

49b ACTS

Let's resume our study here in chapter 27 of Acts. Beginning, we saw the change of transport from little to big, but all along the way, you get this sense of build-up to the climax, which is this storm and shipwreck, just like any well-told tale. We don't get a lot of detail about the trip to Jerusalem.

It's just kind of a bump and jerk and there you are. And here's Agabus rolling on the floor in front of Paul saying, Don't go, don't go. And then he's there and there's the riot.

And then you have this outward movement. Every move from then on is toward Jerusalem. He goes to Caesarea.

He sits there for two years. We don't have a lot told about that. There are some people who think that some of the epistles were written in Caesarea, like Ephesians and Colossians and that.

But no, they are written when he is imprisoned in Rome. So they are a little bit later. And there are reasons we can defend that.

But we'll talk about that when the time comes. But once he embarks, it's time to go to Italy. You have this sense of drama.

You have this intensive sense that Paul is now engaged. He's going the direction God wants him to go. And even as he goes, things are being accomplished in God's plan and purpose because the Roman soldiers that are accompanying him, Julius and his crowd, the sailors, these guys travel.

You remember? The reason I went that long, laborious route of explaining the difference between a fruititarian and one of these guys is that this is their stock and trade. Sailors, all they do is contact people. It's like working at the airport.

Dozens and dozens of people every week you're going to come in contact with. These, what did I call them? Why does that slip my mind? Speculatories. I started to say structatories.

I knew that wasn't right. They're not frumentari. They are structatories.

And what's important about that, why would we care if it's a fruit or a speculum? Because they are travelers. And when Paul has these experiences on the way to Rome, God is putting him next to these people that are going to tell this story around the campfire week after week after week and say, you won't believe. We had this little bald Jewish guy with us and he told us at the outset.

And this is going to spread all through the region, all along the coast of Cyprus, all along

the coast of Crete. From one end of this route in Palestine to the other end of it in Italy, it is going to be known. This is why Paul is going to be able to say later, we go to places and they already know we've been there.

Actually, he said that earlier. But God is working in the journey. Now, the goal is to get to Rome.

The goal is to speak His peace in Rome and to bear witness. But actually, the journey has already begun that. Paul thinks, well, I'm going to bear witness to Christ in Rome.

But he is bearing witness to Christ in Rome, the big Rome, the Roman Empire. And it begins as soon as he leaves Caesarea, headed in the right direction. Julius and his guys and the sailors, every single one of these sailors.

Why does God say, I'm going to give you all these guys? Not a life is going to be lost. Because each and every one of them is going to be telling this story until he has grandkids. And it's going to spread everywhere.

And so Paul is already bearing witness in Rome from the time he embarks on the little ship. So, he starts in Caesarea. He's got Aristarchus with him.

You can find out about Aristarchus, his manservant. He's mentioned in Colossians 4, verse 10. He's also mentioned over in Philemon 24.

And you imagine that when Paul first went through Thessalonica, this man became a convert and now has become his close companion, takes care of his physical needs. You wonder how he left his cloak behind at Troas. Aristarchus must have let something fall through the cracks there.

But, they went to Sidon. They took on their cargo at Sidon. And Paul visited with the Christians of that city.

Just like the ones that were in Tyre. Remember, he talked to the people in Tyre back in chapter 21. And you have this outward expansion of Jewish Christians from the time of the martyrdom of Stephen and the persecution and all of that.

And so these people have spread north up into Agrippa's area. Tyre and Sidon, this is Agrippa country. And so there's a group of believers in Sidon of all places.

And so now they've gone from Sidon over to Myra. They used to have girls named Myra, like Myra Breckenridge. But, they're running against the wind and they're trying to stay in the lee of these sheltering land masses and so on.

And so they're working their way westward. They're fighting against the wind. But, God is using this delay because these people are getting to know Paul.

It's not a flying trip. It's not hello, goodbye. They see him day by day.

Now, there are some, believe it or not, there is an application of this for us. Sometimes, God wants something to happen with us and everything just falls in place. You can't decide if something is the will of God or not by how much resistance there is.

Sometimes, if God wants something to happen, it's just slam dunk and there you are. You wake up one morning and my goodness, I'm in a different town with a different job and it just seemed to happen. And God is very efficient.

