

# God in the Workplace

Roger Bishop

## Colossians 3

17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

# Questions to Ponder

- ◆ How are we living as disciples of Jesus?
- ◆ Where has God placed you to serve Him and others?
- ◆ What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus in your position?
- ◆ In what ways is God at work in your week using you in His world today?



Acts 27:1-44  
Paul Sails for Rome

- ◇ And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius. 2 And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. 3 The next day we put in at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for.



Acts 27:1-44  
Paul Sails for Rome

◇ And putting out to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. 5 And when we had sailed across the open sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. 6 There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us on board. 7 We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone.

Acts 27:1-44  
Paul Sails for Rome

◇ And putting out to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. 5 And when we had sailed across the open sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. 6 There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us on board. 7 We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone.



Acts 27:1-44  
Paul Sails for Rome

- ◇ Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea. 9 Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, 10 saying, “Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.” 11 But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said.

Acts 27:1-44  
Paul Sails for Rome

- ◇ And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in, the majority decided to put out to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.



Acts 27:1-44  
The Storm at Sea

◆ Now when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to the shore. 14 But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land. 15 And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. 16 Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat.

Acts 27:1-44  
The Storm at Sea

- ◆ After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and thus they were driven along. 18 Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo. 19 And on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. 20 When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.



## Acts 27:1-44

### The Storm at Sea

- ◇ Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. 22 Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, 24 and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ 25 So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. 26 But we must run aground on some island.”

## Acts 27:1-44

### The Storm at Sea

- ◆ When the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. 28 So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms. A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms. 29 And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. 30 And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, 31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." 32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go.



## Acts 27:1-44

### The Storm at Sea

- ◇ 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. 34 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.” 35 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. 36 Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. 37 (We were in all 276 persons in the ship.) 38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.

## Acts 27:1-44

### The Shipwreck

- ◆ Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore. 40 So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach. 41 But striking a reef, they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf. 42 The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. 43 But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, 44 and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.



