

'The unfinished story'

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Date: 10 January 2016

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

At dinner time, I looked over and Lois, her face, round about her mouth was covered in blotches. I thought, oh, typical. This is not good. And I actually sent a message to the first year of the photograph saying, you know, what is this?

You know, what's the symptoms of this thing? And we were somewhat alarmed for half an hour until we took a wet wipe and wiped around our mouth and discovered it was tomato sauce. Lois is fit and healthy and we thank the Lord for that and for Grace being so as well.

But thank you for your support. Thank you for your prayers. And pray on for Anna and all like her in hospital. I believe that Iona, I'm looking for Marian. Where's Marian?

[1 : 44] I believe she was in hospital with a chest infection too. Is she getting out today? She's getting out today. So that's good to know. Okay, let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we do thank you for this, your day.

And we thank you for these, your people. We thank you for this, your people.

Your praise. We thank you for that hymn that we have just sung. And all the wonder of what you have done for us, Lord. We are ransomed. We are healed.

We are restored. We are forgiven. In Christ and through all that Christ has done. We thank you for the reminder of this new day, this Lord's day.

Of the fact that Jesus died and he rose again. And he secured victory over the grave. We thank you that he, through the shedding of his blood, has made it possible for our sin to be forgiven.

[3 : 11] And for those who have been imprisoned in sin, to be free and find that true liberty that is only in Christ. So enable us, we pray, not just to sin these things, but to know these things in our hearts.

And to praise you from our hearts. As we meditate upon your love for us in Jesus. We pray that all that we do in this hour would be glorifying to Jesus.

We pray that he would be lifted up in our worship. In the reading of the word. And in the preaching of the word. That we would see Jesus. That we would hear the word, the gospel call of Jesus.

And Lord, we pray that he would give us soft hearts. That we would respond in faith. We do pray for anyone here this morning.

Who is hearing the word of God. Who is hearing the call of the gospel. And thus far has been resisting. Hesitating.

[4 : 18] Wondering whether that call may be for them or not for them. We thank you Lord that as you open our ears to hear and understand. That you are calling us to put our faith in Jesus.

To turn from sin. To turn to him. We pray Lord that even in this place. In this hour. There may be someone. Who comes to that faith or that assurance of faith.

That Jesus is their saviour. And their Lord. We pray for salvation. In this service. This morning. Not only that we would meet as we always do.

But Lord that you would be at work. Doing an eternal work. Bringing eternal fruit. In this service. At this time. We pray Lord that you would be with those who are not with us.

Whose desire would be to be with us. We pray for those who are housebound. Who have been at home for many months. Even years now. We ask that you would draw near to them. Where they are.

[5 : 19] We pray for those who are grieving. This morning. Again as a community. We are conscious of those. Who have been taken from our number. And who have gone from time.

Into eternity. Comfort those who grieve we pray. And Lord as the word which was read. Will linger in the ears. Of some who attended services.

We pray that by your spirit. You may be at work. In hearts. Bringing salvation. To those who hear. Pray for those who are in hospital.

And who are going out of hospital today. We think of Anna. We think of Iona. We think of others like them. Who are in hospitals across the land. Across the world.

Those who are known to us. And connected with us. And we pray. That you would be with them. We thank you. That you are the sovereign God. That there is nothing that. Misses your attention.

[6 : 15] There is nothing that. Is beyond your control. We thank you. That we can trust you. And Lord we pray. That you would bring health. And healing to those who are sick. And that you would.

Cause them to find. Fuller stronger faith. In the time. That they struggle. We pray Lord. That you would. Continue with us now.

Take away. Our sin. Empty us of all. That we would seek to. Lift up. And draw attention to ourselves. And fill us with the Holy Spirit. We pray. That Christ may be.

Glorified. And we pray these things. In Jesus name. Amen. Boys and girls. Would you like to come forward please. How are you going today?

All fine. Anything doing today? What have you got there. Bethany? Come show us. This is not a set up.

[7 : 45] By the way. Not a children's talk. In the making. Unless I think very very quickly. What is this? A charming worm. Lovely. Thank you. Lovely.

What have you got there? Oh sorry. Pardon? See them? What are they? Clones. Clones. Clones. Right. Right. Is that from Star Wars? Wow. Thanks. Excellent. Sorry. Sorry. Well.

