

# (Acts) Sailing With Paul and Jesus

by Brian Brodersen

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*Paul's journey to Rome was marked by a stormy voyage, but he remained confident in God's plan and ministered to the people on the island of Malta.*

**Duration:** 1:06:17

**Scripture:** Isaiah 6:8, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 28:23, Acts 28:26-31

**Topics:** "Missionary Work", "Faith And Obedience"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Paul's journey to Rome as described in the Book of Acts. Despite facing a storm and being shipwrecked, Paul remains confident because God had spoken to him and assured him that he would stand before Caesar. The sailors on the ship become fearful as they approach land and drop anchors to prevent running aground. Paul warns the soldiers that if the sailors escape, they will not be saved. The speaker emphasizes the importance of being active in spreading the gospel, even in the belief that the end times are near. He references the example of William Carey, who challenged the church to have a vision for missions and faced opposition but believed in God's calling.

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## Transcript

At this time, let's open our Bibles to the 27th chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles. So as we come to our study this evening, Paul, of course, had been going through these arraignments and he was forced to appeal, as you remember, to Caesar because he wasn't really getting a fair trial there. The Jews were attempting to mess things up and try to get him to have to go up to Jerusalem and stand before the Roman officials.

And they were they were plotting to kill him. And Paul knew that. So he said, no, I'm I'm not going to go to Jerusalem.

Instead, I'm I'm going to take my right as a Roman citizen and I appeal to Caesar. I'm going to take my chances before the emperor. And so the decision was made that that was indeed where Paul would go.

He would go to Caesar. And so as we pick up in chapter twenty seven, we pick up now with really the final episode of the book of Acts, Paul's journey to the city of Rome. Now, remember, Jesus had told Paul that he would testify for him in Rome.

You remember after he had that opportunity there on the steps of the Antonia Fortress to do what he had always wanted to do his whole life. He always wanted to present the gospel to his people, the Jews. And he had the opportunity to do that.

And perhaps you remember the story that as he was preaching, he had a very attentive audience. They were listening to his testimony. They were listening to what he had to say until he happened to mention the Gentiles, mentioning them in a favorable way and implying that Jesus, the Messiah, had had sent him to the Gentiles.

And that caused the Jews to be outraged once again. And from that point on, they would they would not listen to Paul at all. And then as Paul was there in jail as a result of that whole thing, and, you know, going now through this process of different trials and things, he was he was very downcast over this, the sense of failure.

He felt like he completely blew it. He had a great opportunity and he messed it up. But the Lord came to him and he comforted him.

And he said, Paul, be of good courage, because just as you testified for me in Jerusalem, you're going to testify for me in Rome as well. And so Paul had that promise that he was going to testify for Jesus in Rome. It was a promise given to him directly by the Lord.

Now, Paul had wanted to go to Rome. It was sort of a lifelong ambition. He wanted to go and he wanted to see the work of God in that city.

And so now his opportunity has come, but it wasn't the way he thought it was going to be. He had actually planned to go to Jerusalem, deliver the gift from the Gentile churches to the churches in Judea, and then just journey back toward Rome. But it was in Jerusalem that he was arrested.

But he's still going to Rome. And even though it wasn't the way he originally planned to go. And so when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan regiment.

So entering a ship of Adra Mitium, we put to sea meaning to sail along the coast of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us now. Now, Luke, of course, is the author here and Luke is part of this party.

So Aristarchus and Luke both journey with Paul to Rome. And remember, Paul is a prisoner. So it's speculation, but it's highly probable that the only way Luke and Aristarchus were able to travel with Paul is if they submitted themselves to Paul as his servants or as his slaves, then as his property, they would have been able to travel with them.

And many commentators speculate that that is what they did. So the next day we landed at Sidon. So evidently they set sail from Caesarea and now they sailed up north to Sidon in the area of Lebanon.

And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and to receive care. And when we had put to sea from there, we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were contrary. Now, the date that Paul set sail from Caesarea was probably late August or very early September.

And so as they're beginning this journey. It's already a bad time to set out for Rome by ship, because from September to November, it was considered somewhat of a dangerous time to sail from November the 10th on through about the middle of March, it was basically forbidden for the most part to sail. Nobody would sail the seas during that time because it was just so dangerous.

And you would quite often suffer shipwreck and great loss. So. So this is one of the issues that they're having to face as they're trying to get Paul to Rome.

So what they're doing is they're going to be there. They're seeking to just travel up. If you if you look at your map, they're just sort of hugging the coast all the way up along the Israel itself and then up into Sidon and then over, as he says, near Cyprus, then they're going back over toward the mainland there.

And so if you look at your Bible map, you can you can follow the the course of the ship. And so when we had sailed over the sea, which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, to a city Lycia, and there the Centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy and he put us on board. So most of the.

Experts feel that this was probably a grain ship because Rome was supplied, the wheat grain was supplied to Rome through Egypt. And so this would have been a ship that was probably one hundred and fifty to two hundred feet long and probably forty five to fifty feet wide. And it was a cargo ship, basically, but they would.

