

- Concentrated on vs. 1-12, as had recently preached on 13-38 at Edwin's farewell

Introduction

- Want to give a reminder of where we've come from in looking at Acts:
 - overview of the book, really
 - and particularly what is happening narratively in the final chapters
 - comments about flow from Jerusalem to Rome, from Jews to Gentiles, from disciples to church/Christians
 - questions about how it appears to fizzle out, as a book at least!
- Narrative of these last chapters:
 - Paul returning to Jerusalem
 - arrested, and shipped to Rome when he appeals to the emperor
 - his various defences of himself and the gospel along the way, notably in Jerusalem
 - God's provision for him along the way
 - God's leading him...

Through Macedonia and Greece (1-6)

- Just want to pick up on three themes in this first section, and one or perhaps two in the next:

Encouragement to the church

- encouragement, rather than "you could do better" was consistently Paul's tone
- do we encourage one another?
- "well done", "I appreciated that", "thanks for praying", "I could really see God at work this week"
- I want us to be able to tell "God stories" to and for one another - finding ways to enable and encourage that is not something I'm very good at, I don't think, but want us to work at it...

Plots against the gospel

- Opposition was - and is - a fact of life
 - whether its a threatened school closure in China, potentially affecting several Christian families and the work they are engaged in
 - or a van backing into the wall behind the church not long before a Holiday Club and just causing needless hassle and disruption
 - or even the times when we are made fools of (or feel we will be) for what we believe...
 - the editorials calling for less Christian involvement in the life of the nation
 - or the portrayal of Christians on soaps as weird, bigoted, or perverted - so rarely just normal!
- Its nothing personal - at least not against us! **Its ultimately against our Lord!**
 - our call is **not to complain, but to respond with grace and determination**

Companions in gospel work (v.4)

- Importance of fellow workers
 - people I have grown closest to are very often those I have worked alongside in the cause of the gospel
 - we need that kind of mutual support and companionship
 - we need to pray together, plan together, succeed together and fail together, witness together...
 - Paul couldn't do without it, and neither can we!

Eutychus raise from the dead at Troas (7-12)

- Paul and the miraculous
 - went on talking/teaching after someone had been raised from the dead!!
 - yet there was that element of miraculous in his ministry - when he prayed, he expected God to work

- Paul was so confident in God's work that in a sense he declared what was not yet to be so (Eutychus alive)

Conclusion

- Will we encourage one another?
- Will we expect and respond appropriately to resistance to the gospel?
- Will we be and look for good companions in the gospel?
- Will we expect God to work?