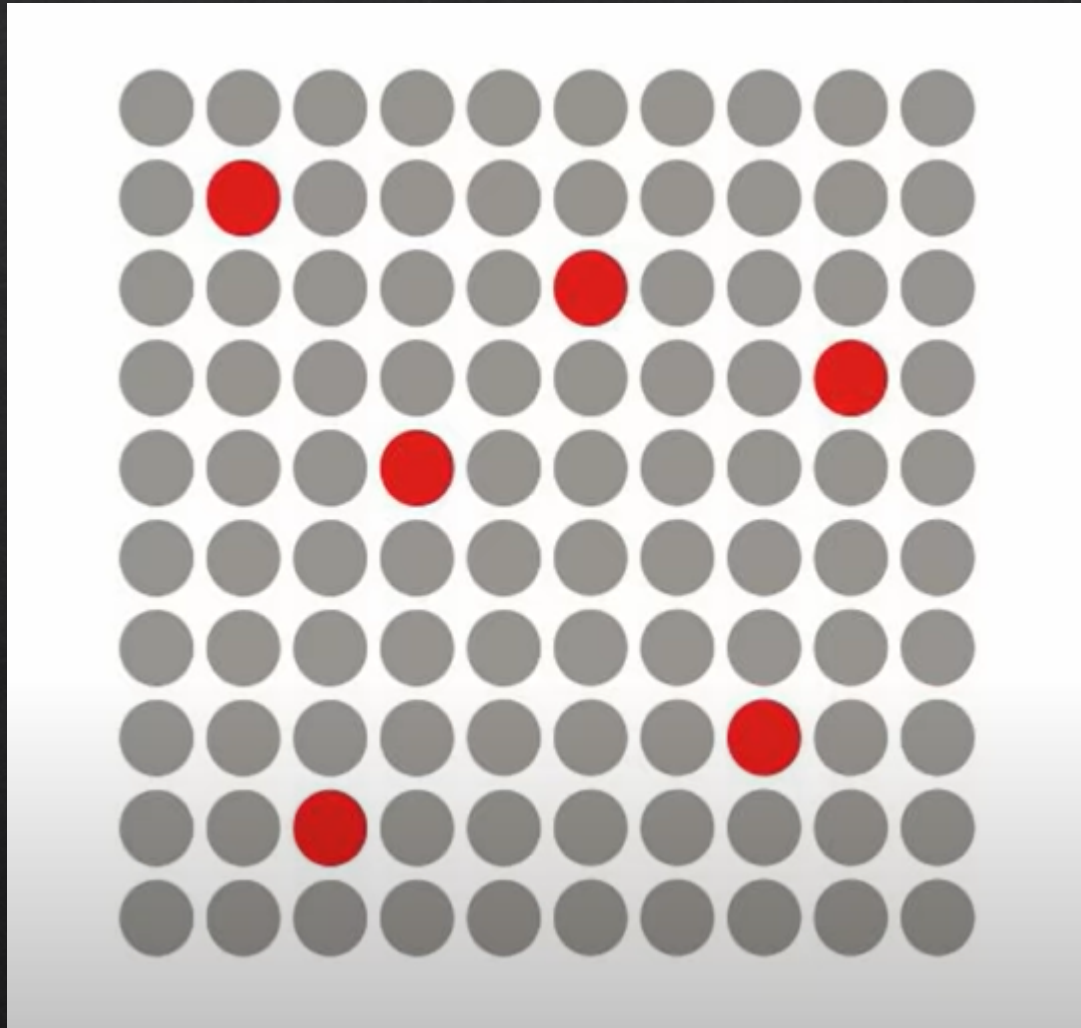
# Personal Background

- ◆ Started out in retail and customer service industry
- ◆ Food and beverage industry
- ◆ Education industry (secular & faith-based)

It's a joy to see  
God working in all  
parts of life  
regardless of the  
place and job.

In every sector, I saw God at work through  
me and in the individuals around me.

What is God already doing in and through you?



What might the scope  
of your ministry be  
where you are right  
now?



# International Traveller: Paul

## Acts 27

- ◇ Interesting parallels between Paul and Jonah