I don't have anything. In my hands. To show you today. But. What I was just thinking about. I will talk to you about today. It's just. What's been on my mind. The last few days.

Who's missing today? We see Anna. We see Grace. And we see. Oh. Where's what? Oh. There she is. There. Who's missing?

[8 : 44] Anna's missing. And Anna's been in hospital. Over the last few days. And. Like I've been saying. Everyone's been praying for her. Thank you for your prayers. God hears. Your prayers.

No one of the best prayers. That. I was ever taught. When I was reading. In the Bible. Sometimes we think. We've got to pray for a long time. Sometimes. I'll tell you a secret.

One of the reasons. Some people. Are too frightened. To come to the firm. And. Is because they think. They have to pray for a long time. Sometimes. It's right to pray for a long time.

Sometimes. Our prayers. Can be very. Very short. John chapter 11. There were two sisters. And their brother. Was not well at all. And so they.

Prayed to Jesus. And do you know what their prayer said? Count the words with me. The. One. You. Love. Is. Sick.

[9 : 43] Many words. Five words. The one you love. Is sick. That's a great prayer. And so.

You can pray. Just as well. As any of us. Bigger ones. Can pray. When people are sick. When people are worried. When people have got things going on. You can just come.

To Jesus. And say. The one you love. Is sick. The one you love. Is worried. The one you love. Doesn't know what to do. Or where to go. And he hears. And he answers our prayers.

Anyway. I've been in hospital. The last few days. And. When you're a dad. And when you're a mum. You just don't like to see. Your.

Child. Whether it's Grace. Or Lois. Or Anna. Being sick. It's really not nice to see. And when I was there. In hospital. I remember something. That Cammy.

[10 : 37] Said to me. A few weeks ago. So this is actually. Cammy's children's talk. Not mine. Good preparation. For when he's doing it himself. Cammy.

Said to me. A while back. He was talking about. When. When his newborns. Were sick. And he says. When you see them. And they're sick. It's just. It's horrible to see. And you just. You just want to take the sickness.

Away from them. You take it yourself. And when I was in hospital. I was thinking that. Wish I could just take. This illness. That Anna has. And I could take it.

Instead. Now. I would be. I'm sure. A far worse patient. Than Anna. I'd probably be. Far less brave. Than she is. Because men tend to be that way.

But. That's what was going through my head. Cammy's words. I wish we could take the sickness. Away from. The wee ones. And take it to ourselves. But we can't.

[11 : 32] But you know who can. And you know who did. Yes. Jesus. The thing that makes us. Sickest of all.

In our hearts. Is what? Is it called? What is the thing that makes us sick in our hearts? It's called. Anish.

You know the answer. It's called sin. And Jesus. Saw our sin. He loved us. And he loved us so much.

That he left heaven. To come to earth. To live for a while. Perfectly. And go to a cross. And die.

Why did he die? Why did he die? He died to take our sin. Away from us. He died to take.

[12 : 28] The sickness. Of our sin. Away from us. And to himself. And Alistair. And Dylan. And Jono.

And girls. And Aish. If we trust him. Then he takes our sin away. And he gives us that. Life. And that health.

Not just for this world. For these bodies. Because these bodies. They've been dying. For our hearts. Our souls. Live forever. And Jesus gives us life.

From the trust in him. So let's hear about that. Our heavenly father. We do thank you. For your. Great great love for us.

We thank you father. That you. Loved us. As your children. So much. That. You sent Jesus. To this world. And we thank you. That he came. To this world.

[13 : 23] Willingly. And he came. To take. The sickness. Of our sin. Away from us. Into his body. So that we. Could have. That eternal life.

And health. That's promised to us. When we trust. In him. We think of. The words of that verse. God. Made him. Jesus. Who had no sin.

To be sin for us. So that in him. We might become. The righteousness. Of God. Help us. We pray. To trust you.

And to receive. That gift. That you have given. To us father. In Jesus. And Jesus. Thank you. That you are willing. To come for us. And to die for us. And we thank you.

For the Holy Spirit. Who opens our eyes. And our ears. So that we would hear. And understand. And see. Your love. For us. So that we would.

[14 : 20] Respond to it. So hear. Our prayers. And continue with us. In this day we pray. Be with everyone. That we love. We pray this. In Jesus name.

