

God's Acts Through Paul

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[0 : 0 0] you have your Bible, I'm going to encourage you to open it. We're going to be looking at Acts chapter 28, 1 through 10, and that's continuing the little series that you've been working through, the Acts of the Apostles, and we're going to be continuing that little series. But I do just want to read a little bit from Acts 27 as well. Let me just pick that up in verse 33, we'll start there, Acts 27, verse 33 through 36, and then we'll turn to Acts 28, 1 through 10.

Should you say, for those of you who've had a look at the word one-to-one in John's Gospel, it's now available also by the Acts of the Apostles online, and so just a little encouragement there for you as well. Acts chapter 27, verse 33. As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. Therefore I urge you to take some food, for it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you. And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God, in the presence of all, he broke it and began to eat.

Then they were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. We were in all two hundred and seventy-six persons in the ship. And when they had eaten enough, the lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea. And you'll know because you've looked at the great shipwreck that ensues.

So we'll move on to chapter 28, verse 1. It says, After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta.

The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, No doubt this man is a murderer, though he has escaped from the sea. Justice has not allowed him to live. He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god. Now, in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. It happened that the father of Publius lay sick and with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him, and putting his hands on him healed him. And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. They also honored us greatly. And when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed. Amen.

[4 : 1 3] We pray that God would speak to us as we... Well, if you have your Bible, I'm going to encourage you to have it open in Acts chapter 28. And this is an interesting little collection of ten verses where we find Paul and all those who were in that ship with him on the island of Malta. Anyone ever been to Malta?

A couple at the back. I've never been. My parents went. They said, beautiful island, just don't travel on the local buses. But Malta is where it's... It's appropriate, isn't it, that on a summer Sunday morning, we find ourselves on the Isle of Malta in Acts chapter 28. But it's a fascinating little passage, and some of you may have looked at it and thought, I wonder where John's going to go with this one. Because it's an interesting passage in terms of its content.

Not even all that's there, but also what is not there. And there's a real sense in which there's so much more we'd love to know about the almost three months Paul spent on Malta. But we only get this little insight, this small insight into his arrival on the Isle of Malta. But what an arrival!

276 people getting washed up out of a boat onto an island. That's a very modern thought, isn't it? 276 people getting washed up out of a boat. You know, we think about the world we live in today, and the number of foreign nationals that have been washed up on our own shore. And how do we respond to that?

What unusual kindness do we show them? Because that was certainly Paul's experience when he was washed up on the shores of Malta. But I read that little bit of chapter 27, because it gives us a little bit of context.

[6 : 16] I don't know how much traveling you've done. I'm sure that at the age and stage of life that the majority of us are at. We've probably done a little bit. And there's a likelihood that the longer we've been on planet Earth, we've maybe had one or two journeys that we're not in a hurry to repeat.

Right? I don't know if you've ever been in that plane that was really struggling to land. Right? One or two people are nodding their heads. They're sitting there thinking, yeah.

Right? And it's not something you want to repeat. I don't know if you've ever been in that ferry that couldn't dock. Right? Because the winds were awful. Right? I remember going to collect my wife from the Stronra, Belfast to Stronra ferry, and they were firing rockets off the ship onto the deck to try and pull the boat in. And I've never seen people so glad to be off a boat than they were. I've crossed to Lewis. I've went over the Minch in a 410, you know, which is, it only got to a 410 when we were out there. Had it been that before we left, it wouldn't have left. Right? But the reality is we've been there. But yet, the reason I say that is we've got to try and get ourselves inside, you know, the experience of the mind and the heart of the 276 people. We've just sang, by grace we'll stand on your promises. And in Acts chapter 27,

Paul, because of the promise of God, had said to 276 people, you know, not a hair in your head there's going to be harmed. That's powerful, isn't it? When God gives you a word for 276 people on a ship that is sinking. Right? That's the context. Right? Paul's not just having a bad ferry crossing.

His ship is sinking. And you guys know, because you've looked at this, it was a shipwreck. And yet, according to the promise of God, by grace we'll stand on the promise. Don't you sing these things, right? We actually want to believe these things and stand on the promises of God.

