

50b ACTS

Let's pick up our study now in Acts chapter 28. We find the Apostle Paul now on shore along with Luke of course and Aristarchus. This is the final and longest of the we sections in this book where Luke includes himself.

Paul gathered this bundle of sticks, laid them on the fire. You notice that Paul is not just sitting there being a big time apostle, letting everybody light the fire for him. He's out there gathering the sticks with everyone else.

But this viper comes out because of the heat. Of course it was cold and so the thing was probably curled up in a torpor. The heat of the fire activated it.

So it came out and fastened onto his hand. Because of this, they changed their minds about him. And instead of deciding that justice would not allow him to live, they said that he was a god.

We don't have the same kind of protestations and so on, although I'm sure Paul put that idea to rest in their minds. They didn't fall down and worship. They don't seem to be near as superstitious.

People who live in a more practical sort of environment, if you're having to scratch your living out of the ground, you're not an academic, you're not an intellectual, you're not a raconteur, you're out there having to plow and plant and do manual labor, you don't tend to be so quick to fall down and worship and make snap judgments. And these people seem to be of a much more practical turn of mind. They draw a conclusion.

I'm sure that Paul set them to rights. But in verse 7 it says, In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island whose name was Publius. I think I gave that as the name of the centurion earlier.

But this is the name of the governor of the island who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. As it happened, the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went to him and prayed, laid his hands on him, and healed him.

It's interesting because on the island of Malta there is a disease that is actually sort of indigenous to that island. It had been common for centuries on that and was unique to that area and they couldn't figure out what it was until 1887. I found out that the microorganism *Mycrococcus mellitensis* and you can hear the mellita in its name, this is a particular kind of bacteria, was discovered and they found that it was in the milk of the goats on Malta.

It was passed down from goat to goat and the people drank the goat's milk and got this, what they called Malta fever or Maltese fever. In the late 1800s they figured out how to develop a vaccine for its treatment. A case of this Malta fever from this particular

bacteria will last an average of four months.

In some cases it can last two or three years. Luke, when he talks about the father here of the governor, says fevers, plural, which is pyretos, P-Y-R-E-T-O-I-S. The first part of that, you talk about a funeral pyre and that's something hot and so the word for fever is pyretos, P-Y-R-E-T-O-I-S.

So this is fevers, plural, because this is something that would come and afflict him regularly, intermittently. So after Paul heals Publius' father-in-law and he heals him through prayer and through the laying on of hands. Now this is a part of the early signed gift package that God gave the church.

Now if I'm sick and you come over and pray and lay your hands on me, I am not going to just suddenly stand up and everything's going to be great. It's just highly unlikely. God does not see fit to do that now.

Why does He do it here? This is my question. Why here? This is the second confirmation, affirmation that Paul is a man you need to listen to. The Maltese people are probably already hearing stories from the sailors.

You know, this man Paul, he told us we were going to have trouble if we left the harbor and he told us if we'd all stay together, even though we would have this grievous shipwreck and run aground on the island that none of us would die, and it all came true. Then you saw the snake and now you see the healing of the governor's father. There could have been lots of sick people.

In fact, there are lots of sick people on the island of Malta, but the one that gets healed is the governor's father. But notice, the governor is not some kind of hard, bilious, anti-Semite, is he? He is receptive, he is cordial, and he brings Paul into his home and it is because of that hospitality and that positive attitude toward these that he could very easily look down his nose at and say, you're common criminals, you're convicts, lock them in the dungeon, put them in the county jail, whatever. Instead, he invites them into his home.

Because of that receptivity, he receives a blessing. His father is going to be completely cured long before they ever develop the vaccine because Paul went into him and prayed. Remember a few chapters back it said that even handkerchiefs that Paul had touched would heal people? Why? Has that ever happened before or since? I don't remember ever reading a story of Jesus touching a handkerchief and somebody carried it to someone and they got healed.

Why with the apostle? It's for a purpose, isn't it? It makes people sit up and listen to what he has to say. That's his bona fides. That's his ID card.

That's his authentication from God. So, Paul arrives in Malta. Did anything like this

happen when he was in Israel or in Jerusalem? Wouldn't it have been great if Paul could have healed somebody right there in front of all the Jews? Trick question now.

Wouldn't it have been great if Paul had been able to heal one? No, it wouldn't have been. Jesus did that. Peter, James, and John did that.

And the church is getting railroaded out of Jerusalem, isn't it? It wouldn't have been great. It isn't going to work. He shouldn't have been there in Jerusalem.

This is the kind of place he's supposed to be. I knew I'd catch you napping on that one. So, 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. This is a great door of opportunity opening for Paul to share the gospel. They honored us in many ways.