These were all ships that were under the authority of the Roman government. So they Julius being a Roman centurion, they, of course, were able to board these ships and use them to transport passengers. And so the centurion found this Alexandrian ship.

It was sailing to Italy. And when we had sailed slowly many days and arrived with difficulty off Cindus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmoni. Now, now, Cindus is, again, if you look up on your map, it's part of the mainland, part of Asia Minor, modern day Turkey.

And there there was actually a straight shot that you could have made if the winds were favorable, but the winds were not favorable. So they had to sail back out and then around the backside of Crete and then they're they're seeking to come around that way. So they're really having to navigate their way.

It's not an easy journey by any means at this point. And so passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens near the city of Lacea. Now, when much time had been spent and sailing was now dangerous because the fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also of our lives.

Now, notice Luke tells us the fast had passed and this was a reference to the the Jewish Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. And so this would have occurred in this particular year is probably 59 AD. It would have occurred early in April or excuse me, early in October.

Some say October 5th, somewhere between October 5th and 15th. So now at this point, as Luke tells us here, it's dangerous to sail at this point because the weather is unpredictable. And so they evidently have a council meeting.

And Paul, interestingly, is brought into this meeting and asked for his advice. Now, this is a bit of an unusual thing. Of course, the you know, when you're a prisoner of Rome, you're not usually asked for advice about traveling.

But evidently, they knew that Paul was probably the most seasoned traveler among them. By this time, the centurion who was guarding Paul would have known Paul quite well. He would have had a great respect for him and he probably knew about his many journeys and things.

So and of course, he would know to some extent that Paul had a reputation as a holy man of some sort. And so they would have often consulted people like that for counsel and advice on an important decision. And so they asked Paul's advice.

Paul gave his advice. But evidently, at this point, they didn't think that Paul was accurate. Nevertheless, the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul.

And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest and winter there. So having stayed in this place for a while, they realized once winter set in that the harbor was not protected well enough. It wasn't going to be a good place to stay.

So what they were doing is attempting to sail just probably about 40 miles up to another location off of Crete and to spend the winter there. So the south wind, when it blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete. But not long after, a tempestuous headwind arose called your rock with in.

So suddenly, just seemingly out of nowhere, this wind breaks out upon them. And the term you rock with and means northeastern wind. And there was a strong northeastern wind that was notorious for creating havoc on the seas that would just suddenly come down.

And that's what's happened to them. Now, the south wind was blowing softly. They thought, oh, this is perfect.

This is going to get us, you know, it won't be any time and we'll be safe in that harbor for the winter and everything's going to be great. They're sailing along and suddenly this northeastern gale begins to blow up on them. So when the ship was caught and could not head into the wind, we let her drive and running under the shelter of an island called Clodagh, we secured the skiff with difficulty.

So the dinghy they brought the dinghy on board to the ship. It's so interesting how Luke is just describing this whole thing. Luke wasn't a sailor, but traveling with Paul, he probably sailed to some extent.

And now he's just familiar with this. And so he's just describing in detail all of the things that were happening. And he was evidently part of this crew that was securing the skiff.

He said it was it was a difficult thing to do. And when they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship and fearing less, they should run aground on the sister sands. They struck sail and were so driven.

So the danger was that the ship itself might be broken up by the violence of the sea. And so what they would do is they would take cables or strong ropes and they would put the cable over the bow and then bring it back and then at the stern and bring it to the center of the ship. And then they would tighten it down.

And this served as, you know, a brace for the ship to keep it from just sort of breaking apart. So they're taking all the precautions possible. And they're afraid that they're going to be driven aground on the sister sands.

Now, this was a place that was notorious for shipwreck. It's off the coast of northern Africa. And because the wind was blowing in that direction, they were fearful that they were going to be blown to the sister sands and be shipwrecked there.

Just, you know, that would be the end of the journey and everybody would have been killed. So that was their great fear. And because we are exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship.

On the third day, we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands. Now, when neither sun or stars appeared for many days and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up. Now, remember, in those days, they didn't have a compass at this point.

They had to navigate by the stars. So with all of this period of time of storming, they had no idea where they were. They were just being tossed around out in the middle of the sea.

They had not the slightest idea which direction they were going in. And so they were fearful they might be being pushed toward Africa and they were going to end up shipwrecked there. But at this point, it just seemed a hopeless situation.

But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, men, you should have listened to me and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, Do not be afraid, Paul, you must be brought before Caesar.

And indeed, God has granted you all those who sail with you. Therefore, take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. However, we must run aground on a certain island.

And so here's Paul, the prisoner now turned captain of the ship. He's in charge at this point. Everybody else has given up.

They're completely lost hope that they're going to survive this thing. But Paul stands up and he takes charge. But he does this, of course, because God has spoken to him and God has encouraged him.

