

Introduction

- Do you ever **doubt** you've taken the right decision?
 - even if things are tough, but you know you've made the right choice, then you can live with yourself...
 - **but when we have doubts over the choices we have made, its a very uncomfortable place to be**
- I really hate both the nagging feeling of doubt if I am beginning to wonder whether I've made the right choice...
 - and the full blown realisation that I've made a bad choice
 - the wrong person for a job
 - the wrong plan for an event
 - the fact that I will have to live with the consequences of my decision for a long time, perhaps
- I will perhaps have to go and have uncomfortable conversations with people to sort things out:
 - conversations where I have to admit I was wrong
 - conversations where I have to ask for help
- Life does throw these things up from time to time
 - and Paul had his share of tricky situations!
 - Bible only occasionally allows us into the **"inner world"** of people like Paul, what was going on inside their heads
 - and this isn't particularly one of them!
 - but there are difficult choices, tricky situations for Paul in particular to face here
 - going to have a look at a couple of them...

Guidance? (vs.1-16)

image: couple gazing...

- How do we receive guidance from God?
 - should we expect it?
 - if so, how?
- Paul has a wider plan, a bigger picture, a clear direction: back to Jerusalem
 - but that is being challenged "down in the trenches" of daily reality
 - first of all some believers **"through the Spirit urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem"** **Brough (v.4)**
 - later a prophet named Agabus (v.10) brought a word from God, a word of warning
 - and the believers around, interpreting this as God telling Paul not to go to Jerusalem, plead with him to change his plans...
- But Paul (**pig-headed?**) presses on! **"...he would not be dissuaded..."**
- **God does speak by his Spirit**
- **It is appropriate for guidance to be corporate**
 - but notice that even when it sounds like the majority were opposed to Paul going, they didn't force Paul's hand
- **There is a need to weigh and test what is being said**
 - in this case it would appear that God was speaking words of warning that suffering was coming **by way of preparation and not to dissuade Paul**

Compromise? (vs.17-26)

image: maze...

- How do we make decisions about appropriate moral behaviour when there are pressures around us?
 - Rogers might notice things different in church life in the UK...
 - Sundays and shopping...

- who should share a flat?
 - should we take Lottery funding to redevelop the halls?
 - how many cars/TVs/computers is it appropriate for a Christian to own, how many coffees to buy?
 - should a Christian use Starbucks/Costa, buy Nestle... etc!
 - how big should a Christian's carbon footprint be?
- Paul was prepared to compromise on incidental things that did not compromise the core gospel message:
 - here he was able to **live with** a purification rite as a way of not offending sensitive Jewish background Christians, when he and indeed the church leaders knew it was not **necessary**

In God's hand

image: globe in hand

- Able to go forward because God has the whole world in his hands!