Amen. We're going to sing now. We're going to sing. Mission Praise 988. Words are on the screen. How deep. How deep. The father's love for us.

How vast. Beyond. All measure. That he should give his only son. To make a wrench. His treasure. Well if you can turn in your Bibles please.

To Acts chapter 28. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Acts in chapter 28. We come to the last study in the book of Acts today.

[15 : 23] I think. Assuming I can speak quick enough and you can listen fast enough. Acts chapter 28 and we read from verse 1.

Once safely on shore we found out that the island was called Malta. The islanders showed us unusual kindness.

They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and as he put it on the fire a viper driven out by the heat fastened itself on his hand.

When the islanders saw a snake hanging from his hand they said to each other this man must be a murderer for though he escaped from the sea justice has not allowed him to live.

But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall there. But after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happening to him they changed their minds and said he was their God.

[16 : 26] There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably.

His father was sick in bed suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and after a prayer placed his hands on him and healed him. When this had happened the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured.

They honoured us in many ways and when we were ready to sail they furnished us with the supplies we needed. After three months we put out the sea in a ship that had wintered in the island.

It was an Alexandrian ship with a figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux. We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days. From there we set sail and arrived at Rhegium.

The next day the south wind came up and on the following day we reached Put-e-oli. There we found some brothers who invited us to spend a week with them and so we came to Rome.

[17 : 31] The brothers there had heard that we were coming and they travelled as far as the Forum of Appius and the three taverns to meet us. At the sight of these men Paul thanked God and was encouraged.

When he got to Rome Paul was allowed to live by himself with a soldier to guard it. Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled Paul said to them My brothers although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans.

They examined me and wanted to release me because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. But when the Jews objected I was compelled to appeal to Caesar not that I had any charge to bring against my own people.

For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain. They replied We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you and none of the brothers who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you.

But we want to hear what your views are for we know that people everywhere are talking against the sin. They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying.

[18 : 52] From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the law of Moses and from the prophets. Some were convinced by what he said but others would not believe.

They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement. The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said to Isaiah the prophet Go to this people and say You will be ever hearing but never understanding.

You will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused. They hardly hear with their ears and they have closed their eyes otherwise they might see with their eyes hear with their ears understand with their hearts and turn and I would heal them.

Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles and they will listen. For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him.

Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen and may God bless that reading of his word to us and give us understanding.

[20 : 13] John McSween is now going to lead us in prayer and God. Thank you.

thank you. it points to us■or turning placed in prayer and then upon the God says we AB are so he he after We're looking forward to the Deutschen defence.

I am the Queen of the Queen to deinem my own. And the author of the weeklyodar ship, he once he grows up to the fråga.

God bless you so that the listen lemon and water will give you an agora continuous broadcast.

Mr. dell Will ask for peace and peace in your body Bear a voice that would spread a Esta Alma Through the Como power and patience His name Habilalai Revealai prés Coach Brady Vysco Vysco Os Why we always have thell yield.

[22 : 31] Okay there you go.

[illegible]

inker from all i.e.,youddo and heal your daughters both countries around sky and house
Den Pierre Monat, he made my floor with his heart He made mykan under the head his
chest he said He made my eyes god he said, and has no reason so not his lips his hearts
had no problem no steps for him Iffiynav and God directions are following the bolts of
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would go back to work and make her faas and rather have to go back to Muhlochan So
our Austen

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And I Moo Progress Parked, took some Our Come Doin' Video Video Video Video Video
Video We sing again to God's praise from Psalm 130.