God has told him, Paul, I told you already, I'll tell you again, you're going to stand before Caesar. And so he was confident, as he says here, I believe what God told me. And so take heart.

And yet there is going to be some difficulty ahead. So now in the 14th night had come as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea about midnight, the sailors sense that they were drawing near some land and they took soundings and found it to be 20 fathoms. And when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found it to be 15 fathoms.

Then, fearing less, we should run aground on the rocks. They dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, unless these men stay in the ship, we cannot be saved.

Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and it fell off. And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying today is the 14th day you have waited and continued without food and eaten nothing. Therefore, I urge you to take nourishment for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you.

And when he had said these things, he took bread, gave things to God in the presence of them all. And when he had broken it. He began to eat, then they were all encouraged and also took food themselves.

And in all, we were two hundred and seventy six persons on the ship. So once again, Paul is in the driver's seat. He's just as God's man.

He's there and raised up to encourage these men to get them to eat. And they're all following his lead. They're they're taking encouragement from what he's saying.

So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw out the weed into the sea. And when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they observed the bay with a beach onto which they planned to run the ship if possible. And they let go the anchors and left them in the sea.

Meanwhile, loosing the rudder ropes and they hoisted the main sail to the wind and made for sure. But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable. But the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves and the soldiers plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape.

But the centurion wanting to save Paul kept them from their purpose and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land and the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land. And so just that Paul had promised we're going to suffer loss of the ship, but not not of life.

And just as he said, all of them made it safely to the land. Now, when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta. Now, here's the amazing thing.

The direction of the wind coming out of the north and out of the east. It seemingly would have blown them in probably a different direction, but actually they were, in a sense, right on course. They were blown right toward their destination.

They had a minor. You know, diversion here, but nevertheless, they didn't they weren't blown to toward the African coast like they feared, but instead they were carried along and they come to Malta, which isn't that far from where they're headed. They're headed, of course, to Rome.

And so this is where they ended up. And the natives showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire, made us all welcome because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold. But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand.

So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, no doubt this man is a murderer whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live. But Paul shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead.

But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god such as the fickleness of man. He's a murderer. Oh, no, he's a god.

And in that region, there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. Now, he was actually this is an official title. So he was a Roman official, probably not a Roman himself, but he was the designated sort of governor of the island by the Romans or the governor of that particular region of the island anyway.

And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went into him and prayed and he laid his hands on him and healed him. So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed.

They also honored us in many ways. And when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary. So Luke here, he gives us an overview of what happens there.

He gives us a little bit of information about some of the ministry that Paul carried out there. But Luke doesn't really go into any detail about any evangelistic effort on Paul's part or any conversions that took place. But I think we could certainly.

Say that Paul indeed ministered the gospel, he would not have simply healed someone without sharing the gospel with him, giving them the impression that he just happened to possess some healing powers. So in all of this, you can be sure that Paul was ministering the gospel to these people as he was sharing with them, as he was praying for them and as they were being touched by the Lord. Now, after three months, we sailed.

In an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the twin brothers, which had wintered at the island. So they spent three months then on Malta. And Luke tells us that the Alexandrian ship had the there on on the bow.

You know, the figurehead was the twin brothers, and these were Castor and Pollux. They were from the Greek and Roman mythologies believed to be the sons of Zeus, and they were sort of the protectors of the semen. And so Luke just simply informs us that that was the ship that they were on.

And landing at Syracuse, we stayed three days. Now, Syracuse is on Sicily. So now they're right at the tip.

Of course, Sicily is part of Italy, but it's disconnected from the mainland. So they're now at the tip of Italy at Syracuse for three days. And from there we circled round and reached Regium.

And after one day, the south wind blew. And the next day we came to Puteoli, which would be near Naples, where we found brethren and were invited to stay with them seven days. And so we went toward Rome.

So after. Probably six months or more from their departure from Caesarea, they now finally arrive in Italy and notice verse 14, they were greeted by brethren. So there in Puteoli, they came into contact with the body of believers, with the body of Christians, and I can imagine the reception that Paul and Luke and Aristarchus would have received, especially when these believers found out that this was the apostle Paul.

You see, he had written the letter to the Romans already and his reputation, his fame as an apostle. All of that would have, of course, been very familiar to everybody. But now here he is.

He comes into our town. They must have been completely amazed to have Paul there with them. And so he stayed with them for seven days.

And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as a pea forum and three in. So they're now 30 miles or so from the capital. And when Paul saw that, he thanked God and he took courage.

So somehow now the word is spread that they're there. And so now more are coming to meet them. And so when he came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard.

But Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him. And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them, men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go because there was no cause for putting me to death.

But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation for this reason. Therefore, I have called for you to see you and to speak with you, because for the hope of Israel, I am bound with this chain. And then they said to him, we need to receive letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken in the evil of you.

But we desire to hear from you what you think for concerning this sect Christianity. We know that it is spoken against everywhere. So this these are the leaders of the Jewish community.