He can move you. It's like picking up Philip and dropping him in another town. Other times, the emphasis is on how you get there.

And there is all kinds of diffugalties and resistance and episodes and things that take place along the way. And God works in and through those circumstances. So, sometimes it is a faith test.

It's a perseverance test. You have need of endurance so that you can inherit. If you've got no resistance, how are you supposed to endure? I'm going to endure my comfortable lounge chair with my feet up and my mint julep and my stereo wailing away and I'm just going to slide down the slippery slope to being an overcomer.

What do you overcome if there is nothing to overcome? We were talking on the break about the overcomers over in Revelation and the ones who are not overcomers when you get down to chapter 21 and 22. And if they are oligos, then they are short comers instead of overcomers. And they would be like oligocomers or whatever.

They are short comers. And they are sitting out there watching their inheritance go up in the flames. They are hurt by the second death.

It's very important to remember that it's not some big thing. I think in a lot of Christian circles, at least a lot of ones I've been in, they say, well, God is preparing me for something later. God is getting me ready to be a missionary or God is getting me ready to have some big moment in my future life where I'm going to be all set to go and at some pivotal point, I'm going to say the right thing or do the right thing and some big Christian thing is going to happen.

And I will have fulfilled my purpose and met my faith and destiny will have fallen on my head. It is what we are doing now. We are Paul on the ship.

This is it. We are bearing witness. We are doing the thing that God has called us to do day by day by day.

And you can expect wind in your face. You can expect to be crawling along the lee shores trying not to hit the rocks. You can expect storms.

You can expect sailors who don't believe what you have to say and take you to a place you don't want to go and have to rely on the promises of God and trust in the Word of God. And when God told Paul, if you all take this voyage, everybody is going to die, how do you think that made Paul feel? Well, absent from the body, present with the Lord, I guess, but what about Rome? And so you can imagine that there is sort of a Moses on Mount Sinai kind of conversation where God says, Paul, if this ship leaves harbor, the ship, the cargo and the lives will all be lost. And Paul says, Lord, I seem to recall you saying I have borne witness in Jerusalem, I will bear witness in Rome, now how am I walking on the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea and going to come up like Jonah on the shore? How is this going to work? And God says, well, I'll tell you what I'll do.

I'll spare your life and I'll give you all the sailors along with because you're right. And so what is the deal here? Paul reminds God of his promise. Paul reminds God of his prophetic word that certain things would happen.

This is what we are called to do. Why do you think God told Paul they're all going to die after he had told Paul he would bear witness in Rome? It forces Paul to say, to put two and two together and say, Lord, my equation does not balance. You have told me one thing over here and you told me something else over here.

This does not mesh. He has to take the word of God back to God in prayer. And this is what I think constitutes healthy prayer life.

When you look at scripture, Moses talking to God, what does he do? He takes God's word back to him. Abraham interceding on behalf of Lot in Sodom. What does he do? He takes God's character back to God and he says, Lord, will you destroy the righteous with the wicked? Moses, Lord, what are the nations going to think? You have made these promises.

You've invested your name and your presence with us. And if we get wiped out in the wilderness, what does that say about you to the nations? Time and time again, you see in prayer, people holding God to His word. Look at the prayers of David in the Psalms.

Over and over again. And this prayer has devolved into a really shallow and sort of perfunctory kind of a thing. Oh God, help so-and-so.

Oh God, heal so-and-so. Oh God, I'm hurting. Please make it stop.

We know better. We have seen in God's word. Now when we pray, we should go to God and give Him a reason why He needs to make it stop.

We need to give Him a reason, not that He won't do it unless we give Him a reason, but the reason, the whole purpose for this scenario is for us to deduce the applicable doctrine, the applicable principle, the applicable promise. God will create a mortal danger scenario, a high pressure situation, and face us with it to see what we're going to

do. Remember what Moses tells the Israelites? God has brought us out in the wilderness to test us and to see what's in our hearts.

That's what He's doing with us. That's why the winds are blowing. That's why there's resistance to our ship getting where it's going.

God is testing us to see what's in our hearts. What ought to be in our hearts? The word of God. How do we let God know that His word is in our heart? We tell Him.