And when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary. It doesn't say specifically that they came to faith. It doesn't specifically say that a church was started.

But you get the idea that God didn't blow Paul all the way across the Mediterranean Sea just to kill a snake and heal an old guy. There was a reason. And it is fulfilled.

So, then it says in verse 11, after three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship. Remember, it was after the middle of September. It was after the feast and so on.

So, you figure through the nearly better part of a month it took them to wallow around in the middle of the Med in this typhoon and then to be blown ashore. You're looking at November, December, January. This is probably early February by now.

After three months, we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the twin brothers. This is Dio Scurioi. Dio Scurioi.

You think it might be Dio Adelphoi or something, but this is Dio Scurioi. Do you have any idea who this is? Think about the founding of Rome. What's the legend of the founding of Rome? Have you ever seen the statue of the wolf and the two little babies nursing? These are Zeus' sons, Castor and Pollux, the twins.

Castor and Pollux, the twin brothers. This ship had wintered at the island as well. So, once the weather freshens and they can go, they're going to take this ship and it's going to head up there.

What I find interesting about this is why do we care about the figurehead of the ship? Has Luke told us about the figurehead of any other ship that they've ridden on? No. Why does he tell us about this one, do you think? Zeus' sons, the twins. The figurehead represents the ship, doesn't it? It sort of characterizes the ship.

It's like a mascot for a team. In my high school, it was the Sequoia Eagles. We never had an eagle, but that was our team name.

So, this ship, every time somebody sees it and they see these two guys' heads out on the front, on the prow, they say, oh, that's the... probably the name of the ship was the Dioscoroi. Got the two sons there. This is emblematic of Rome, isn't it? It's emblematic of everything that Paul is supposed to be witnessing to.

This is what he's coming up against. The Roman ship with the figurehead of Zeus' sons is going to take the apostle Paul and it's an Alexandrian ship. It's Alexandrian registry.

It comes from Egypt. Everything is secular. There's not a Jew to be seen.

God isn't using any Hebrews. You can't find anybody of any of the twelve tribes here except in Paul's little party. It is all of God.

God is prospering Paul in his Gentile milieu. He's on an Alexandrian ship with a Roman figurehead surrounded by Roman guards and soldiers. He's been on Malta where there's no Jewish people.

And God is blessing and he's fruitful. When he went to Israel, the home of God's people, and when he goes to Jerusalem, the capital, it's all tohu wabohu, isn't it? So, they go on this ship that had wintered at the island and they land at Syracuse and stay there three days. Do you notice how often we keep finding this three days? How long was he at the governor's house? Three days.

They're on the island for three months. Now, they're on the twin brother's ship and they land at Syracuse and they stay there three days. What does the number three connote? It's the number of God, isn't it? God is in it.

It's the number of the Trinity. It's the number of days that the Lord Jesus was in the heart of the earth. Three days and three nights.

It is the triangle that is the strongest geometric shape on earth. I watched a fascinating thing talking about domes. Did you ever see the special on domes they had on PBS talking about how the Romans figured out how to make domes? And they could only get them up to a certain height and in later times all they could do is try to emulate it and you have Michelangelo and the guy before him that was trying to put a dome on St. Peter's there in Rome and they were trying to figure out how to make this dome and then later on they had this great architect and he figured out not only how to make a dome but to puncture it with holes like our Capitol dome is surrounded with these windows and it's very light and very tall.

One of the ways they were able to do that is that it is essentially a series of concentric arches and yet the whole thing is essentially based on the principle of the triangle and it

is the principle of the triangle that makes the thing go and this is where your geodesic dome comes from. The guy that invented the geodesic dome was a complete and total wacko but he stumbled onto this because he was analyzing domes and why they work and he figured out that it was a triangle and he said well I'll just make a dome out of triangles I'll cut out the middle man and these smooth arches and he invented the geodesic dome. If you ever read about him he was a nutcase.

However, the triangle is composed of three parts and the triangle is typically the symbol of the godhead for that reason. Well, we stayed three days in Syracuse from there we circled around and reached Regium and if you look on your map once again you'll see that this is now a northward track that is taking him directly toward the capital. Syracuse is on the tip of Sicily there.

This always reminds me of a boot kicking a pork chop. Sicily looks like a pork chop. Malta is down below that.

So they land on Sicily and then Regium which is right at the tip of the boot and then they sail across the arch and up the instep there toward Rome and after one day in Regium they only had to wait a day and they got a south wind. The next day they came to Pudioli where we found Brethren and were invited to stay with them seven days. It's interesting to speculate on how this colony of Brethren arrived at that town.

Were they Jewish scattered Christians? Were they converts that had migrated from Paul's earlier travels in Iconium and Lystra and Antioch and Ephesus and Athens and Corinth? How did they get there? We don't know. But they were Brethren. And we're invited to stay with them seven days.