They're saying, look, we don't know anything about what's happened to you, but we want to know about this sect. We want to know what you think about it, because it's it's being spoken against everywhere. And of course, being spoken against would have been in the context of the Jewish community.

They were, as we know from our studies, they were the ones that were the most antagonistic to the message. And so when they had appointed him a day, many came to him in his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the law of Moses and the prophets from morning till evening. And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken and some disbelieved.

So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word. The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah, the prophets to our fathers saying, go to this people and say, hearing you will hear and shall not understand and seeing you will see and not perceive for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes, they have closed less.

They should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn so that I should heal them. Therefore, let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles and they will hear it. So here we see Paul's and to some extent the Holy Spirit's final appeal to the Jewish nation.

Paul lays it out, spends the entire day taking them through the scriptures and showing them the truth about the Messiah, that the Messiah had to suffer and die and then showing them that Jesus of Nazareth, he had to have been the Messiah. He met all of the requirements, all of the prophecies were fulfilled in him and some believed. But evidently, there were many that did not believe.

And so now, Paul, he really pronounces a judgment on them and he does so by going back to Isaiah. Now, remember, Jesus had said the same exact thing to the Jews when he was there ministering among them prior to his rejection and crucifixion and so forth. He called them hypocrites and he said, well, did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites? And then he went on to quote this exact same passage.

And so now some 30 years later, God has been patiently working and Paul has had this practice of going to the Jew first and and, you know, that great passion to see his fellow countrymen come to faith. But most of the time he finds a very cold reception. He finds opposition.

And so he has on occasion indicated that, you know, there was coming a time when God was going to sort of cut things off for them. And on earlier occasions, he would say, OK, if you count yourself unworthy of eternal life, then we'll go to the Gentiles and we'll find an audience there. And now here he.

Not only says that again, but it's almost like he pronounces sort of the final word on it because he says, notice, therefore, let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles and they will hear it. So it's almost like from this point on, that will now be the emphasis. Now, this occurred in probably sixty one a.d. We don't know exactly what the date was, but probably in sixty one a.d. Remember, it would have been just a brief nine years later that Jerusalem would have been leveled.

The temple would have been destroyed and the Jewish remnant would have been led away captive after many were slaughtered when the Romans came in and overthrew Jerusalem. So the judgment is about to fall. And so Paul speaks very firmly to them.

And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves. Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him. So this is how Luke closes his brief history of the early church, not with Paul standing before Caesar.

Notice that that was where Paul was headed. You know, there is tradition that tells us that Paul appeared before Caesar at this time was released. And then, of course, we know that he appeared before Caesar later.

He was arrested again. And tradition tells us that he was executed by Nero. And that tradition seems to be pretty accurate.

But interestingly here. There is the possibility that on this occasion, Paul did not necessarily stand before Caesar. If.

Within a two year period. There was no one to bring an accusation before the court regarding the apostle. He would have been then just simply set free.

Now, we know Paul was set free. We know that his ministry continued. And but then he was arrested again later.

And he tells us about that fact in the epistle to Timothy, the second epistle. But whether or not he actually stood before Caesar at this particular point, we don't have any absolute authority that says that he did. But we know eventually that he did ultimately that he did, because, of course, Jesus said he was going to and we could base it on that.

But Paul, again, in Second Timothy, he implies that he's already been before Caesar once. It could have been here, but it could have been after his second arrest. But the interesting thing is that here Paul dwells for two whole years in his own rented house and people are coming in every day and he's ministering the gospel to them.

He's preaching the gospel to them. He is teaching them about Jesus Christ. Now, remember, he's under house arrest.

So he's got these Roman guards that would be with him and watching over him. And it's interesting that in some of his epistles, he alludes to the fact that he had a ministry among the very members of the household of Caesar. And so here's the point.

Here's the interesting thing. Paul wants to go to Rome. He thinks, man, going to Rome would be fantastic, you know, to see the church there, to see the Christians, to experience what God's doing there.

And boy, if I could have some impact on the on the empire itself, if I could connect with some of the officials and minister the gospel, because Paul had done those kinds of things. Sergius Paulus, you remember, he ministered to him. And of course, he stood before Felix and Festus and Agrippa and all those things.

But I don't think Paul ever dreamed that he would actually have a ministry in the household of Caesar, that he would be evangelizing in the very palace itself. But according to Philippians, that's what he was doing. He communicates that to us in Philippians.

And so it's interesting how in so many ways we see that although the circumstances were adverse in many ways and not the ideal kinds of circumstances that you would want to go to Rome under, actually, the circumstances were more conducive for the furtherance of the gospel than had Paul gone the way that he originally planned to go. If Paul just would have shown up in Rome as another person in Rome getting off the ship, he's an apostle. Yes, but to the Romans, he's just another tourist.

He's there. Had he gone in that way, he would have had a glorious ministry, I'm sure. But I don't think he would have been connected to Caesar's household.