  - ◇ 2 men in boats in a storm
  - ◇ Both charged to communicate God's message to the capital city of the dominate empire at that time.
- ◇ Parallels between storms
  - ◇ Storm on the Mediterranean and the storm on lake Galilei
- ◇ We are at the climax of Acts: God's promise that the disciples will be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

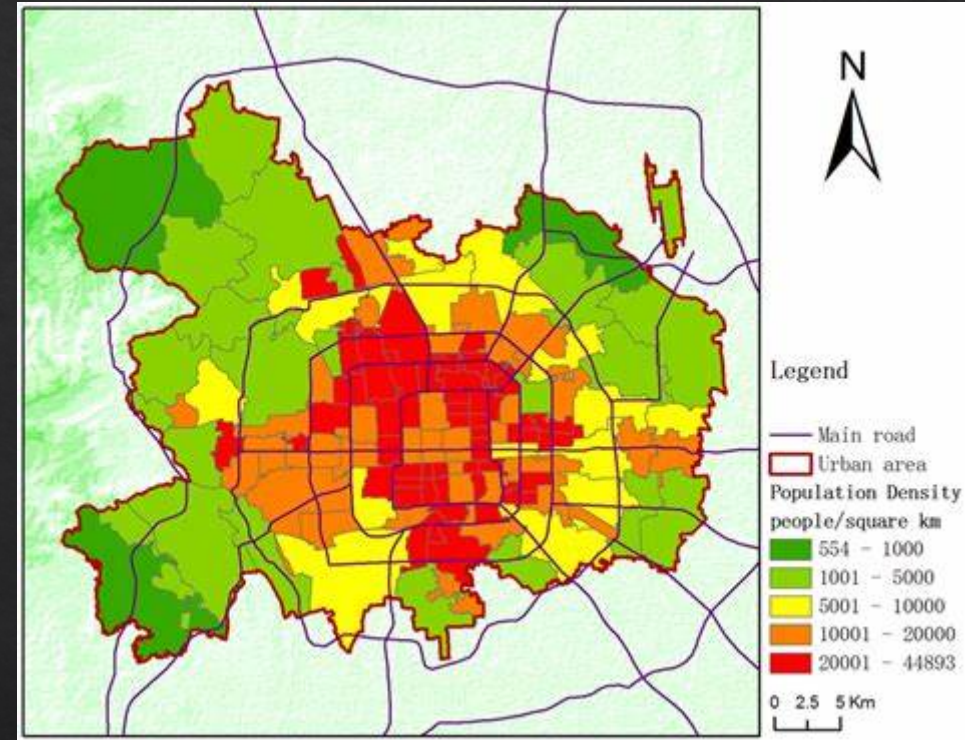
- ◆ The sea symbolized power and darkness
- ◆ God showing His sovereign power
- ◆ God would not prevent His message from getting to Rome
- ◆ Thankful for the person who witnessed to me.