So seven is the number of completion and perfection. So they get to stay for a week. And you notice that God is dictating the timing.

It's completely out of Paul's hands. He decided where the ship would go when they were traveling toward Jerusalem. How long they would stay and who would go where and the Ephesian elders would come down to Miletus and so on.

Now the schedule is completely out of his control but it's perfect. He is in the right place at the right time for the right length of time with the right circumstances. Paul didn't go hunt down a snake and stick his hand at it and get it to buy him, did he? Paul didn't make the governor's father ill.

Paul didn't make the rest of the ill people on Malta sick just so he could heal them. This was all orchestrated by God. Everything is in place by God.

This is the way. This is the way our lives can be. God does the work.

God provides the power. We just make sure that we are pursuing the right path. You will

find refreshment when you need it.

You will find safe harbor when you need it. You will find resistance and challenge and tempest when you need it. Sometimes we need a challenge, don't we? I was thinking about that this afternoon.

I did work on the computer from early, early this morning all the way until right before class. When you just sit, at least for me, my legs start aching and my body, I just have the urge to just go run a couple of miles. Just not even change shoes, just go out the front door and just run.

In fact, I have done that. Back when I was single I used to do that a lot. I would wake up in the middle of the night and just feel like I needed to run.

I would just pull on a pair of shoes and go run. Run a couple of miles and come back. Because you just have the need for activity.

Your body just says, I need to move. I need some circulation. I need some exercise.

I need some flexibility. I need something to happen. We need stress.

We need challenge. The reason your bones grow... Did you ever wonder why little kids fidget? I have. They're just never still, are they? From the time they're born, little babies, when they're awake, they're just moving.

Their stuff just flails. Their arms and their legs just flail. They're looking from here to there.

And little toddlers, they're just little perpetual motion machines. You know why that is? God built that in because stress stimulates bone growth. Stress stimulates muscle growth.

It is that movement. If you strapped a little kid down, you know what happens to them? They turn out like they atrophy. It's like people in a coma.

Why do people in comas look like that? Their wrists turn under and they get all strange looking. The body has to have challenge. We are built for it.

Our sedentary way of life is what's killing us. They had some special on the news about getting a heart attack sitting in the morning traffic. Did you know that in rush hour on Monday morning, you are 30% more likely to have a heart attack than sitting in traffic at any other time? It's the stress and it's the relation to your blood pressure and one thing and another.

The Lord knows that you can still get stressed sitting in traffic. At least I can. God knows what we need better than we do.

We think, I need a bed of ease. Remember the words of the song, Am I a soldier of the cross? Or should I be laying around on flowery beds of ease? Well, God has orchestrated this tempest. God orchestrated the stay in Malta.

God said you don't need to be at Fair Havens and you don't need to be at Phoenix either. It's going to take me two weeks to get you there, but I'm going to put you in Malta where you're going to be able to do some good. He spends three months there, establishes people, heals them, builds them up, creates a great testimony.

God gives him power over the snake. We all know what the snake stands for, right? God gives him power over disease that we haven't seen him exercise in months and months and months. And now he's on this ship that God parked there in Malta for the winter.

So he's got his taxi waiting for him. And it takes him up there to Regium and after one day, the south wind blew. God didn't have any reason for him to stick around in Regium.

So as soon as he gets there, the wind shifts. And now he's got a favorable wind to go on up to Puteoli where he does need to be because that's where the brethren are. That's where the saints are.

And so they stay there seven days. Why do they stay there seven days? Sailors are literally driven by the wind. They got a nice south wind that got them up to Puteoli and then God just switched the wind around and said, alright, you get no southerly wind for a week.

And so they stay there. They can't sail until they get a favorable wind. God orchestrates it.

God chooses it. This is the great thing to understand about anything in our life, whether it's evangelism. People say, oh, you're fruitless and sterile and barren and dry and shriveled and ingrown because you don't get out and evangelize.

When is the last time you led someone to the Lord, they will ask you and try to humiliate you and embarrass you. You will lead somebody to the Lord when the Lord God is good and ready for you to and not a moment sooner. He will steer the wind.

He will pre-position someone who is ready and receptive and that you are uniquely suited to communicate to. You can go flying out there elbows and knees trying to be a witness and you're going to end up like Paul getting torn apart by the crowd. Total waste of time.

Let God set the agenda. Let God determine the direction and speed and severity of the wind. Let God decide the duration and the course of the journey.

Now that all sounds highfalutin. How do we do that in practical terms? We fold up our

Bibles and go home and tomorrow is another day. Tomorrow is Wednesday, right? So how are you going to do this tomorrow? How am I going to do this tomorrow? Well, what is the alternative? If God is not leading, if God is not guiding, if God is not orchestrating, who is? We are.