But God has a plan to get Paul right into the very infrastructure of the of the empire and have him minister for him in there. And so that's what happens. And that to me is intriguing to see how the Lord's plans are different than our plans.

There can be, you know, a shared vision, a similar thing, but that the details quite often will be different than what we thought, because God has a better plan, a bigger plan, and he doesn't always let us in on all the details of what he's doing. You know, years and years ago, Cheryl and I, we always had some sort of a sense that somehow, someday we were going to end up ministering here again. And but we were perfectly content with the church.

God had us pastoring for all those years in Vista. We were very happy to do that. It wasn't like we were looking to get out, but there was just some sort of a sense that somehow the Lord was going to bring us back here at some point.

And we think about it sometimes, talk about it, pray about it. But, you know, what we never, ever dreamed of is that we would come here via London. You know, I mean, this is only 60 miles south.

We had to take a six thousand mile detour to get here. And, you know, I would have never dreamed that. And and yet God had a plan, a purpose that we were not aware of.

But now we look back on it and think, oh, that was I mean, that was just glorious. It was wonderful. It was the the greatest time in our ministry experience to date.

And, you know, so we think how amazing the Lord is that he gave us a sense of his plan, but he didn't give us all the details. But it was better than we ever dreamed. And that's the way the Lord works.

You know, as we look at this whole 27th chapter and all the details that Luke goes into of this journey on the ship and and people have wondered, well, why in the world did Luke do all of that? Why did he go into all of this detail? And I think the intention of Luke and remember, Luke's just the penman for the Holy Spirit. It's not that Luke just sat down and said, this is what I'm going to write. Luke was carried along by the spirit of God.

And so he writes this detailed account of this journey that they take. And so people have asked the question, well, why this detail? What's the purpose of that? Why not just skip to Paul? You know, sailed eventually through a variety of circumstances. He ended up in Rome.

But Luke goes into all these details. But I think it's because what Luke is wanting us to understand, again, is this whole idea of the providence of God. That God's overruling in all that's going on, Satan is trying to kill Paul.

There's no question about it. I mean, this has been going on throughout his entire ministry. And this is something that has gone on throughout the history of the work of God in the world.

The devil has always been behind the scenes, opposing it, trying to take out the servants of God. You think back to David and how David's anointed to be the king, but Saul is insanely jealous of David and he's just bent on destroying David. So David has to flee and hide and all of these things.

But yet David's already been anointed to be the king. Samuel's already come and poured the oil upon his head. And and so in one sense, it's a certain thing that he's going to be the king, but David doesn't see it all the time.

Sometimes he thinks, I'm surely going to die by the hand of Saul, but he doesn't. Because regardless of the obstacles, whether they be human or satanically inspired, visible or invisible, God is working out his plan. So he uses the whole attempt by Saul to kill David, to work something in David.

So when he gets him on the throne, he's actually going to be a good king. But all the way along, you find that as God is unfolding his plan, Satan is opposing God's plan. And so Jesus comes into the world, Herod finds out about it, finds out that he was born in Bethlehem.

And so he sends out his soldiers to kill all the children two years old and and under. And then we find that when Jesus is beginning his ministry in Nazareth and he's, you know, proclaiming in the synagogue that the prophecy has been fulfilled. Then the people take him out of out to the brow of the hill and they want to throw him down.

They want to kill him satanically inspired. He's on the boat in the Sea of Galilee. And this incredible storm comes up in the seas and fishermen are afraid they're going to drown.

Jesus stands up and rebukes the wind just as he rebuked the demons. And we see the enemy's hand behind the scenes. And I think that's true with Paul, too.

This guy is God's man and he's going to go and he's going to stand before Caesar. He's going to influence the kingdom from the inside out and the devil is going to do everything he can to try to stop it. But he can't stop it.

That's the great point. He can't stop it, even with this storm, even with all of the attempts. And, you know, Paul finally survives all of the disaster at sea.

And then the first thing that happens to him when he gets to land, he's bitten by this viper. And you think, man. When does it ever stop? But.

In the whole thing, what happened, just like the Lord said, you're going to stand before Caesar and testify for me, and more than that, you're going to connect with the household of Caesar, you're going to connect with the palace. Paul, in writing to the Philippians, he talks about the palace guard, the elite guard of the emperor, the praetorian guard, he was actually connected to these guys because of his imprisonment and he was able to share the gospel with these men. And so God overrules the enemy's attempt to overthrow his plan, and he not only overrules it, but he does above and beyond what Paul would have even thought, because I'm sure he never dreamed that he would go to Rome and have the kind of ministry that he actually ended up having.

But that viper that came out of the bundle of sticks, that's it right there, the devil, he's always there, he's always striking at us, he's always trying to discourage what God is doing, he's trying to overthrow the work of God, he's trying to interfere with the plan and the purpose of God. And he is alive and well and active right here today, and I'll tell you today, I think he's working overtime, he's working at least as hard as he's ever worked in history, and we just see it all over the place, and I don't know about you, but I experience it, I feel that oppressive thing that just is there. It's a reality, but here's the good news.