[27:52] I wait for God, my soul doth wait, my hope is in his word. More than they that for morning watch, my soul waits for the Lord. I say, more than they that do watch, the morning light the sea.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. make us ready we pray to hear and to obey the word that you're speaking to us speak individually to us we pray we ask Lord that you would help us in the listening that you would help me and speaking Lord that you would guide and that you would lead and that you would be glorified we pray this in Jesus name Amen so we've come to Acts chapter 28 the last chapter in the book of Acts and for those who are here just today for the first time or for those who maybe been away for a few weeks just a brief recap last week in Acts chapter 27 we we looked at Paul's journey for Rome and it was a turbulent one there was shipwreck there was storms there was all kinds of incident within the passage and we finished at the end of chapter 27 with the apostle Paul and the other 275 members of crew jumping over the side of this ship in stormy waters in desperate weather the vessel is reached we see in verse 41 of chapter 27 and it's breaking down under the power of the surf as the sea beats in it and the crew there are swimming for the shore of this unidentified island and as we go from chapter 27 and as we go from chapter 27 into 28 as the crew the 276 come aboard onto not come aboard but leave board and head for this island as they come ashore they're met with unusual kindness that's the first point unusual kindness now let's try and think ourselves into the the plot of this again remember these men have been through the most horrific of journeys i can remember how bad shape i used to be when i would come off the sullivan after four and a half hours in choppy waters take me kind of two or three hours just to find my feet again take me half a day to get an appetite back here's these men they haven't eaten properly for weeks they have been through severe trauma physical psychological spiritual trauma uh they have swung for some distance through absolutely freezing waters uh the timing of this the commentators tell us was around about october november time within the year uh so these waters were not warm they would have been ice cold hugely unpleasant so as these men are washed up on the shore you can imagine the shape they were up you can imagine how uh how battered they must have looked imagine how weak and how vulnerable they were as they stepped on shore and so if the islanders who were receiving them had any kind of malice towards them they would have been easy prey we've been very easy to pick off uh this crew and just knock them down they were pretty much down anyway but they would have been easy prey if the islanders decided to turn on them but the islanders didn't decide to turn on them they showed what is described here as unusual kindness verse one on safely on shore we found this is luke writing in the first person we found that the island was called malta the islanders showed us unusual kindness they built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold so they were shown an unusual kindness as they landed on shore you can just imagine freezing cold soaking clothes

tired hungry how welcome uh they must have felt as these islanders showed them not malice but kindness imagine how welcome that fire must have been to these men who were freezing so they were shown kindness on the sea so they were shown kindness on the sea unusual kindness on the sea they were also shown kindness as we carry on through the verses by those who were in authority in that place verse seven there was a state nearby that belonged to publius the chief official of the island he welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably so they weren't just showing kindness as they were received but a wee bit down the line here as they got their strength back up and the authorities got involved they too showed them that kindness and that hospitality for three days the main man on the island took them in and showed them real hospitality it was unusual kindness and then there's that same consistency as they prepared to leave the island verse 10 it says there that they honored us in many ways and when we were ready to sail they furnished us with the supplies that we needed and so three occasions there at least and consistently during their stay in malcolm the crew of this ship were shown unusual kindness and it strikes me that this teaches us lessons about ourselves as fallen human beings and teaches us lessons about god as well mankind ever since genesis we go right back to the beginning we have fallen we are not the way we were designed we are we are fallen we are broken we are to use the illustration with the children we are infected with this disease of sin it doesn't just touch some of us it touches all of us it spoils everything in the world it affects everything it even reaches as far as as human kindness the fact that luke has to record here that the kindness they were shown was unusual kindness speaks to us about the fact that we are fallen the very fact that kindness is unusual and not what we would expect speaks to us about our fallenness the wonder that we are fallen broken sinful state are still capable of such kindness as we read here this is pagans that speaks to us about the fact that we have been made in the image of god and something of the image of god can be seen in every human being and in this community that they find in malta we see something there of the image of god in this pagan people it points us past them to the god who is in source by origin and purity the god is kindness he is where we find the purest most concentrated kindness the god that they did not yet know but were soon to be introduced to the god who is in the god who says to us in jeremiah 31 3 i have loved you with an everlasting love