We go to Him in prayer and say, Lord, this is a very uncomfortable situation. I know you said in this world you shall have tribulation. Well, I am having tribulation and I believe that that has been fulfilled and what I would really like now is to see the overcoming of the world that was the rest of that statement.

And I am relying on you and your grace. You have said, and then start listing your promises. Now, how many promises do you know? How many promises have you memorized? That will keep Him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee because He trusts in thee.

So, if I am trusting God, then I ought to have perfect peace regardless of the circumstance. I may not be happy. I may not be tap dancing on my nice shiny floor, but I ought to have peace.

I shouldn't be troubled. I shouldn't be dismayed. Jesus said, let not your heart be troubled neither let it be dismayed.

Perfect peace because our mind is stayed on Him. We trust in Him. How do you get stayed on Him and trust in Him? You have to have some objective propositional truth.

God has to have said something that we take to the bank. We go to God and say, you said this. The promise, I have told you this before, the promise that I have probably claimed more than any other in my life is ask and it shall be given.

How many times have we come to these passages that are difficult and do not immediately yield their meaning and don't immediately, you just can't come to it and read it and say, oh, okay, good, that makes sense. I mean they are hard. They seem to conflict and they tax your ability to understand and in many cases totally surpass my ability to understand and I go to God and I say, Lord, it's not just me but a lot of other people would really like to know what this passage says.

I don't want to screw it up. I don't want to misunderstand it. I don't want to miss something important that you have for us in this passage.

You have said, ask and it will be given. You have said, if we seek, we will find. You have said, if we knock, you'll open the door and that if we ask for bread, we will not get a rock

or a snake or a scorpion and I cannot tell you the innumerable times that I have gone to God and said, I am looking at this passage and I cannot figure it out and God will answer those prayers but He waits until we ask.

What does the scripture say? Ye have not because ye ask not or because you ask amiss so that you can consume it with your own desires. You are not looking at God's plan. You are looking at the plan of Sam.

You are saying, Lord, please give me all the money I need for a new bath boat or please... I don't even... I would know a bath boat if one fell on me but something. That wouldn't actually be one of my desires. Please give me the latest greatest computer maybe.

But you see the point. Look at what Paul is doing. He is listening to what God says and when God says you are all going to die, he says, Lord, you can't do that.

My mission is not accomplished. You told me when you commissioned me, when you blinded me on the Damascus road that I would be the apostle to the Gentiles and I've got a lot of things to say that I haven't said yet. You said I would testify in Rome.

I haven't been there yet. We can't die and I don't want to be the only guy surviving on the boat so how about we all make it through the storm? And God says, fine, I'll give you everybody on the boat just because you're there. this is what we think about.

Whether the boat is small, whether it is large, whether it's near the shore, whether it's out in the open sea, whether it's just a stiff wind that you're battling against or whether it's a tempest and you're throwing everything including the running gear of the ship overboard. The only reality that counts is what God has said and we have to take it to the Lord and say, Lord, you have promised. You cannot deny your word because that would be to deny yourself and you have promised.

And a lot of times that's all God is waiting for is for us to realize what the realities are, what the fixed elements in the universe are and it's not our circumstances, it's God's word. So, after they go to Myra in Lycia, southwest coast of Asia Minor there, they get some little breezes there going along the land and so on. Julius, the spectatore there, speculatore, finds another ship, this big Alexandrian grain ship.

He takes the soldiers and the prisoners on board. Big grain shipment going up to Italy. So, they're going along the peninsula.

They're going out. This is near Rhodes where the Colossus was. Remember when he was going toward Jerusalem, we talked about this thing has already been there, been a wonder of the world and fallen into the sea.

And, as they go along here, they pass this Canidas which is the last port of call before

you go across the Aegean and start heading over to Greece, the Greek mainland. And so, you're kind of heading out in the open sea as much as you can be in the Mediterranean. So, land is going to disappear over the horizon and now you're out there where you have no bearings except the stars.

I don't know that they had knowledge of the magnetic compass at this point. I don't think they did which is why most of the sailing was done inside of land. But, at some point, you have to swallow hard and go across because there just isn't any land to sight.

So, they go and they leave Canidas over the horizon. But now, they get a northern wind that blows up and blows them out into the middle of the Mediterranean. They're trying to head basically sort of northwest.