The good news is that God's plan isn't going to be thwarted. And the enemy tries, he may to sink the ship, to bring us down through the attack of the viper or whatever the case. God's going to get us through.

We've got the victory. Because we're serving the Lord and he's got a plan and he's going to get it accomplished. And so I think Luke went into this detail to remind us of the providence of God.

To show us that what God says he's going to do, he's going to do regardless of the circumstances. If all hell breaks loose against us, if all nature. Manipulated by the evil one, somehow, you know, the forces of nature turn against us or whatever the case, you know, back in the eighteen hundreds.

This young man, Jay Hudson Taylor, he felt this intense burden to go to China and to take the gospel to the Chinese people there. There had been some mission activity among the Chinese, but he just he had this great passion to go and to really go into the interior of China, because up until that point, people had just ministered in the coastal region. But he wanted to go into the interior, wanted to penetrate into the deepest part of China.

And bring the gospel of those people. He had a great vision to do it when he set sail for China. His journey to China by ship was very similar to Paul's journey to Rome by ship.

It's amazing when you read in the biography, I'll never forget reading the story and feeling like I'm reading Acts 27 all over again. But it's eighteen hundred years later and it's another apostle, a man who's being sent by God to China and to this day, the millions and millions of believers in China, I personally believe that you can attribute so much of that today to the ministry of this man, Hudson Taylor, back in the eighteen hundreds and the vision that he had and the foundation that he laid in the road that he paved into that country. But it's so crystal clear when he set sail from England, he's not that far outside of the harbor.

And man, a storm strikes and it just seems like this guy's never going to get to China. There is no way they're going to survive this. But he did.

The Lord got him there. And when the Lord calls us to step out, when he calls us to do things, the enemy will oppose us. I have had that experience numerous times, I know God's calling me to do something and man, the enemy is right there through, you know, some health crisis or some other thing that goes on and you're just you know, it just seems like all hell breaks loose.

And yet the Lord, he's faithful and as we trust him and obey him and just take those steps of faith and depend on him. It's so wonderful to see how he comes through, you know, just this past month ago or whatever it was, I really strongly felt that God was calling me to go. I had been in England.

God was calling me to go back again for this outreach that we did. You guys know about it. We prayed about it.

I want to get some pictures and show you and I'll hopefully do that in the next few weeks. But I was convinced on the one hand, the Lord wanted me to go, but as the time got nearer and nearer to go on the trip, the worse I felt. And, you know, this chronic illness thing I have, it just it just seemed to get more and more aggravated.

And two or three days before I'm ready to go on the trip, my friend Phil calls me and we're talking about it and I'm just about to tell him, you know what, I'm not going to be able to come. I mean, that's you know, that is how bad I felt. And before I could get those words out of my mouth, he said, hey, listen, it's non-negotiable.

You're getting on the airplane. Don't even think about not getting on the plane. So I never got even got a chance to tell him I was going to try to bail out on this.

And, you know, when he said that, I was like, oh, he just doesn't know how bad I feel, you know. And so I have the phone and I thought, oh, I can't, you know. And it was one of those things where the Lord, it's almost like I got trapped into this thing because all these other people were depending on me.

I got to be the airport, pick up this person, do that person. I got these fans. Everything's on my credit card, you know, and it's like, how do I just stop the whole thing? I can't do it.

So anyway, I got to go. So I go and I get there and I feel absolutely horrible. And after, you know, our flight and I went a day before the team went and, you know, because I thought I'll get there, I'll rest a little bit.

And the next day, you know, I'll feel better and we'll be able to take this 200 mile journey and do all of this kind of stuff. So anyway, by the time I got to my destination, Willacomb Bay, North Devon, England, by the time I got to Phil's house, I felt like I needed to be life flighted back home. I mean, that's how bad I felt.

I just looked in like you got to get me to something. You got to just do something for me because I just feel like I want to drop dead right now. And, you know, Phil's kind of panicking.

Well, what do we do? We're supposed to have devotions, you know, in two hours. I'm like, forget devotions, forget everything. I just got to go.

You know, I told him, get get me to some place because I happen to be sleeping in his living room is three wonderful kids who are up at six in the morning, you know, climbing all over the place. And I had two hours of sleep and I just thought, I can't do this. I mean, this is how weakened I was.

And. So, you know, Phil and Holland was with me and Holland, they both just grabbed me and prayed for me, just laid hands on me, prayed for me. And I'll tell you, in five minutes, I just looked at him and said, let's go to do the devotion.

We had a team of 50 people waiting for us to do this devotion for. And I said, let's go do the devotion. And from that moment on, I had the grace and the strength to go through the week and to do the things that we needed to do.

And I just I marveled. I shouldn't marvel because that's happened to me over and over again over the years. But just to see how God is faithful, that when we take those steps against the opposition that's there, that he meets us and he gives us the grace and the strength to do what he wants us to do.