It's a matter of where we put our eyes. Do you remember the difference between subjectivity and objectivity? In subjectivity, we get our eyes three places. We either have our eyes on ourself.

Well, this isn't right for me. This is unjust to me. Somebody said something bad about me.

Somebody did me an evil turn. I'm getting shortchanged. I'm unappreciated.

I'm getting the short end of the stick. I've got the fuzzy end of the lollipop, whatever it may be, right? And we have our eyes on ourself. And we say, could Paul have possibly functioned that way? What do you mean chains? What do you mean shifts? What do you mean sitting around here for two years with no justice? I'm an apostle.

I write Scripture for a living. I'm a big noise. People are going to know my name.

Long after all of you people are gone, dead and forgotten, he could say. Right? But he submits himself. What does the Bible say? Submit yourself under the mighty hand of God.

And in due time, he will exalt you. In God's time, in God's way. So tomorrow, again, what if you say, okay, I'll keep my eyes off myself.

I'm not going to get self-centered. I'm not going to have the whole universe revolve around me. Where else could our eyes go? They could go to people, right? We could let our environment and our thoughts be dictated by people and what they say and what they're doing.

We're trying to please them or we're trying to fit into their world or conform to their mold. We're trying to get ahead according to their system, make points on their scoreboard, right? It's common. It's natural.

It's our instinct. It's our nature. It's like turtles going to the sea.

It's like salmon running up the river. We're born to do that. And it's only the power of God that can break that.

We can get our eyes on things and circumstances. I mentioned on Sunday that great example of how your soul builds spiritual maturity and you become oriented to God's grace. And then you learn to have mastery over the details of life.

Every little detail of life doesn't change the direction of your ship. Aircraft carriers just sail a straight course. They don't rock.

They don't tilt. They don't roll. They don't pitch because they're too big.

They're too stable. The ship goes steady. The sea dashes itself in vain against it.

That's what our soul ought to be like. We should be the thermostat, not the thermometer. That's mastery of the details of life.

We don't let our eyes get on things. So, what's the bottom line? How do we do this thing that Paul is doing? He doesn't have control over the situation. People are making decisions.

The wind is blowing. What is he doing? Where are his eyes? Are his eyes on Paul? No. Are his eyes on the people around him? Not in a way that dictates his moves.

His eyes are on the Lord. He's praying. He's operating in the power of God.

Where is the power of God for you and me? It's God's Word and God's Spirit. If we have a question about what we should do, and we always do, I bet you can think of something right now where you have a question about what's the best thing to do. There is an answer in God's Word.

There is a principle. There is a promise. There is a doctrine that says, here's what my priorities should be.

Here's what my goals should be. Here's what I should consider important. Here's what I should let go.

When we do that, we will have a life just like this journey. It will have storms. It will have snake bites.

It will have restrictions. But it will bear fruit, and it will reflect the glory of God. It will demonstrate the power of God.

It will be a life of meaning. It will be a life like Paul's that will be in God's record for all eternity. You realize this stuff happened almost 2,000 years ago, right? This is happening circa 60 A.D. 1,940 odd years ago.

Why do we know about it? Because it's a life lived in the power of God. That's what our lives ought to be like. That's our opportunity.

So, tomorrow, when traffic is bad, or when people are bad, or when things are bad, think about the Apostle Paul. We're not sitting on a rough piece of board shackled to a smelly Roman soldier, are we? We're not being endlessly delayed by adverse weather and

winter. We're not two weeks on the sea with no food and no fire and no warmth and no comfort.

How many of those people do you think got seasick in those two weeks? Nasty. Nasty environment. 275 people all thrown up at the same time.

We're not in that situation, are we? Shouldn't we be that much more able to persevere? That much more able to keep our eye on the prize, on the goal, on the call? We should be. We need to be. Because this life is short and the Lord Jesus is coming back soon.

Well, we're going to see as we continue our study and action about a week and a half from now that Paul is going to continue to go. The last thing we see here in verse 14, and so we went toward Rome. What a great thing.

You can scratch it on my tombstone. Wouldn't it be great? We went toward Rome. We went in the direction that God called us to go.

God said you must bear witness to be in Rome. We went toward Rome. What a great concluding phrase.

Well, that's our opportunity and that's our hope. Let's close in prayer. Father, thank you for demonstrating and illustrating for us so clearly the divine power that is available to us, the opportunity that you have given us because of Jesus Christ.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will remind us of who we are, remind us of what our opportunity is, remind us of the provision that you have made for us so that we can live each day in a way that is pleasing in your sight, in a way that glorifies the Lord Jesus. We ask it in His name. Amen.

Yes.