And this big northern wind comes and blows them out into the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. And the sky clouds over and they've got no bearings. It's so dark they can't see the sun, they can't see the stars, they can't see the moon.

So, you're out there, if you've ever been at sea where you could look in every direction and see nothing but choppy water, it all looks the same. A lot of times, you can't tell if one side of the horizon is brighter or another. And if it is brighter, is that just thinner clouds or is that where the sun is? I mean, you just cannot tell.

And if you haven't got a compass and the wind is shifting and it's boxing the compass, well, what do you do? Which way do you aim? So, they're lost, basically. Lost at sea. The only thing they know is that typically this time of year the winds blow out of the north so they figure it's probably a northerly wind and so they're trying to head generally in sort of a westerly direction.

That's as much as they know. So, they try to find Crete and go along Crete. It's a 160 mile long island.

That gives them a good part of the way along. And after they pass the tip of Crete, the eastern tip of Crete, there's a small bay there called Fair Havens. And it's late in the year.

This is after the middle of September now. Winter is coming on. And navigating any time after the middle of September is dangerous in this part of the world.

And any time after the first week in November it's just virtually impossible. And you get this from the old Roman writers. They talk about this.

There's a guy named Vegetius who makes a big deal out of this in some military writing that he did. So, they have no hope of reaching Italy before winter. They've gotten this far but they've been delayed so long that they're not going to make it.

So now they have to figure out where are we going to wait. We have to wait for spring before we can go the rest of the trip. So, when it says the fast had already gone by, this is Yom Kippur, the head of the year.

We just had this, what, last week? Last Thursday? We had Yom Kippur as they call it now. Well, that's the fast here that they're talking about. The 10th of Tishri, mid to late September.

So, Paul warned them that if they try to go any further, everything will be lost. But, the guy driving the ship and the owner of the ship said, nah, we've got to get out of here. This is a lousy place to winter.

So, they want to try to go to a larger and safer port, the one called Phoenix or Pheneca, it's called today. P-H-I-N-E-C-A, which is 40 miles further west. And they figure 40 miles, how hard can it be? It's not that bad.

So, the only problem with that is that the coast of Crete turns north suddenly. If you're trying to go in a straight line from Fair Havens to this port of Phoenix, well, there's a big gash in the southern part of Crete. So, think about kind of an east-west line as the southern part of Crete and then all of a sudden you've got this big opening to the north, like a big bay.

Well, what that does is take away the shelter of the land. So, as you're trying to sail west, all of a sudden the northerly winds that prevail at that time of year, the land is not stopping them anymore and it just catches the ship and just throws it clear away from Crete. And so, this little, it's like Gilligan, you know, a three-hour tour, you get blown off course and now you never get where you're going.

So, this is exactly what happens. This big norther blows them right out to sea. They at first thought that they were going to do fine, but not.

So, they're driven southwest about 23 miles, this island of Kauda. They see the island and say, ah, well, at least we know where we are now. They recognize it and so they try to get the island between them and the wind.

So, they try to get to the south side of this Kauda island. And they've got this skiff or dinghy or whatever you want to call it and they try to use this as sort of a stabilizer. They lash some lines to it and if you think about it, if you put it on one side of the ship and run lines all the way around, if the ship tries to roll very much, it's either going to try to pull this skiff out of the water or try to push it down into the water and so that helps stabilize the ship a little bit.

It's like a, what do they call those? Outriggers. It's like making a makeshift outrigger. Well, they try this, but let me just say this much.

People who know a lot about sailing and especially sailing in the Mediterranean Sea have pored over this account in detail and are convinced that whatever else you want to say about the inspiration of scripture or anything else, that this is an actual account of an actual journey. It's like someone kept a log book because it is so detailed and so precise and so accurate to what actually happens. The nautical terminology is exactly right and it's very clear to even a secular reader who understands Greek that Luke or somebody that Luke talked to was on this voyage and took notes as they were going because it's so detailed and so precise and of course it was Luke.

So, they pass these ropes under the ship and they, it's called frapping or hogging the vessel by tying the stem and stern tightly together with ropes to keep it from breaking its back. They frap it because you get this stress as waves pass, you know, you turn the head of any ship into the waves. When you do that, you're going to have lift from the crest of the wave on the bow and the stern and the center is going to be sagging and as the wave passes underneath, it's like high centering.