[8 : 45] And so, 276 people, by the promise of God, Paul says, not a hair in your head. And 276 people are washed up on the shores of what we now know is Malta. And Paul, his companions, found that out.

Wonderful little thing about this is that Malta actually means refuge. That's the meaning of the term Malta, of the island Malta, refuge. Right? And so, they land on this little refuge, this little island of Malta. And I don't know about you, but sometimes it just does as good as the people of God to slow down when we read the Word of God. You know the problem that happens? The more you know the Word of God, the tendency is you speed read. Slow down. Slow down. Right? Because when we slow down to read the Word of God, in actual fact, we capture so much more of what God has to say.

Slow down enough to hear God say what He wants to say. Look at verse 1 of Acts chapter 28. After we were brought safely through. Is that not the most beautiful phrase? When you've just come through a storm that has shipwrecked you, and you've been toughed up on a beach. After we were brought safely through. You know, my friends, I just want to encourage us right away that when we stand on the promises of God, the promises of God are eternal, they are faithful, they are true, and God will always bring us through all the trials that life throws at us. I've got a friend of mine who's terminally ill, and one of his favorite Psalms is Psalm 23, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Right? And he's in a position to speak about that from living experience. And he says, God doesn't build a bypass. What he says is, He'll go through it with you. And Paul doesn't escape the storm, doesn't escape the shipwreck. It's not like Paul is sort of beatifically lifted off the ship, and he lands in a kind of angelic fashion on the beach, and Paul goes through the shipwreck. But the promises of God are such that after we had been brought safely through. And sometimes we read the Word of God, if we read it just too quickly, we can miss little gems where God can just speak into our heart and say, I know the trial you're facing. I know the difficulty you're going through. I know the experience that you would rather not have, not endure, and you would certainly not wish on anyone else. But I, and I alone, am the God who can carry you through. And so Paul and his companions, in actual fact, because of the promise of God, he speaks into it, and they're all washed up safely onto the shore of

Malta. So they're brought safely through, and they learned that the island was called Malta or called refuge. God is a refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble, right? And so the reality is here's the experience, there's the outworking of the promises of God, there's the outworking of the Word of God. We don't just say, God is a refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.

We actually experience it. And so here's Paul and his companions experiencing something of the promises of God in the delivery from the shipwreck scenario in which they were in, and they learned that the island was called Malta. And I mentioned just contextually that, you know, we are seeing so many people being washed up onto their own shores, and many other places around the world are seeing folks being washed up onto their shores. And there's something actually very beautiful about what unfolds in terms of the people of Malta towards Paul and his companions. But for you and I to really get our head around that, we've got to remember that they know that this ship is carrying a mixed bag, right? They know that the crew are on board, they also know there are guards on board, they also know there are prisoners on board. Isn't it remarkable how whenever a person is convicted of any crime, that we can have a prejudice in our heart against them? Even although we don't know much about the circumstances, we can just have a prejudice in our heart. It's interesting, I was once involved in a debate in the work that I do in prison ministry, you know, where people were saying, what should we call ex-prisoners? And I said, why don't we call them men and women?

[13:51] Free men and women. Because that's what an ex-prisoner is. They've served their time. You know, but people want to label them ex-offenders, ex-prisoners. Yeah, ex-this, that, that thing.

So you've got to put yourself in the mind. It's not that difficult, actually. It's fascinating to hear people just begin to voice their opinions about foreigners washed up on the shore.

I'll tell you what, it's not all Christian, is it? Tragedy is, sometimes it's Christians voicing those opinions that are not all Christian in their voicing. But something unique happened in Malta. When this mixed bag landed, and, you know, folks have struggled to try and understand, was this the whole people, or was this the guards, or whatever was going on? But the reality is, the text of Scripture says it very clear. It says the native people. In actual fact, you know, the earlier text would actually say that these were barbarian. These were pagan people.

These were the worshippers of false gods. These were not believers in Yahweh, believers in Jesus.

These were not believers in the living God. They worshipped, you know, pantheons of Greek gods. These barbarian people. These barbarian people. These native people. Said, showed us unusual kindness.

[15 : 30] For they kindled the fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and it was cold. Now, Malta normally is blessed with a great deal of great weather. We don't know, you know, in terms of the shipwreck coming up, these folks are coming straight out the sea.