◇ Population of Beijing in 2023: 21,766,214

◇ Christians 987,329 (4.5%)



- ◆ This story set in
  - ◆ a particular place
  - ◆ a Particular time
  - ◆ with particular people
- ◆ Figuring out how to respond in their situation.
  
- ◆ Isn't this like us? Where are you placed? Who are you with?

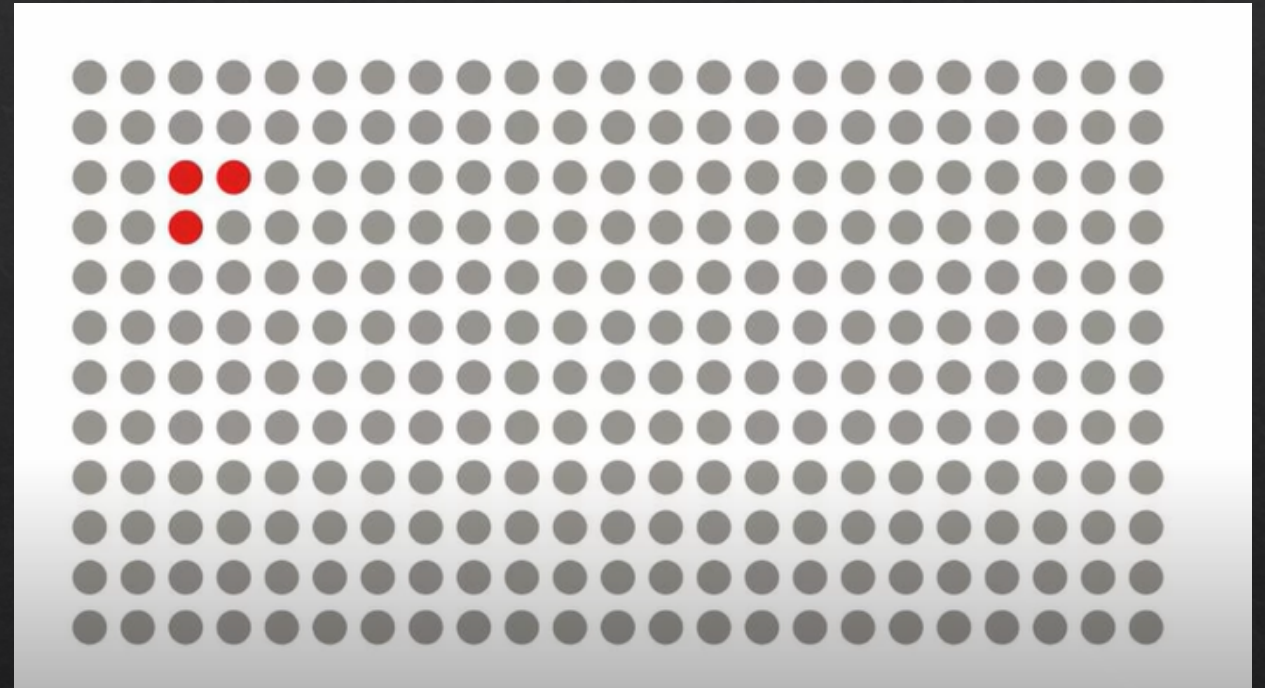




# Paul's Journey

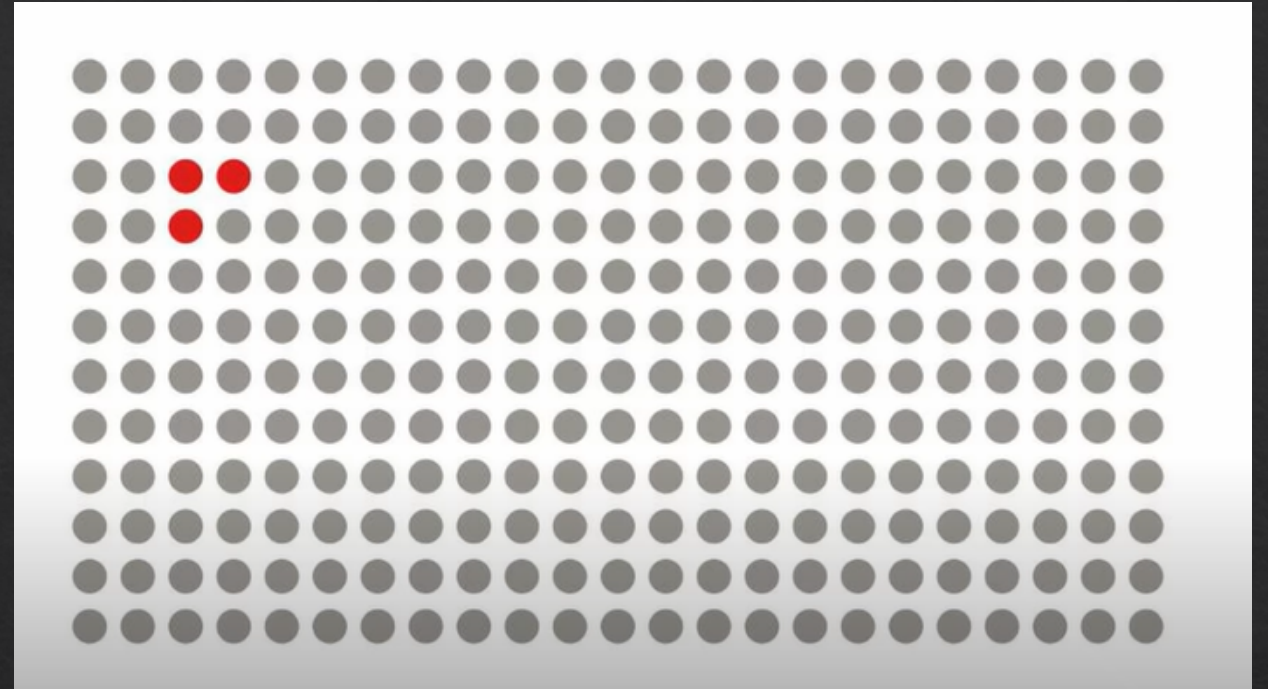


- ◇ Imagine that you are Paul
- ◇ In a boat
- ◇ 270 people who don't know Jesus.
- ◇ For an extended period of time.
- ◇ You, Luke & Aristarchus
- ◇ 3 out of 273 (1% of the population)





- ◆ You build a relationship with a centurion: Julius
- ◆ God gives you a message for the senior management team: a centurion, a pilot and owner of the boat.
- ◆ You are a prisoner. You are not a sailor but a maker of tents.
- ◆ You are convinced in what you are saying.