The wave is in the middle and the bow and the stern want to sag and so it basically starts kind of taking the ship and starts like a wire. You bend it up and bend it down and you do that often enough it's going to break and so what they used to do is this frapping or hogging where they would take lines and wrap around the bow up front and run it straight back to the stern and lash it as tight as they could to stop this flexing in the middle of the boat and that's also described here. They've actually found some Egyptian drawings of Queen Hatshepsut's expedition long before the time of Luke, way back where they did this same thing.

Anyway, two weeks, 14 days and 14 nights, this northeastern blows. You think, well now, they only had a 40 mile cruise. How much provision do they have? I mean, they have to go on half rations, quarter rations, two solid weeks and they're not even inside of land.

They can't get a fix. They have no stars, can't see anything. They've lightened the ship by throwing all the deck cargo, then the ship's tackle.

As I mentioned on the break, if you think about hemp line, these big cables, when they get wet, they weigh hundreds of pounds and basically what they've done, you typically have it running up into the rigging over blocks and tackles and that and then you have a lot of it coil on the deck. Well, they chopped that off and threw these big coils overboard. Evidently, they left just enough to still be able to hoist the sails because it says later they hoist the sail.

But all of the excess, all of their spare canvas, their spare spars or whatever else they have on there, they've heaved them overboard trying to lighten the ship to the maximum extent. And so they've basically given up hope because they don't know where they are. They figure we're done for.

But just in the darkest hour, two solid weeks, and by the way, Paul hasn't heard anything from God during this time, so he's just praying and he doesn't hear back. There's no relief. You imagine Paul is praying many times a day.

Even if he's just like David or Daniel, he's going to pray three times a day at a minimum. And day after day after day after day, you think two solid weeks of nothing but this horrible, fierce gale and no relief at all. But after two weeks, an angel of God comes and stands by Paul and reassures him with a message of comfort.

So the next morning, obviously the people are trying to sleep as best they can. Paul shares this with his companions and of course he has a little bit of a, you know, I told you, we shouldn't leave Fair Havens. But you wouldn't listen, so here we are.

He says, now God has given me this promise that we're not going to die. Well, this is going to be a comfort if you believe it, right? To the extent that you have faith, it's going to be a comfort. Keep up your courage.

There will be no loss of life among you, only of the ship. An angel of God, to whom I belong, whom I serve, stood before me. Do not be afraid, Paul.

You must stand before Caesar. Confirmation of the earlier word. And you get the idea that Paul has been praying this prayer for two weeks and God finally comes back and says, you're right, you will stand before Caesar.

God has granted you all those who are sailing with you. And I think this is also an answer to prayer because Paul is an interceding kind of guy. And I think he was grateful that Julius had been so kind and had given him liberty to visit with the Christians in Sidon and that kind of thing.

So he asked for his life and God granted it. Therefore, keep up your courage, men. I believe, God, that it will turn out exactly as I have been told.

But we must run aground on a certain island. Now this is some nice additional information. We're going to run aground.

Well, any sailor does not want to hear those words. To a sailor, this is like the words cardiac arrest. I mean, you do not want to run aground.

Who was the captain of the Exxon Valdez? Ran aground. Ripped his ship open. When the fourteenth night came, as we were being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight, the sailors began to surmise that they were approaching some land.

They took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms. You can only imagine what this is like. You know, more recent days in the British Navy and in our Navy in the days of sail, when you take soundings, you have a piece of small stuff, a piece of line that has

knots in it because in the dark, this is midnight.

Now after two weeks, do you seriously think they've got anything that can make a flame or any way to start a fire? How do they see? Well, they can't see. It's pitch black. There's no overhead light at all.

So how do they take a sounding? Well, they've got the sounding line. It's got a lead on the end. And then there are knots that they can feel the pattern of.

And so as they drop this and wait for it to hit, when it finally touches bottom, they feel for the nearest knot. And that tells them how deep the water is. But they can't see a thing.

So they take these soundings. They find it to be 120 feet. A little farther on, they take another sounding and they find it to be 90 feet.

So it's shoaling. It's come up 30 feet just between soundings. They say, oh, we're getting close to something.