[40 : 53] i have drawn you with love and kindness now these men these broken men who were decanted off this ship swimming for shore think about it when they arrived on the shore think about as they came before they were received how did they come they didn't come with arms full of supplies to trade with they didn't come with offerings and gifts that they could seek to to trade and use as currency these men battered broken coming off the ship they were empty handed and yet they were received with kindness and we as we come to god as he calls us as he draws us to god who draws us with love and kindness how are we to come to him how can we come to him we come with empty hands we have nothing that we can use as currency to trade with god to try and win his favor we come as those who are by admission we are broken far from perfect we come as those who if we are attempting to carry our sin in our own strength are exhausted and cast down and yet jesus bids us come to me all who are weary and who are burdened and he will give us rest when we could when we still can offer nothing that god could want or god could need he has shown us and he continues to show us today that unusual unexpected extra-ordering kindness he has shown us grace his blood speaks his blood speaks of that grace and it's because of that blood it's because of that kindness it's because of that love it's because of the character of the god who has revealed himself to us that today as we hear his call we can have confidence to come just as i am we're going to sing shortly without one plea but that thy blood was shed for me and that thou bidst me come to thee o lamb of god i come so there we have the first point these islanders as they come ashore they show to the crew unusual kindness and god has shown us this unusual kindness this amazing grace in christ he calls us to come second point that we have in these verses is that unnatural power that's demonstrated probably the better description would be not unnatural but supernatural power we see two instances here of the supernatural power of god at work in this whole scenario first of all we see it in the snake bite verse 3 to verse 6 is where we find that

Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and as he put it on a fire he and as he put it on a fire a viper driven out by heat fastened itself on his hand when the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand they said to each other this man must be a murderer for though he escaped the sea justice has not allowed him to live but paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no effects the people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall down but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him they changed their minds and said he was their god so we see this supernatural power of god in the protection that's afforded to paul the apostle paul gets bitten by the snake in the full sight of everyone who's there you see this snake hanging off the the hand of paul the islands assume that this is the god of justice who's caught up with paul he's escaped the shipwreck but now he's caught up with paul in the form of this state and so they were looking intently at paul expecting that he was going to fall down dead at some point soon but actually that's not what happened i'm just in application here note the not the reaction of the islanders the islanders assumed that this snake and the illness that they anticipated that was going to follow was god's judgment on paul when actually the opposite was true this snake that fastened itself onto paul's hand was going to be something that would be used to demonstrate god's glory and his power and it strikes me as a lesson that we would do well to import into our lives we often assume when bad things happen to us and to others we automatically assume sometimes this is god's judgment what have i done or what is it that they've done to deserve this remember jobs friends they came along to offer comfort to job the comfort was in the form of what is it you've done job to deserve this judgment it's the last thing they should have said it's the wrong question to ask often we think don't we what has that person done to deserve this thing that god is allowing that was the wrong question to ask often today still the wrong question to ask maybe a better question to ask when we see people going through things akin to this is what is god going to do through that scenario often the lord allows these traumatic situations in our lives so that he can reveal his power and his love and his grace and his glory the light of god shines most brightly in the darkest of circumstances and that was the case here and then he just shakes off the snake he carries on as before and that in itself was a demonstration not of Paul's supernatural power but of the god that Paul had revealed to them and would reveal to them his supernatural power

we're told here that they they assumed Paul was a god we're not actually told that Paul responds to that but i think we can assume from Paul's character through the previous chapters he would have wasted no time and saying you got that one wrong i am no god but let me point you to the one who is god so we see the power of god this unnatural this supernatural power in the snake bite and we see the power of god secondly in the sickness that's recorded here verse 8 publish the official's father was sick in bed suffering from fever and dysentery Paul went in to see him and after prayer placed his hands on him and healed him when this had happened the rest of the sick on the island came and they were cured and so there's another unfortunate situation here with this official who showed him such kindness his father was sick in bed and suffering and uh

Paul went in to see him Paul before he did anything else prayed and then he laid hands on him in faith and the god that Paul prayed to healed the man and so in this instance through Paul's prayer which isn't recorded for us that through Paul's prayer everyone in that situation would have been under no doubt that this was not Paul that was going to do the healing but this was the god that Paul was praying to that was going to do the healing and that's exactly what happened this man who is so sick in bed is healed by the god that Paul worshiped very soon the news travels around the island and the rest of the sick on the island are brought to Paul and god through Paul brought healing to many of them as well don't know does that remind you of anything does this remind us of any accounts previously in scripture if it was christianity explored we'd stop and have a discussion just now but um i think our minds shouldn't take long to go back to instances like mark mark chapter one verses 29 to 32 in fact let's just go there you're all looking a bit sleepy mark chapter one think about what we've just read with uh paul and what happened there keep that in our minds and then we rewind to the ministry of christ just shortly after calling uh peter and others to follow him as disciples it says there they as soon as they left the synagogue verse 29 they went with james and john to the home of the home of simon and andrew simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever he told jesus about her so he went to her took her hand and helped her up the fever left her and she began to wait on them that evening after sunset the people brought to jesus all the sick and demon possessed the whole time gathered at the door and jesus healed many who had various diseases i think we are meant to remember that passage because what we see here is quite simply the supernatural power of jesus the risen christ at work through paul the apostle as paul laid hands on them and prayed for them it was jesus power that was working through the apostle it's good for us to be reminded today that god does not change the same jesus and mark we see at work in acts the same jesus who's at work in acts is still at work today i the lord do not change we remembered a few months ago jesus christ the same yesterday today and forever he was powerful he was powerful he is powerful and still he calls us to come to him with whatever overwhelming situations we face in life the snake bites the sicknesses the storms of life one touch from the king of kings can change everything i told you before that was the that was the testimony of stephanie cloud the the singer songwriter