You know, I enjoy swimming in the sea, but I tell you, swimming in the sea off Scotland is cold, right? And, you know, the reality is that they were coming out of the sea.

But there's something beautiful, isn't it, about the warmth of the welcome. That in actual fact, they kindled this big fire on the beach, because they've got a crisis in their hand. They've got 276 people that don't have a roof over their head.

And they create this big fire on the beach, and there's a warmth of welcome. And it says they showed them unusual kindness. There was no hostile environment here. There was no kind of immediate suspicion, immediate attack.

Without doubt, there were suspicions. We know that. There were superstitions. We actually know that in the context of Acts chapter 28, because they had a little idea going on in their superstitious head.

[16 : 38] That in actual fact, those who perished at sea, it was the judgment of gods, of the gods. So that was their basic premise. If the ship is shipwrecked, it's the punishment of the gods.

So they're sitting there thinking, for some reason, these people have escaped the punishment of the gods. That's why when Paul gets the incident of the libra that we'll come to, they're convinced, again, in their superstition, that this is still the gods punishing.

You know, he's escaped one thing, he's getting caught with the other. So they had this idea that God would just have to punish the people for their wrongdoing. And yet, here they are, showing.

I love that little phrase in verse 2. Unusual kindness. There's actually something very beautiful about it, isn't there? What does it look like to show unusual kindness to the person who's nothing like you?

Well, they kindled a fire and they welcomed us all.

[17 : 48] There's a warmth about the welcome. We all know that, don't we? You know, it's one of the kind of tragedies, isn't it, of kind of modern living. You know, I'm assuming that probably the majority of us all live in, you know, kind of central heated houses, you know, where it's raised.

There's something just cold about a radiator. I know that seems like an oxymoron, isn't it? Right, but it's not the warmth of a welcoming fire, is it? I remember my granny's coal fire.

Something beautiful about that, right? I mean, one or two people are blessed to have a log burner. That gets close, right? You know, I love going into a house that's got one of them. I always want to light it, regardless of the weather. There's just something about sitting beside an open fire.

I have one of the ones in the garden and there's something, you know, lovely about that as well. And so there's just this warmth of a welcome. And the interesting thing is, as a believer in Christ, there's a little conviction in my heart here about the unusual kindness being shown by pagans to believers.

In Paul's case, not everyone in the ship, obviously. But that unusual kindness being shown. And, you know, Paul, we then see Paul in a kind of position that we're not accustomed to seeing Paul.

[19 : 10] But in actual fact, I think it was just Paul being true to character. We're familiar with Paul the preacher. We're familiar with Paul the great evangelist.

We're familiar with Paul the great church planter. We're familiar with Paul the incredible leader. We're familiar with Paul, the one inspired by the Spirit of God, who gives us huge tracts of Holy Scripture.

We're familiar with that Paul. But in actual fact, what we discover in the midst of this crisis is Paul the wood gatherer. Paul the wood gatherer?

But that's what he does. And there's something very beautiful about that, because no job was beneath him. And sometimes in the church of Jesus Christ, we need to be reminded of that on a regular basis.

That in actual fact, no job is beneath us. You know, we're all servants. Every single one of us. And so we get Paul the wood gatherer. What does the great apostle do when he arrives in Malta, coming out of a ship, when he's soaking and they've got a fire?

[20 : 16] He goes off to gather wood. Isn't that lovely? And so he goes off and he starts to gather brushwood, drywood, sticks, because he wants to make his contribution to the fire.

Such is the providence of God that when he goes off to gather brushwood and sticks and stuff that you can burn, he scoops up one that's got a snake in it. Now some of us can sit there and think, a bad luck there, Paul, right?

Of all the wood you could have picked up. Providence of God. Sovereign God working out his purpose and plan, working out an open door. I'm convinced for the gospel of Jesus Christ on the island of Malta.

Right? But he scoops up the one with the snake in it. Right? And as he throws it in the fire, it says, calls it a viper.

In actual fact, Malta doesn't have any poisonous snakes. You know, it may have had back then, it doesn't have now. It's like Ireland, they've all been driven off, right? But at the end of the day, it doesn't have any now.