3 The next day we put in at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for.

# Speaking to Power

Centurion: the power of the state

Pilot: the power of expertise – the senior consultant

Owner: the power of money and ownership

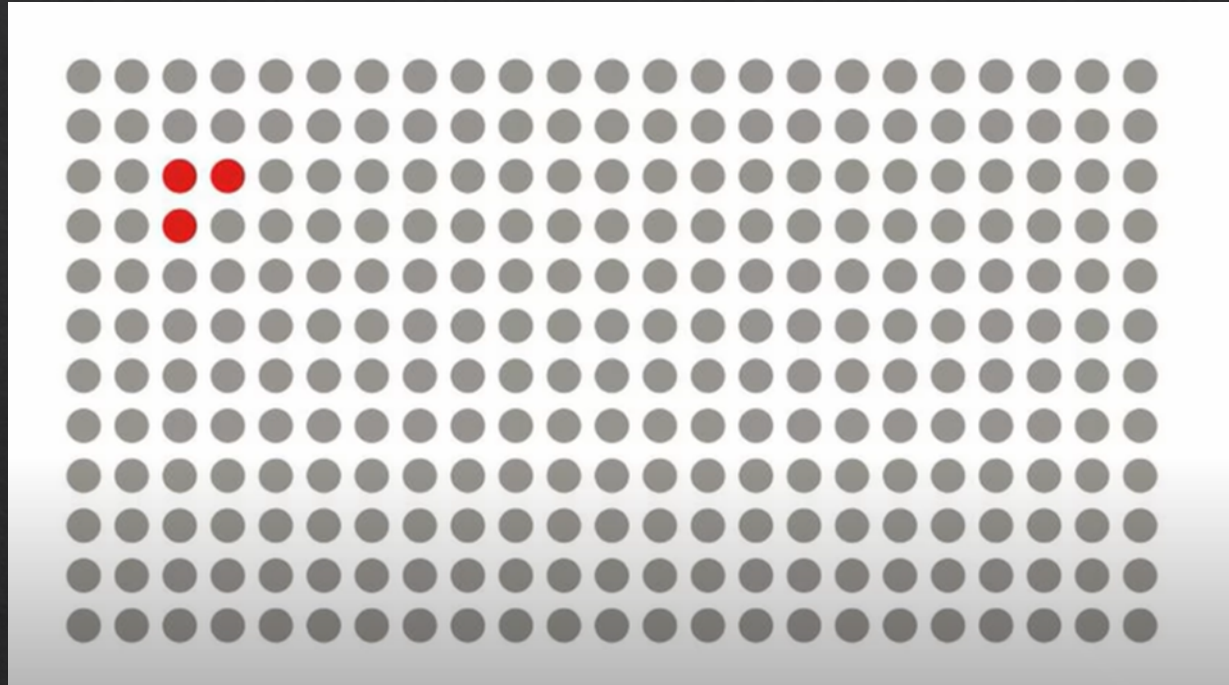


# Prophecy

- ◇ Paul received the message in a non-religious context
- ◇ Not in a small group
- ◇ Not in a church
- ◇ But out in the world
  
- ◇ Luke doesn't tell us that Paul used religious language to communicate
- ◇ They know he is a follower of Jesus: he is under arrest

Paul teaches us that we don't always have to say "God says..."

# God gives wisdom for the benefit of the whole crew



- ◇ Does God need a boat to get Paul to Rome?
- ◇ Does God care only for Paul and his 2 friends?
- ◇ Does God care about the commercial impact on the owner?

Does God care about the physical and material wellbeing of the organisation you're in and the people you work with?



# Throughout the Bible

- ◇ God's concern with our:
  - ◇ physical environment
  - ◇ Spiritual wellbeing
  - ◇ Emotional wellbeing
  - ◇ Mental wellbeing



God creates a wonderful environment for us to flourish in:

- ◇ Running water
- ◇ Nutritious food
- ◇ Amazing environment
- ◇ So much wildlife to enjoy
- ◇ Purposeful work
- ◇ Fellowship with Him

Genesis 22:18

18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

## Jeremiah 29:7

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

But **seek** the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and **pray** to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.