living on the streets of edinburgh living in a cardboard box drunken broken drug addicted cries out to christ help me and his testimony was one touch from the king of kings changed everything the woman with the issue of blood remember luke eight spent all her money all her time trying to find a cure no one could heal her touch the hem of the garment of christ instantaneous healing and as we thought about with the wee ones the healing that we need first and foremost is not the healing of the body it's of the heart it's of the heart it's of the heart the healing that we need is the healing that touches the sickness of sin that's killing us and is breaking the world around us and the only one who can bring that supernatural health and healing and life to us is christ so what are we to do come to them unusual kindness the application from that is come to them to seal it unnatural supernatural power to deal with the sickness of our world and our lives the peace offered in christ come to him just as i am who are wretched blind sight britches healing of the mind yea all i need in thee i find

[55 : 54] O Lamb of God i come third point is a very brief one it's the unlikely transport we have this we have this uh unexpected not unexpected but unusual kindness unnatural power third point unusual transport after three months on the island as we just follow through we reach verse 11 and uh they're able to set sail again and so off they go and look as he always does he records the times and the places he gives us the specifics of uh how they traveled where they traveled to and from the people that they met on the way the fellowship that they they shared but what actually interests me in this section more than anything else is the is the vessel uh read about the the vessel in these verses in verse 11 it was an alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods castor and pollux now these twin gods not that they were actual gods but in the eyes of the alexandrian they were gods they were gods of seafaring very much revered by that people at that time and yet what do we find them doing here we have this ship these two gods at the front of the the ship these two gods small g and this in essence they're rivals yeah what do we find them doing there's this kind of humorous irony here they're like god's taxi jesus had revealed to paul whatever else happens you're headed for rome i have worked for you you are rome bound you may be in prison today i think that was acts 23 but fear not you're headed for rome you may be going through a shipwreck the whole of the rest of the ship may be in absolute blind panic but paul fear not you're headed for rome paul is composed and so we here we have this humanist scenario with these these two alexandrian gods that are doing exactly what the lord god the one two god the only living god has determined would happen from the beginning they are paul's taxi to rome imagine paul looking out in front of that ship seeing these two images and smiling to himself these are not in control god is in control god's purpose to get paul to rome to bear witness about jesus not the weather not the authorities not the gods of the alexandrians nothing no one could get in the way of god's plan his course his timetable and take that as a a warning uh this morning if you're here and you're in rebellion against god at some particular point you and i can have our plans we can hold them tight but none of our plans if they are not god's plans can prevail what he determines no one no thing can stand against and overrule and let that also be an encouragement to those who are in christ if our desire this morning is to follow jesus to go his way to live in obedience to him then be encouraged be encouraged to keep on following him he has a loving purpose for our lives plans to prosper the heart not