We're going to run aground just as the Apostle foretold. Fearing we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak. Prayed for daybreak.

As the sailors are trying to escape from the ship, they let down the skiff pretending like they were going to put the stern anchors out. And they said, well, now we're going to anchor the bow. But what they're really going to do is sky out.

Paul says, unless these men remain in the ship, yourselves cannot be saved. We've talked about this in terms of volition related to divine decree. Volition related to promise.

God has made a promise, but it is contingent on doing something. Depending on the decision you make, the forecast of God will or will not happen. So they cut away the ropes of the boat.

Now Paul has credibility. Paul told them that the storm was coming. Paul told them they would run aground on an island.

And so now when Paul says, you better cut away the skiff, they do it. Even though, when you think about it, this is not something that would normally recommend itself. You need the skiff.

But they follow his advice. And this is sort of a symbolic of trust in what Paul is telling them. Change of mind regarding his word.

So now verse 33. Until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly

watching and going without eating, having taken nothing. I encourage you to take some food, for this is your preservation, for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish.

Having said this, he took bread, gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it and began to eat. This is quite a symbolic act. Paul basically is signaling the end of the test here.

Jesus took bread and broke it and ate it with his disciples in a special way at the end of his test. Not at the complete end, but just before it finished. Paul does the same thing here, just before it finishes.

All of them were encouraged, and they themselves also took food. All of us in the ship were 276 persons. This is not a little fishing boat.

This is a big vessel, especially for that day. When they had eaten enough, they began to lighten ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea. And of course, this is their remaining food.

They threw the cargo out, but they kept enough wheat to make the equivalent of oatmeal out of. You can eat that. You can live on it.

But they're throwing that out because they're near land and they figured that the ship's done for. When day came, they could not recognize the land, but they did observe a bay with a beach and they resolved to drive the ship onto it if they could, casting off the anchors. They left them in the sea.

Of course, you hate to leave anchors behind because this is kind of like when you're in a balloon and you drop all your ballast. Well, where are you going to get any more ballast? Casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time, they were losing the ropes of the rudders, hoisting the foresail to the wind. They were heading for the beach, but striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground.

The prow stuck fast, remained immovable. The stern began to be broken up by the force of the waves. This is very graphic and detailed information.

You can tell that Luke was there and he's telling you what he saw. And this is as close as you get in this life to a movie of the life of the Apostle Paul. I mean, this would make great cinema.

The soldier's plan was to kill the prisoners so that none of them would swim away and escape. If you survive and you report back to Rome and they say, well, what happened to the prisoners? They didn't escape. They were all lost at sea.

But the centurion, who is the centurion? Julius. Wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention and commanded that those who could swim should jump

overboard first and get to land and the rest should follow. Some on planks, others on various things from the ship.

So it happened that they all were brought safely to land. The lifestyle of the Apostle Paul during this slow journey has been a witness to Julius. And he knows he can trust Paul.

He can take his word as his bond. If Paul says, we'll get to the shore and we'll wait for you, he can take his word. And this is a testimony.

This is a witness. Seeing Paul comfort people in the storm, seeing Paul pray to his God on their behalf when they are not his people, when they are his captors, if you will, all of this makes an impression. And that's exactly what happens in our life.

As we go on our journey, however easy or difficult it may be, it is not our words so much as our life that bears witness. It is our life of integrity, our life of reflecting the character and the glory of God that makes a difference. It's how we do what we do.

How do we cope with pressure? How do we deal with adversity? How do we face the ugliness and the headwinds in this life? How do we face storms? How do we face delays? How do we face frustrations? Really wanted to get to Italy? Don't want to have to winter here? What are we going to do for three months until it's safe to sail again? And you think it's a waste of time. It's not a waste of time. This delay and this journey is impressing without them consciously being aware of it.

Aristarchus, Luke, Paul, all of his group are making an impression on each and every sailor, each and every soldier, and that is a testimony that is going to spread like wildfire all through the Roman Empire because these people are the travelers. We do not know how God is using our example. You will never know until you get to glory the ways that God has bounced His glory off of you.

You will not know. You have no way of knowing. Paul, Luke, had no idea, I'm sure, that during this journey, this would be read by millions of people over hundreds of years.