[21 : 29] It has snakes, but not poisonous snakes. Description of text, a viper. And so he throws it in, and the heat, probably the thing with sleep, and the heat arouses it. Boom! And isn't there a beautiful picture in Scripture?

Here's the great apostle, preacher, evangelist, church planter, leader, spirit-inspired writer of Holy Scripture. Right? With a snake. Now, you know, there are those who would love to do allegorical interpretations of Scripture and go back to the Garden of Eden and, you know, Satan's attack and various other different bits and pieces.

Right? But at the end of the day, we've got a viper hanging from his hand. And there's a little phrase. They're watching. Because what Paul does is he goes, and the snake falls off.

But they're watching. They're watching. Because you see, in the superstitious island of Malta, they're sitting there thinking, all these people escaped the sea.

The judgment of the gods. This is not the living God. The judgment of the gods. Right? But they can't escape justice. They actually name a Greek god, and their two Greek gods are wrapped up in that little word.

[22 : 48] Right? And so they can't escape that. The snake's got them. So they're waiting. It says they're waiting for him to swell up. They're waiting for him to fall down dead.

And nothing happens. Because in their heads, they're like, the gods have got them. But the gods can't get God's man.

Because that's who Paul is. And these superstitious gods are no gods at all. Because everything is happening according to the plan and purpose of God.

How do we know that? Because while they were still on the ship, God said to Paul, not a hair of your heads. And God didn't, you know, have to add, but it's included.

When he says, not a hair of your head, he didn't add, oh, by the way, Paul, you're going to get a snake bite, but don't worry about it, right? And that was not a cocktail, right? So the reality is, he said, you know, you're going to get a snake bite, but that's not going to harm you either.

[23 : 52] He doesn't say any of that. Because the promise of God is such, nor a hair of your head is going to come. And so in actual fact, you just fast forward, and what's unfolding is the providential plan and purpose of God that he has for Paul and others on the island of Malta.

When we say God moves in mysterious ways, and we've sang about that this morning, this is fairly mysterious, isn't it? We would not write this script.

And again, that's part of Scripture. Time and time again, we see who God is, because the script is never as you or I or anyone else trying to prove the existence of God would write it.

Only God. And so here, we have, you know, Paul shakes off the snake, and the native people are convinced this man's a murderer, skate the ski, you know, he's not allowed, justice has not allowed him to live.

And they're waiting, and they're watching. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a God.

[25 : 14] Now, they got that wrong. And Paul, that's not the only time he was experiencing that, because of the way in which God was at work in and through his life. Very often, people would try to elevate the person rather than the God who was at the center of the heart of the person.

It still happens today. People sometimes elevate the person rather than the God at the heart of it. But Paul, of course, would not allow it. But this is where the passage is interesting for us, because what we don't get in this little account of Paul and Walter is the account of his ministry, other than his healing ministry.

We don't get the account of his teaching ministry, of his preaching ministry. We know that he was there for three months, because it tells us in the next verse, after verse 10, that, you know, three months later, they gave them everything they needed for the ship to, you know, set sail.

They boarded another ship. But the one thing we know about Paul is that he was never a man to miss out on a gospel opportunity. He was never a man to miss out on an opportunity to share whose power these great things were being done by.

I don't, for a minute, think that Paul spent three months in Malta and didn't tell the story of how, when we were on the ship, God told me, not a hair on your head and 376 people washed up and shore.

[26 : 40] And you folks, sure is unusual kindness, and we're so thankful for the warmth and the welcome. And you thought that I was a God just because the viper didn't get me and the sea didn't get me, but I'm not a God. I'm a follower of the one living, true God.

But in actual fact, for the people of a superstitious nation, how are you going to open their eyes to prepare their hearts to listen? Well, I'm convinced that what God did was he opened their eyes through the way in which Paul was then used of God to bring about healing of sickness and disease and set the platform to actually show them the living God.

Now, we don't have the account in Scripture of those who get converted at Malta. We don't have that. That's why there's part of me that says, I'd love to know more about Malta. In fact, come the day in glory, and I get my wee chance somewhere in the midst of eternity to sidle up alongside Paul, I'll probably say, I'm going to tell me a wee bit more about Malta, right?