to harm plans to give us hope in the future paul could see that and the lord was using this unusual form of transport uh to i think make this point his sovereignty fourth point here is the unhindered preaching we'll just briefly look at this as well when paul arrives in rome there seems to be this kind of unhindered freedom that he enjoys that he hadn't enjoyed for some time in verse 16 we're told about his living arrangements he's allowed to live by himself with a soldier to guard him paul's given this liberty even though in one sense he's in captivity and i imagine that julius the roman centurion who'd been on guard during that shipwreck incidents could have spoken up for paul and said he's a good man he's a man of integrity he's someone that we can trust and so paul is given this this degree of freedom he's unhindered in the way that he was hindered before by heavy ball and chain around his ankles and his wrists then when it comes to verse 17 looking at this meeting which we've no time to go into just now he meets with the jewish leaders now every time thus far when he's met with jewish leaders it's it's descended into chaos very quickly and yet here paul seems to have a newfound freedom they're willing to listen to paul they're open to him their minds haven't been poisoned against paul there's no letters that they've been pouring over with a smear campaign against paul as he had in times past no one verse 21 was saying anything bad against paul however many people were saying bad things about this sect that paul was part of and so they see in verse 22 we want to hear what your views are for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect and paul then has this golden opportunity to preach the gospel without any legal or any religious hindrance an opportunity that he hasn't had for many years and so verse 23 and following just scan it we see that the opportunity that paul is given he takes it with both hands and he teaches boldly and he teaches without hindrance in rome in these meetings and from his own private house trying to get into the mind of paul he says something else to us about the kindness of god paul having gone through such suffering as he preached the gospel when he was not permitted is at the end of this section here given this blessed privilege of being able to preach the gospel with a license always with freedom without fear without hindrance and clearly it's a blessing that paul didn't overlook this was an opportunity that paul didn't spare let's just make the note in application as we move to the final section today we have opportunity to share christ we shouldn't take it for granted there are many people across this land today who are meeting and who are preaching as i am

and if the authorities get one hint of what's going on they will be dying in like a ton of bricks they'll be in prison they may be losing their heads today we have opportunity it may not be as warm culturally as it was in decades past but still today we have opportunity to share christ are we taking it in our workplace amongst our friends we taking it final section it's the unfinished story this is the last point and this is an unfinished story in the sense first of all that we don't know actually what happened next if you're someone who's been following this with real interest and you've really been getting inside the mind of paul following his course and seeing these trials and these tribulations and these shipwrecks and these journeys and all that was going on we know that the next thing that paul is due to face is the trial before caesar that's why paul's in rome he has to appear before caesar what happened when he appeared before caesar we don't know because we're not told it's one of these loose ends at the end of acts that luke doesn't tie up but we're just going to have to live with that see luke isn't writing a biography about paul this is not about paul it's not about peter it's not about james it's not about john it's not about it's not about any of these apostles in the first instance this is a book about jesus and his gospel and so the book finishes with paul preaching jesus not standing before caesar but preaching jesus verse 24 some were convinced by what he said but others would not believe you hear that not could not others would not believe they disagreed among themselves and began to leave after paul made his final statement the holy spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said to isaiah the prophet go to this people and say you will be ever hearing but never understanding you will be ever seeing but never perceiving for this people's heart has become calloused they hardly hear with their ears note this point here and they have closed their eyes they have closed their eyes otherwise they might see with their eyes hear with their ears understand with their hearts and turn and i would heal them therefore says paul i want you to know that god's salvation has been sent to the gentiles and they will listen who are the gentiles we are the gentiles and that's the other reason that this is an unfinished story what paul spoke of on that day is still being worked out here on this day

as through the word same word by the spirit the same spirit we continue to hear the same message the same good news about jesus how he lived and how he died and how he rose for our salvation here's the question at the end of Acts how are we responding if god opens our eyes and ears to see and hear the good news about jesus it's because he is calling us to turn from sin and to turn in faith to jesus will we then be with those who would not believe verse 24 or will we allow the holy spirit to convince us and will we come in faith to jesus unfinished story in many lives perhaps some here how's it going to conclude let's pray our heavenly father we pray that as we think through these things and as we consider that same gospel call that went out from paul the apostle on that day we thank you that same call is recorded for us and comes to us through your word on this day we thank you lord that you reveal yourself to us you reveal the truth of your gospel to us you show us our sin and our need of forgiveness not in order to tell us then that we are barred but in order that we will turn in faith come to jesus and be forgiven enable us as we sing our final praise praise not just to sing it with our lips but to respond within our hearts we pray this in jesus name amen three nine six and mission praise to conclude just as i am without one plea but that thy blood was shed for me and that thou bidst me come to thee oh lamb of god oh lamb of god i come can we can we sing this can we sing this can we sing this to conclude and now may the grace of our lord jesus christ and the love of god the father and the fellowship of the holy spirit you with us all both now and forevermore amen