And so, again, I think the lesson here is to know the sovereignty of God, the providence of God. And when God says you're going to do this, I'm calling you to this thing or this place or whatever, know this, he's going to get you there. He's going to accomplish that.

And all of the powers of the devil aren't going to be able to stop what God wants to do if we will just by faith move ahead and trust the Lord. And that's what Paul did, and that's what others have done, and that's what we need to continue to do, because God's not finished yet. He's not done.

Saving people. And I am of the conviction that God has a lot more work that he wants to do, and he wants to use people like us to do it. You know, the missionary endeavor.

The modern missionary endeavor did not really. Come into place until the 1700s, you wonder, well, what in the world was the church doing before that? Believe it or not, for about a thousand years, the church was just twiddling its thumbs for about a thousand years. The church was just so absorbed with its own internal issues and theologies and the the the world, the European world had become Christianized, not Christian, but Christianized, where Christianity influenced the culture greatly.

But it never necessarily impacted the individual people to the extent that they were truly born again somewhere. But the vast majority weren't. But for about a thousand years, even a bit longer, actually, there was no mission vision to speak of in the church.

And it wasn't until William Carey in 1790 went to India that the mission vision of the church was rekindled. And now for the past couple hundred years, God has been working. God has been getting his gospel out to the nations.

And that's something that I believe the Lord wants to do in an even greater way. You see, because the biblical picture of a church. Is a church that is looking out.

A church always is on a decline when it just begins to become introspective, when it begins to just look at itself, think about itself and just sort of get caught up in all the internal issues. That's when a church begins to decay and just stagnate. A church needs to be looking out all the time as Christians.

We need to be looking out. We need to be thinking of other people. We need to be thinking of other nations.

We need to be thinking of getting the gospel out to the world. And this book of Acts, of course, this is the whole message of the book of Acts, really. But I think today that.

Among a lot of churches, there there's a lot of introspection, there's a lot of just preoccupation with our our own little world. And God help us not to let that happen, because the message is that we need to be looking out, we need to be stepping out, we need to be moving out and we need to be getting the gospel out to the ends of the earth. That's what Jesus told us to do.

And for all those centuries, that wasn't happening with the church. And and thank God William Carey took that step and he challenged the then existing church, the British church especially, to get a vision for people in other lands. And he was scoffed at.

He was mocked. He was ridiculed. They had all kinds of reasons why that was going to be just a big waste of time and money.

But he believed God was calling him. He took that step and he paved the way for many missionaries to follow. But I think we need to be careful.

It's so easy to just settle down and live comfortably and enjoy the good life right here in Southern California. You know, one of the best places to live in the world, except for our political situation. But other than that, I mean.

You know, this is the place, but. Is that the way we ought to be thinking as God's people? We shouldn't be thinking that, oh, man, the weather's so good and, you know, everything's so wonderful here. It's so cozy and comfortable.

We shouldn't be thinking that way at all. We should be just saying, Lord, wherever you want us to go, whatever you want us to do, we want to be in the center of your plan. If it's to be here in Southern California.

Great. I mean, certainly some of us are called here, but we need to be open to to just going out. Going out to different communities, going out maybe to different states, going out to different countries.

You know, it's amazing when I think of the missionaries that I know that are serving the Lord and making a great impact in places. You know, here's the reality. You might not know this, but, you know, there are people just like you.

There are people just like me. There are people just like us. They're just people.

They're just normal, everyday people that you'd look at and go, wow, that's a missionary. You look kind of like me. Yeah, that's what missionaries look like.

You know, they're just they're just normal people, but they've taken a step of faith. They're out there. I was talking to this guy a few weeks ago at the missions conference.

He's he's serving the Lord in an in an Islamic nation. It is against the law to be anything but a Muslim in that nation. And there he is with his wife and his children.

And they're there serving the Lord. And he's going out into this local square, you know, sort of the town center where hundreds and hundreds of men gather daily. They're unemployed.

They just sit out there and talk. And he just goes out there and he just sits and he has conversations with these Muslims and they all want to talk about religion. So he shares the gospel with them.

There are people that have just packed up and, you know, taken their whole families. You might say, well, you know, I can't be a missionary. I've got kids.

We have a friend who's on his way to Britain as a missionary. He's got five kids. Years ago, George Markey went with his family with eight kids to the Ukraine.

And so, you know, these kind of things, sometimes we think, well, you know, missionary, that's a young kid with no responsibility and no direction in life. And, you know, we'll give him a few bucks and go out there and see what he can do. But, you know, I'm 40 now, man, I'm old.

I got responsibilities and things that, hey, you know what? God can use anybody. He will use anybody. But we need to be open.

We need to just say, Lord, whatever you want. Hey, I'm not saying you have to go somewhere, but if God calls you, you sure would want to go where he calls you to go. So what I am saying is, is having gone through this book of Acts, having studied it together, having seen what was happening in the early church.