Because I'd love to know what happened in that three months, right? I'm maybe just nosy, right? But I'd love to know more. But even what I do know just builds my faith, encourages my heart, and what it is to stand in the promises of God, to be faithful to the Word of God, to speak the Word of God, and to be looking for the opportunity that God provides.

But all of that includes, I think, you know, so much of that warmth of welcome teaches us volumes, but also, I think, of Paul's just servant heart, of his preparedness just to go and do what needs to be done.

[28 : 15] And even in the gathering of wood, there's a plan in the purpose of God for opening up opportunity. Because what happens as a result of all this is Publius is the, one of the kind of kingpins, one of the local leaders, and, you know, he's obviously got substantial property in the area.

And he invites Paul to come into his house. And when they get there, they discover that in actual fact he was very hospitable to them for three days.

They enjoyed his hospitality. I'm sure that was well. They were making arrangements for folks to be in other places. But his father lay sick with fever and dysentery.

And again, one of the great things about scriptures is we know that Malta, in actual fact, is an island, suffered from a thing called Malta fever, which in actual fact eventually they discovered was being caused by the microbes in goat's milk which they drank.

Right? So, in all probability, Publius was, you know, his father was actually suffering from what we call Malta fever. You know, and it would bring out a fever and a dysentery within him.

[29 : 22] Not comfortable. And Paul, of course, prays for him and there's instant healing. Now that, that in itself is just again a sign of the power of God and the faithfulness of God at work in his man.

because Malta fever was something that could take months to run through the system of a person that didn't clear up overnight. And so, here is Paul who, when he meets with Publius' father, it tells us, and again, for me, when I look at this, I can see just the platform being established for the Word of God.

What do you do with a superstitious nation while you shipwrecked 276 people washed up on your beach? You know, convinced that they've escaped the gods. You know, the one who's going to be the main speaker has a viper in his hand and he shakes it off into the fire and nothing happens to them but they're watching and nothing happens and so they think he's a god and Paul's not going to allow that to last for long.

So, what does he do when Publius' father, who we know is sick, look what it says in the text of Scripture. Paul visited him and prayed and putting his hands on him.

Now, who did he pray to? In whose name did he pray? We know Paul, right? We know in whose name Paul prays. We know who he's calling out to and crying out to.

[30 : 59] We know that for Paul there is no other name but the name of Jesus. And when this had taken place, you know, his father is healed and then it says, verse 9, and when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came.

And so you start to see the islanders, disease-ridden, coming to Paul and they're cured.

Now, why are they cured? How are they cured? They're cured by prayer and the laying on of hands in the powerful name of Jesus. And the bit that, as I say, I can't expound and I'd love to expound is what did Paul say to them?

What did Paul preach? I wish I knew. Right? I'm feeling confident, I know. I know he would preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. I know that he would proclaim there is salvation in no other name than the name of Jesus, the very name he's praying to.

I know he would say there is only one true and living God. It is not the God you have put your superstitious trust in. It's the God who has delivered us from the sea.

[32 : 20] It's the God whom you saw me shake the viper off. It's the God in whose name I prayed for. It's the God who makes his name known in Jesus.

It's incredible this little account that we have. And isn't it interesting because it says in verse 10 that they also honored us greatly.

And when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed. There's a generosity in the people of Malta when Paul and his companions are ready to set sail again.

There's a phenomenal generosity, a sacrificial generosity. In terms of what they're putting on board here. Why? Well, I can't help but think salvation has probably come to many.

Because you know that in Paul's journey he would often travel around and he would gather generous gifts to relieve the needs of saints in other places. But at the end of the day here, we just see this incredible generosity.

[33 : 41] Now, this is a fascinating little passage because normally when we're in certain parts we kind of we get nice kind of closed loops, don't we? There'll be too many closed loops in Acts 28, 1 to 10.

You get a lot of open-ended things. But we can only look and know Paul and know for sure that in actual fact he would have used this platform that was brought about by the providence of God to lift up the name of Jesus and his prayers would be in the name of Jesus and his message would be the saving message of the gospel.

We know that. We know that well enough from other places. And it's interesting as we I've deliberately just wanted to walk through that and unpack that because I think there is also a message for us in the life of the church and all of this.