How could they possibly imagine? They just had no idea. And yet, it is the faithfulness, it is the consistency, it is the prayer life, it is the day-to-day faith in God that makes this tremendous impact. And it is the same with you and the same with me.

It isn't what we do near so much as how we do it that counts. Do we walk by faith or do we walk by sight? Do we trust in the promises of God or do we listen to the word of man? It's just that simple. Day by day, decision by decision, situation by situation, relationship by relationship, we either live it like anybody else in the world or we live it like a Christian.

We live it like someone who belongs to God and who has God's word, who goes to God in prayer, and it ought to make a difference. It ought to stick in people's minds. People that

come into our periphery ought to say, you know, there's something different about those people.

Most of the people that I have heard about that came to faith in Christ as adults were impressed with the life of a Christian that was in their periphery. And sometimes that Christian never knew it. But people say in their heart, now there's somebody that has the kind of life I wish I had.

And I don't mean the circumstances. I mean there's somebody that has the peace. There's someone that has the enjoyment.

There's someone that seems to have the capacity for life and capacity for love, capacity for enjoying whatever comes their way. They don't seem to get rattled. They don't seem to be depressed and torn apart by things.

Where does that come from? And sometimes they'll ask and say, how can you be this way when your circumstances are thus? And then they have the opportunity. Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. So here's the question we ask ourselves.

And this is sort of the main point as we watch Paul go through this very difficult circumstance with Luke and with Aristarchus and with the rest of them. When the eulogy is written for us, what is going to be the outstanding characteristic that people remember? You saw this Polish guy that crossed the line with his semi and wiped out, what, ten people at a swipe? Out of nowhere, these people are gone and their funerals are had and their memorial services are attended and words of memory are said about them. What would be said about us? If that had been us, how would they be eulogizing us now, the people that know us best, the people that are in our periphery, the people who would attend and say, that sounds like him, that sounds like her.

What would the characteristic be? It ought to be faith. It ought to be hope. It ought to be love.

It ought to be stability. Because of our faith, because we know God's promises, because we know God's Word, because we know the power of God's Spirit, it ought to make a difference. It ought to be a gyroscope in our soul that stabilizes us in life's stormy sea.

Now, how do we get that? How do we maintain that? By doing just what we're doing tonight. By studying the Word of God. That's step one.

Step two is, after I close here in a couple of minutes, and we pray and we're dismissed, and we fold up our Bibles, and we get in our cars and we drive away, is it still going to be circulating in our mind? What about tomorrow? What about the next puff of wind that delays our journey? What about the next delay and frustration? What about the next tempest? The next blue norther? We're going to be sailing along a coast and all of a

sudden the coast is going to disappear and the wind is going to heal our ship over 45 degrees. Now what? Does it make a difference? This determines our eternal future. This determines where we will serve and what we will be doing in the millennial kingdom.

God will judge us based on what we have done with His promises. Are we Israelites who drop in the wilderness? Or are we Caleb and Joshua crossing the Jordan, dry shod, into the land flowing with milk and honey? We choose, we decide, every single day, every single situation. And it's not like we're made out of some special stuff to do that.

It is prayer. It is claiming God's promise, letting God do the work. Paul is no different physically than any other man on the ship, probably less so.

I'm sure there are Roman soldiers on there that are twice the man Paul is physically. But who's got the power on the ship? Who is God sending an angel to, to comfort? Who is God assuring that His life cannot be lost? Who is God granting the lives of those around Him? It's the little, short, bald-headed guy. Why? Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him. He will make your path straight.

What's the advantage of a straight path? It's easy to tell when you're on it, and it's easy to tell when you're off of it. That's what I like about a straight path. Straight path through the narrow gate that leads to life.

It's easy to tell when you've swerved, because you're not cutting a straight line through the Word of Truth. Well, we leave the crew and passengers, both guards and prisoners, floating in the sea on planks and flotsam and jetsam, paddling toward the shore of this unknown island until next week, where we will begin chapter 28. Father, thank You for the privilege of studying Your Word.

Thank You for illustrating for us so clearly the nature of our life, the assignment that we have in the short time that remains to us in this life. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will keep us ever mindful of the great opportunity that we have because of the Lord Jesus Christ to live a life that counts, a life that makes a difference, a life that is useful to You both now and in the kingdoms to come. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.