Let's not forget that this wasn't just about the history of what happened 2000 years ago. This is about what God wants to be seen happening today, right now. And I think one thing that we have to guard against is a lethargy toward missions and things like that, based upon the idea that, oh, well, the Lord's coming so soon anyway.

You know, we probably don't have time to get out there. Hey, we don't know when the Lord's coming. And as a matter of fact.

If we go back to the very beginning of Acts. I want to remind you of something, the apostles themselves were under the impression early on that the kingdom was going to be immediately established. And they actually questioned the Lord about that particular thing they said to him there in chapter one, they said, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? Basically, what they were asking is, are you coming again immediately? Are you going to set up the messianic kingdom now? And, you know, today we see a lot of things happening in the world, we see the whole thing going on in the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the Iraqi issue, the what's going on in Iran and all of these things.

And because the Bible does speak about this particular region being the hotspot in the end times, we look at it and we say the Lord's coming as soon agreed. I don't dispute that at all. I think that's absolutely true.

But when we say soon, we don't really know what soon is. I remember 20 years ago, people telling Cheryl and I. That, you know, one particular friend, I remember she had gotten married and they hadn't had any

kids yet, and so the question was, are you going to have any kids? And her response was, well, you know, the Lord showed us that he's coming so soon we don't have time for kids. Well, they've got four kids now and one of them's 20 years old.

So, you know, we think, man, the Lord's coming soon. Well, you know, 20 years is soon. I don't know how much longer we have, but.

Jesus said an interesting thing to those guys when they said, well, you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel, he said, it's not for you to know the times or seasons that the father has put in his own authority. And, you know, the reality is nobody knows, nobody will ever know, the Lord only knows, and he tells us not to be sitting around trying to calculate and come up with the day or the hour that he's going to return. He said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be witnesses to me.

In other words, Jesus was saying, don't worry about that. That's not your responsibility. That's in the father's hands.

This is what I want you to do. I want you to be my witness to the uttermost parts of the earth, and I believe that today God is we're moving along in history and I certainly believe that we are near the end of time. I believe the Lord's coming as soon.

But I don't think we're to be sitting around saying, well, you know, the Lord's coming so soon. We don't have time to get involved in missions or church planning or anything like that because, you know, the Lord's coming soon. I think because we believe the Lord's coming soon, we need to be all the more active because there's still a lot of people that are lost.

There's still tons of people that have never heard the gospel. And so God, help us to not be preoccupied with those things that we don't have any control over anyway. And I want to take it even in a bit of a different direction.

Because I found myself kind of getting swept up in it at times, just, you know, in my head and then having to back off and say, wait a second, you know, we're living in a time of intense turmoil politically in our nation, in our state, and it's easy to get distracted. It's easy to get preoccupied. It's easy to get our focus off on those things and, you know, become obsessed with those kinds of matters.

But those are not the things that we, the people of God in the kingdom of God, are to be taken up with. I want to do my part as a citizen. I'm going to vote.

I'm going to do what I have the right and the privilege to do. I want to do all of that. But at the end of the day.

These things are bigger than I can't. Change these things, only God can change these things. If he's going to or not, I don't really know.

But I know this, God has not called me to be a political activist. God has called me to be a witness for Jesus Christ. And God has called me to reach out to people's individuals of every ilk, whoever, whatever they're involved in or doing, and to get the gospel to them.

And I think as the church, we need to remember that because I think there's a lot of Christians in the country who still are looking to the political process for some sort of solution. But our problems are never

going to be solved through that process, if they're ever solved at all, there's a good chance they'll never be solved because the Bible does say that things are going to go from bad to worse, not from bad to better before it's all over. And so I believe that if we get caught up in those things and if we spend our time and energy and concern and all of that in that particular arena, in the end, we're going to be sorely disappointed.

Because that's not where the solution is, the solution is in the salvation of a human soul. And that's the one thing that no politician can bring to anybody. That's the one thing that no political party can bring for anybody.

That's the one thing that the world system doesn't even realize. It's the one thing, though, that we can do. It's the one thing we're called to do and it's the one thing we need to do.

And so as we close our study here in the book of Acts. May that be the lesson that we take home with us, having gone through this great history of the early church that the history of the church isn't over yet. And we've got a chance to make history right here today, now and in the future.

And by God's grace, we'll do it. Amen. Father, we thank you that you have called us to be your people.

You've commissioned us to be your servants. And Lord, we just tonight we want to say, like Isaiah said so many centuries ago. Here I am, send me.

Here I am, use me. And Lord, we know that you use people that are committed to you and help us to be committed, help us not to be playing games, help us not to be floundering spiritually. But help us, Lord, to be seeking you and to be available so that you can do with us things that we might have never even dreamed, the things that you have planned.

Thank you for the testimony of the book of Acts, for the great testimony of the Apostle Paul and Lord. Lord, we just yield ourselves to you following their example and pray you'd use us for your purpose in these last days. In Jesus name.

Amen.

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