There's a message there about the providential plan and purpose of God. There's a message there about staying on track in the midst of a superstitious world pointing to the one who is way beyond any superstition, the God of all glory, the God who makes himself known in Jesus, the good news of the gospel.

There's a message there about praying for the sick. There's a message there about a pagan world that is watching unbelievers. And does our life match up with what we say we believe?

[35 : 02] As the world watches us, do they see our actions? Do they hear our words? All of our actions, all of our words as through the matrix of the gospel, as through the gospel of grace.

Do they find us an unusually welcoming and warm people? Do they find us a people that are constantly doing unusual acts of kindness? Paul met pagans who did that.

You know, God's people should be way ahead of that. And I think there's a challenge in here about mercy ministry. There's a challenge in here about, you know, some of the stuff we do in our churches.

I look at our own church and we have a huge food bank and we have a huge, you know, kind of mercy ministry in terms of those who have no employment, in terms of those who are in debt.

Now, that's not the gospel in and of itself. It's not the gospel in and of itself. It requires us to preach the gospel right in the midst of all that we do.

[36 : 11] It requires us to unpack the gospel in creative ways to everyone that's a user of a food bank or a recipient, you know, in a debt management or a recipient in a job club.

It requires us to preach the gospel, to share Jesus with them. They're not going to become Christians because of the mercy shown in a job club or a food bank. It requires us to share the gospel.

But I tell you this much, we get incredible opportunities to share that gospel because we do that mercy ministry. Now, the weakness is sometimes people do mercy ministries but never share the gospel. There's another weakness.

Sometimes we're just always shouting out the gospel but we never do anything in terms of mercy ministry towards anyone else. But there's a beautiful harmony about a mercy ministry that is gospel-centric that unpacks Jesus and makes him known.

And I do think there's a wonderful little challenge in Acts chapter 28 about the merciful ministry of God's people. And we can learn lessons from those who did well.

[37 : 17] Of course, every time I look at it, I just see God weaving his plan as he always does. And sometimes I just read the word of God and it brings a smile to my face because I look at this encounter in Malta and I think, only God, only God could shipwreck a boat with 276 people on board and yet guarantee their safety.

Only God, in fulfillment of his word, could have them wash up on an island, strangely enough, which is called refuge. And they don't get a hostile reception or instead they get a warm welcome.

But only God could use all that as a platform for a people who in their superstition are convinced these people should have all drowned because the gods are angry with them. And then he makes his chief spokesperson.

He points them out with the viper incident. And all the people are watching Paul. And Publius is watching Paul.

And only God could have Paul, the one they're watching, talk to Publius and Publius says, oh my father, very ill. Well, let's, in the name of Jesus, bring healing.

[38 : 50] Only God. Only God. Friends, I hope there are many times in your life when you have done or you've olded, find that little catch of the breath that has you say, only God.

Only God. And he is the only God. The God that Paul, I'm confident, proclaimed clearly on the island of Malta.

Well, he's going to be arriving in Rome, but that's not for me to unpack. That's probably Carl's job, I think, probably next week, as you continue your little journey in Acts.

But I just wanted to encourage your hearts a little bit with that account of Paul on Malta. One day, someday, I'm going to get to the island of Malta.

And one day, someday, I'm going to get a wee chance to find out how the church took root in that island. But for just now, only God. Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we want to say thank you for your word.

[40 : 07] We want to say thank you for just all that we read in there and of the way in which we can trace your providential hand, your sovereign plan, your sovereign purpose, your faithfulness.

Father, we delight in your deliverance according to your word of those who were on board that ship. We delight in your deliverance of those who, as a result of sin in our world, were diseased and sick and set free because of Jesus.

we delight, Lord God, that in your sovereign mercy you had Paul and Ellen of Malta. And when we read that account, Lord, we just, we catch our breath and say, only God, would you help us to be merciful to those that we meet?

Would you help us, Lord God, to live the life that you've called us to? that as a pagan world watches us, they might see the love of God, the grace of God, the mercy of God in us.

And we might be faithful in declaring who you are for your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen. We're going to sing a song in closing and is it with a story to be told, with a story to be told.

[41 : 43] So we'll stand together and worship as we sing and then I'll do our blessing. Thank you.