# Welfare of Beijing

- ◇ Political
- ◇ Physical
- ◇ Mental
- ◇ Emotional
- ◇ Relational
- ◇ Ecological
- ◇ Economic



- ◇ City
- ◇ District
- ◇ Streets
- ◇ Shops
- ◇ Gym
- ◇ Office
- ◇ Bus/subway
- ◇ Men's retreat venue

# Paul's job is to speak up for the others

- ◇ He does not win the argument

We must speak truth for the benefit of others

- ◇ You are convinced the policy is wrong, protocol should be changed, the judgement unfair.
- ◇ May not change
- ◇ Speaking out may be right and important



# What's your ministry looking like now?

- ◆ Knowing the boat is going down
- ◆ With you and everyone else with it
- ◆ What do you pray for when you see storms coming?



# The Storm Comes

- ◇ Rages for days
- ◇ Professionals follow best practice
- ◇ Throw the cargo overboard – not enough
- ◇ Everyone despairs
- ◇ What do you do?
- ◇ This business is going down!
- ◇ This business is about to go into liquidation!
- ◇ Do you have any space in your heart for anyone else?





# Pressure

Often causes us to be self-focused

But what about Paul

Intercedes holistically

Encourages them emotionally

Paul stood up among them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. Yet now **I urge you to take heart**, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.

# Paul's Ministry at Work

But what about Paul

Intercedes holistically

Encourages them emotionally

Witnessing clearly

23 For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, 24 and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted **you** all those who sail with you.'



# Nick's Story

- ◇ Assigned to an ICU
- ◇ Treating multiple covid patients
- ◇ 12 hour shifts
  
- ◇ Silently praying for their salvation
- ◇ Not everyone got better
- ◇ Often didn't know outcome
- ◇ Friend asks about a patient
- ◇ He got better – is now a Christian



Take Nick out of the ICU – maybe the patient would have died separated from Christ.

Take Paul out of the boat and maybe 273 would have died in that storm.

Take the teacher out of the school....  
Take you out of your position...

# Paul Brings Encouragement

- ◇ Interestingly, Paul hasn't spoken about Jesus.
- ◇ Paul makes it clear: it is his God who is guaranteeing safety.

Paul is bearing witness

- ◇ Is Paul outlining the gospel message?
- ◇ Might people be intrigued?
- ◇ Might they want to ask him at that moment?
- ◇ or wait until they are safe to see if what he says comes true?

All that matters is that Paul is sharing his  
faith with others



## With God's Help

- ◇ How did you put up with that bad situation at work?
- ◇ My small group prayed for it.
- ◇ How did you get that job done on time?
- ◇ Well, I just asked God to help me.
- ◇ How did you deal with that difficult person?
- ◇ I prayed for them.

The more we involve God, the richer our testimony becomes.

# Paul's Ministry at his Workplace

But what about Paul

Intercedes holistically

Encourages them emotionally

Witnessing clearly

Strengthens them physically

34 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.”



# Strengthening Each Other Physically

- ◇ We are meant to take care of each other's physical wellbeing – we know that
- ◇ Under pressure – do we notice?
- ◇ Can I get you anything?
- ◇ Paul then does something politically incorrect
- ◇ He prays in public

35 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.

# Are You Willing to be Politically Incorrect?

- ◆ Previous position in the Korean International School in Beijing
- ◆ Unimaginable incident shook the school
- ◆ A Korean English teacher asked if we would like to join in prayer.
- ◆ In the midst of terrible tragedy, she asked if we wanted to join in prayer and lifted the situation up.
- ◆ In that moment, she took a stand to show that in that unimaginable moment, there is a God who cares.





# Strengthening Each Other Physically

- ◇ Paul, by eating himself, is showing his faith in God.
- ◇ By the men eating – taking a step of faith
- ◇ Paul invites them to believe a little, to look to God.

35 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.**

# Paul's Particular Words



...he took some bread and gave thanks... Then he broke it...  
Acts 27:35



And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them...  
Luke 22:19



...he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.  
Luke 24:30



# Paul's Ministry at his Workplace

Intercedes holistically

Encourages them emotionally

Witnessing clearly

Strengthens them physically

Protects them practically

31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved."

