from La Cairne to Bradford, it must have taken me about 8 hours and I got within 50 yards of the car and I could see big hacks of rust and rotten arches and everything hanging off the car and even before I got to the thing, the guy that met me, I remember saying to him, I don't want this, what's wrong with this car?

[51 : 11] I said, well look at it, you can see from 50 yards away what's wrong with the car, do you want to hear it start? I said, don't you want to hear it start? Oh, I'm going to start it for you, start it for me. It was puff of smoke, coughing, trying to get our breath back, it was a total disaster and I remember how angry I was, having undertaken a 14 hour journey there back for nothing.

Just think about this question, would the apostles really, let's just take this chapter, just this chapter, would the apostles really have travelled all this way?

You know, along a dangerous, a complicated journey in an age where it wasn't easy to travel, would they really have travelled all this way? Would Dr. Luke really have given up his career in medicine?

Would these disciples and apostles really have thrown away their boats and their nets and their family businesses and relationships and the security of being in one place for generations?

Would they have really done it for nothing? Would they really have undertaken the different aspects of this journey for nothing?

[52 : 29] For some story that they all knew and whispered to each other but hoped the world wouldn't hear them, they all knew it wasn't actually true. Remember, these apostles are eyewitnesses.

These are those who saw Jesus and who heard Jesus and who experienced time with him, before and after. These are ones who sat with him, some of them, after the resurrection, would they really have had the stamina, the stickability to give so many years and so much time and so much energy and ultimately their lives for some cause that they knew was actually not true?

some cause that they cooped up in a committee meeting. Makes no sense. I think not.

These apostles, these messengers of the good news about Jesus were not making up stories. They were not perpetuating rumours.

and the more we take the time to look at the evidence, the more surely we will be convinced that what they preached and what they propounded, they believed and they had seen.

[54 : 06] They preached it because it was true. They were eyewitnesses of these things. They had confidence in the good news about Jesus.

they believed and they proclaimed that Jesus lived amongst them perfectly, sinlessly.

That Jesus died on that cross laying down his life for them. they proclaimed that Jesus rose supernaturally from the dead and ascended into heaven.

They proclaimed what he told them that he would return. And they proclaimed it because they believed it. there was no conspiracy story, there was no cooked up church report.

They were reporting the truth of the gospel, what happened. They believed. Do you believe today? And that's the question.

[55 : 20] That's the key central question. Do you believe in Jesus? Jesus? Do you believe that he lived sinlessly?

Do you believe that he died on that cross for you and for me? Taking our sin upon himself? Do you believe that he, the son of God, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and one day soon will return?

no longer is the quiet baby, but as the king of the universe, the judge of the Lord.

Do you believe these things? It is eternally important that we believe these things. Romans 10, the word is near you, it is in your mouth and in your heart.

That is the word of faith we are proclaiming, says the apostle Paul, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

[56 : 40] for it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

As the scripture says, anyone who trusts in him will not be put to shame. So it's not so much today about what you are doing.

The primary question is what are you believing? Where is your faith? So there's the journey, and the journey teaches us that we can have confidence in scripture, the Bible, the facts, the places, the geography, the history, and the journey also teaches us that we can have confidence in the gospel message that the apostles undertook all this and so much more because they believed in the truth of the gospel message.

And the second point to note here I think it's probably as far as we'll get really actually is the destination. What was the destination? Well the destination that was set was Jerusalem.

And we see that not just in this chapter but in the previous chapters too. In Acts chapter 19 and verse 21 it says there that Paul decided to go to Jerusalem.

[58 : 03] In Acts chapter 20 we can see that impetus is still there. Paul is in verse 16 in a hurry to get to Jerusalem. Acts chapter 20 and verse 21 Paul speaks about how he is compelled by the spirit and going to Jerusalem he says.

And so the destination that was set was very much fixed. Paul was not aimless. He didn't journey like we sometimes do on a Saturday afternoon.

Get in a camper van of the car and say well let's just take a stroll and see where we end up. Paul had a clear destination in sight and it was Jerusalem. A lot of the commentators actually spend a lot of time thinking about the merits and the demerits of this journey that Paul decided to take.

Some think that Paul should never have actually gone to Jerusalem. Others think that he should have. Some think that he was off track. Some think that he was on the right track.

So there's a question over the destination and the wisdom of it. And those who say that Paul shouldn't have gone to Jerusalem shouldn't have set that as a destination point on the biblical day sat nav.

[59 : 23] The reason they say that he shouldn't have gone to Jerusalem was that if he went then he would suffer. And certainly through the spirit we are told in verse 14, verse 4 sorry, and in verse 11 that the Christians, Paul's brothers and sisters, they certainly had been given an insight, a dramatic insight through Agrippas, that Paul would suffer in Jerusalem.

And so those who loved Paul, it made sense that they would say, Paul is going to be absolutely horrific in Jerusalem for you, don't go there, we love you, we would like you to stay here, don't go.

The Holy Spirit has told us it's going to be a nightmare for you when you get there, so don't go. And so it makes sense that having been given that revelation, those who loved Paul wanted to keep him with them and not encourage Paul to go into the Lion's Den.

But the difficulty is, sometimes, the Lion's Den is the place that we're called to go. And if you want my opinion, it's just my opinion, I think probably, well, Paul was supposed to go to Jerusalem.

See, Paul, as I think back through his conversion and his calling, Paul knew from the outset that he was called to suffer for the name of Jesus.

[61 : 02] Just after Paul's conversion, remember, Acts chapter 9, as Ananias trembled at the prospect of having to meet with this Saul, the persecutor, do you remember what the Lord said to Ananias about the apostle Paul?

The Lord in the region said to Ananias, go, this man, Paul, is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.