- ◇ Paul was in a boat with 275 people.
- ◇ What boat are you in?
- ◇ What are the challenges?
- ◇ What wisdom does God want to bless those people with?
- ◇ What's God doing there?
- ◇ What does He want you to do?





# The God Who:

Sends with purpose

Grants favour

Gives wisdom

Communicates

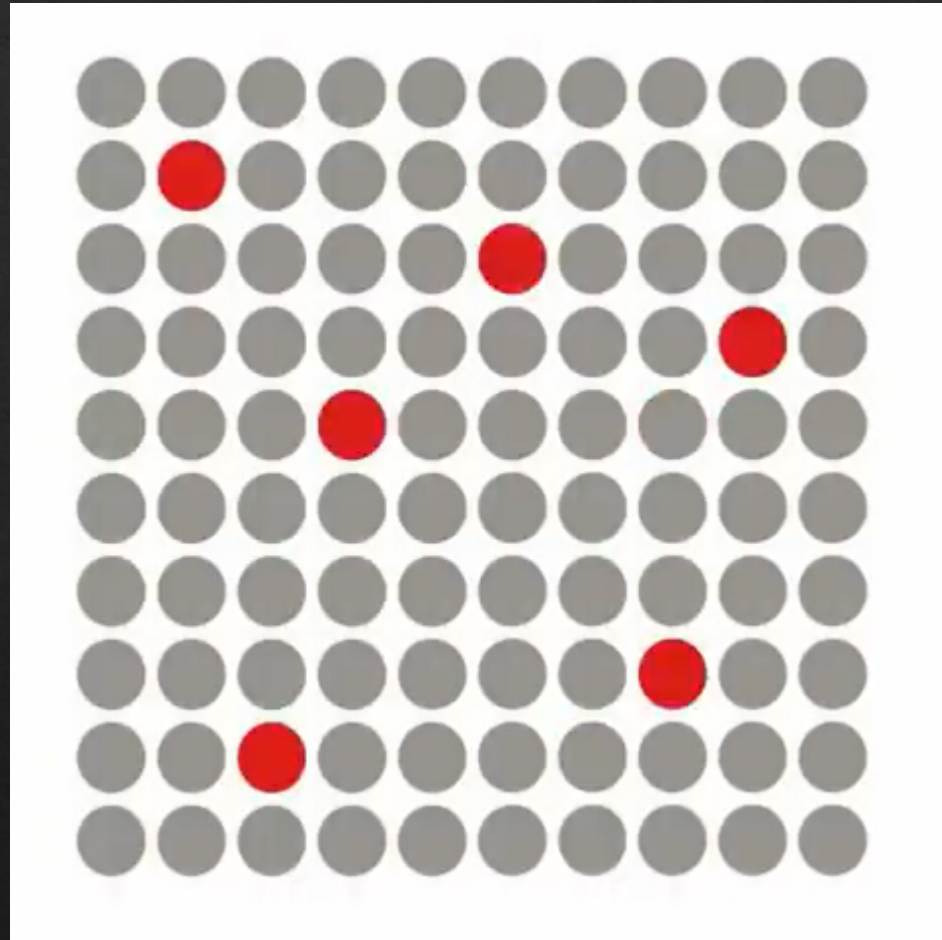
Responds to prayer

Strengthens His people

Keeps His promises

Fulfils His purpose

Where are you making a difference?





## Questions to think about:

- ◇ What boat are you in?
- ◇ What are the challenges?
- ◇ What wisdom does God want to bless those people with?
- ◇ What's God doing there?
- ◇ What does He want you to do?

Let us Pray

## Group Discussion Questions

- ◆ What boat are you in?
- ◆ What are the challenges?
- ◆ What wisdom does God want to bless those people with?
- ◆ What's God doing there?
- ◆ What does He want you to do?