We know these verses well, but then it goes on to say there, I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.

to Paul knew from the beginning his calling was going to be a calling that involved much suffering and so when people said to the apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit has told me, Paul, you're going to suffer if you persevere into Jerusalem.

That didn't cause Paul to say I must be off course. I think that made Paul think I'm on the right track. I must carry on.

[62 : 25] And it strikes me more and more as I study that the early church had a very different perspective on suffering to us.

In Acts chapter 5 after there was trouble in Sanhedrin after the apostles had received a thorough flogging. Do you remember the reaction?

It says in Acts 5:41, the apostles left the Sanhedrin and they would have left battered and bloodied. They left the Sanhedrin rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering the space for the name.

they found joy in taking up their cross and following the steps of a suffering saviour.

And I just wonder if this is something that perhaps we need to re-learn. Jesus did say to us, if you're going to follow me you're going to have to take up your cross.

[63 : 38] And to follow Christ is to accept that we will to different degrees be called to suffer in this world. And that doesn't involve us picking up bonds and hand grenades and machine runs.

Nothing aggressive about what we're called to. But it does mean that sometimes we may be on the wrong end of it. Some today are suffering and they are losing their lives for Jesus sake.

And we could spend the next hour hearing story after story that would break their heart about the extent to which some people are suffering and it will never be reported.

others in our country may lose their good name. They may lose their cool reputation school.

They may lose some of the profits of their business or their job if they speak up for Jesus. that's about where we are today.

[64 : 53] But I think we need to note in a changing culture if we are going to follow Christ as we are called to sometimes like Paul we will be destined to suffer.

and I know some will be saying even as I say this I wish he wouldn't say that. I know there will be some here this morning who will be thinking I wish he wouldn't go there because that's going to put people off becoming Christians.

And let me tell you it's not an easy message to preach and there is a great temptation for the preacher to play these things down. Nobody wants to have some kind of sadistic obsession with suffering for the cause of Christ but it's everywhere in scripture.

And if I don't preach it when you and I follow Christ and then we hit some degree of trouble when people are treating us in a way that they wish they wouldn't and it's for Jesus sake.

If I haven't preached it and we haven't noted it, then we're going to wonder when we're under pressure if we're off course, if we're on the wrong track.

[66 : 16] And we're not. Jesus said, follow me. The road will be pitted with trouble at times. and so be prepared for that.

And so be prepared for that. As Paul was. But be reassured that no matter how big the trouble is, Jesus has promised he will always be with his people.

And some of the most troubling times will be some of the most blessed times. C.S.

Lewis puts it well. He says, life with God is not immunity from difficulties, but peace in difficulties.

So, Christians, those who are here this morning and are Christians, let us ask the question, are we taking up our cross?

[67 : 27] And are we willing to stand and to say that we're not ashamed to own Jesus Christ as our Lord? are we willing to say that we do believe this is God's word?

We do believe the gospel message is true. Are we willing to do that even if it is going to draw ridicule and degrees of suffering in our workplace and our community?

Are we willing to suffer? Or do we always look for the course of least resistance? Jesus was willing to suffer for you and for me.

Remember that. Do you notice that as people try to dissuade Paul, the more they spoke, the more they realised it seemed futile to keep speaking.

And so in verse 14, they come to that point and they just say, you can imagine their hands going up saying, the Lord's will be done. Paul, there's no point speaking to you.

[68 : 43] The Lord's will be done. I read back and put me in mind, we'll finish with this, it put me in mind of another journey. I think it's supposed to.

The Lord's will be done. This puts me in mind of another journey that Jesus was not, was urged not to go on. Remember? And he was urged not to go on this journey by those who loved him the most.

Remember in Mark 8, as Jesus sat down with the disciples and he said, this is what's ahead. There's going to be suffering. I'm going to die.

There's a cross. And Peter said, no, no, Lord, not that way. And Jesus said, yes, Peter, that's exactly the way.

And so on, Jesus went to Jerusalem. And in Gethsemane, as the sweat dropped like clots of blood from his brow, Jesus said in Mark 14 prayer, take this cup from me.

[70 : 01] Yet, not what I will, but what you will. The words will be done. And so on Jesus went to the cross.

The one who sometimes calls us to suffer, he first suffered for us. he set his face like flint for Jerusalem.

In the Trinity before time, it was destined that Jesus would go to Jerusalem and that he would go to Calvary to be despised, to be rejected, to suffer.

so that we might be saved. Let's pray.

our heavenly father, we thank you for that journey that Jesus, our saviour, undertook out of love for sins who need to be saved.

[71 : 24] we thank you that he was promised to be and he came to be the man of sorrows. We thank you that knowing that he would be despised and rejected, knowing that he would be crucified, still he came and still he went on to that cross, suffer for our sin, to die in our place, so that we might be saved.

And Lord, we praise you today that all that has, all that was required for our salvation has been done. And Lord, we praise you that today, the invitation, the earnest cry from scripture that comes, is not one where we are called to do X, Y and Z, to make ourselves fit for God.

Nothing we could do could make ourselves fit for God. We thank you that the calling of scripture is a calling to believe in all that has been done.

And so we pray for faith, that we would believe in our hearts, that Jesus was raised from the dead, and that we would confess with our lives, that he is Lord, and that we would know in our hearts, and people would know from our lives, that we are saved, that we are Christ's.

to hear our prayers and continue with us, we pray. Go before us, give us strength, give us courage, give us wisdom, that we may live for your glory.

[73 : 31] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. finish mission phase 458, 458, man of sorrows, what a name for the son of God who came, ruined sinners who reclaimed, hallelujah, what a savior.

And I may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, both now and forever more. Amen.