

Kev's sermon notes for eGroups

Sunday, March 28, 2021 – Psalm Sunday

Elevation Church - Broadcasting from Ballantyne Campus – Charlotte, NC USA

Pastor: Steven Furtick

Sermon Title: "The Pointing Finger and the Healing Hand – Christian Opportunism – Let go of the Boat and Protect the Vessel inside of you – Don't protect the wrong thing too much (opinions and perspectives) – Your heart and soul within you is the most important vessel to protect – And this is what God values the most – No power is released from a pointing figure – Don't hold on to what is hurting you – What does God want to do through you - from the places where you have been hurt."

Elevation Worship and Maverick City Music

- "Walk on Water" – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtZiHaMSY1s>
- "My Testimony" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NyH9mDYECK>
- Jireh (outstanding new release from Elevation Worship and Maverick City Music) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mC-zw0zCCtg>
- "Graves to Gardens" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwX1f2gYKZ4>

Scripture for this week:

- Acts 27: The Storm - 13 When a gentle south wind began to blow, they saw their opportunity; so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. 14 Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the Northeaster, swept down from the island. 15 The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along. 16 As we passed to the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure, 17 so the men hoisted it aboard. Then they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together. Because they were afraid they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor[b] and let the ship be driven along. 18 We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. 19 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 the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved. **21 After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. 22 But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. 23 Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me 24 and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' 25 So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. 26 Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island."** The Shipwreck - 27 On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. 28 They took soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet deep. A short time later they took soundings again and found it was ninety feet[e] deep. 29 Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. 30 In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow. 31 Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved." 32 So the soldiers cut the

ropes that held the lifeboat and let it drift away. 33 Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. “For the last fourteen days,” he said, “you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food—you haven’t eaten anything. 34 Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.” 35 After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. 36 They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. 37 Altogether there were 276 of us on board. 38 When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea. 39 When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could. 40 Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. 41 But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf. 42 The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. 43 But the centurion wanted to spare Paul’s life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. 44 The rest were to get there on planks or on other pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land safely.

- **Acts 28: Paul Ashore on Malta** - 28 Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. 2 The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. 3 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. 4 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 from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live.” 5 But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. 6 The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead; but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god. **7 There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days. 8 His 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. 9 When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured.** 10 They honored us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed. **Paul’s Arrival at Rome** - 11 After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island—it was an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux. 12 We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days. 13 From there we set sail and arrived at Rhegium. The next day the south wind came up, and on the following day we reached Puteoli. 14 There we found some brothers and sisters who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome. 15 The brothers and sisters there had heard that we were coming, and they traveled as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. At the sight of these people Paul thanked God and was encouraged. 16 When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him.
- **2 Tim 2 (KJV):** “20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. 22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23 But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. 24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to

teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”

- Ex 4:2: 4 Then Moses answered and said, “But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, ‘The Lord has not appeared to you.’ ” 2 So the Lord said to him, “What is that in your hand?” He said, “A rod.” 3 And He said, “Cast it on the ground.” So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. 4 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Reach out your hand and take it by the tail” (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand), 5 “that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.” 6 Furthermore the Lord said to him, “Now put your hand in your bosom.” And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, like snow. 7 And He said, “Put your hand in your bosom again.” So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his other flesh. 8 “Then it will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign. 9 And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river and pour it on the dry land. The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land.”
- 2nd Cor 4: 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So then death is working in us, but life in you. 13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, “I believed and therefore I spoke,” we also believe and therefore speak, 14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. 15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.
- Ep 3:20: 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Sermon Title: “The Pointing Finger and the Healing Hand – Christian Opportunism – Let go of the Boat and Protect the Vessel inside of you – Don’t protect the wrong thing too much (opinions and perspectives) – Your heart and soul within you is the most important vessel to protect – And this is what God values the most – No power is released from a pointing figure – Don’t hold on to what is hurting you – What does God want to do through you - from the places where you have been hurt.”

- **Please consider joining an eGroup (small group) so you don’t have to walk this walk alone? – See www.elevationchurch.cc.**
- **Interested in joining Elevation Church: See: www.elevationchurch.cc**
- **Interested in leading an eGroup? See: www.elevationchurch.cc**
- **Interested in serving at Elevation Church: See: www.elevationchurch.cc**
- **Interested in attending or leading a watch party: See: www.elevationchurch.cc**

- Here Comes Church:
 - Interested in serving at Elevation Church: See: www.elevationchurch.cc
 - Please consider joining an eGroup (small group) so you don't have to walk this walk alone? – See www.elevationchurch.cc.
 - eFam reunion – Led by Danny (eFam Pastor) hosting a pop-up watch party in Atlanta GA – Now 8 watch parties in Atlanta GA - the 3rd stop in a eFam reunion tour – during an outreach event over 26K meals packaged
 - Awesome baptism of Rebeka (sp?) at a pop-up watch party in Atlanta GA - with family watching from all over the world.
 - Old Church Basement – Forthcoming album release – quote from Going back to the place where we discovered worship for the first time – not a physical place - accessing our first love (within ourselves) – bringing you back to a pure place – absent of self-consciences.”
 - Release of “Jireh” from Elevation Church and Maverick City Music
 - Easter Worship experiences – all times USA Eastern
 - Friday, April 2, 2021 – 7PM and 10PM
 - Sunday, April 4, 2021 – 9:20 AM, 11:20 AM, 1:50 PM, and more times
 - See: www.elevationchurch.org.
- We are glad you are here – What a privilege it is to gather together and to praise God.
- I am not going to give the sermon title until the end of the sermon.
- Following the two recent mass shootings, the world needs to hear more Christian messages right now – and we need to remind ourselves that the world needs Jesus – and everything that we are doing here at the church matters – and what keeps me going is the fact is that we continue to change lives – pushing through self-doubt – and push through the the day-to-day grind of life.
- See Acts 27: 42 to 44 and Acts 28: 1 to 11.
- We talk about canceling culture in the news today – know this – the only person that can cancel something is the one who created it – therefore Paul got to live - despite what the prison guards and the ship captain had in mind for Paul.
- Malta literally means “honey” or “refuge.”
- People can change their mind really quickly like they did at the fire pit – and there's no better time for me to say this than Palm Sunday – remember what everyone was saying on Palm Sunday (Kev note: See Matthew 21)? And how they change their minds on Friday? This is how fast people can change their minds - because people are fickle and people are finite.
- Publius welcomes to Paul to his estate and serve them for three days – isn't it amazing that Paul is being cared for by complete strangers? Isn't it amazing how God extends favor to you wherever you are?
- **Here is a key point: The favor extended to the people on the ship was not disqualified by all of the mistakes the sailors made while at Sea – it is one thing to realize that God places favor on us when we make good decisions (when we are wise, nice to everybody, quote scriptures and spend time in prayer) – Here we see God's favor was waiting for them in a place where their mistakes landed them.**
- **My goal today is to convince you to become a Christian opportunist – See Acts 28: 7 to 11 – and we do this by “protecting the vessel” – and this is probably a strange thing to say since we just read about a ship breaking into pieces and stranding everyone on an island – and this is not the**

vessel that God is most concerned about – we all tend to protect the wrong thing too much – and not protecting the right thing enough – we are all defensive by protecting our opinions, our preferences.

- See 2 Tim 2 (KJV): “20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. 22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23 But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. 24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”
- See 2nd Tim 2: 20 to 26: We all have cases to protect our expensive \$300 to \$900 USD smart phones – we all have cases for phones that can be replaced – but the phone suppliers don’t make a case for your souls – for our hearts, for our faiths, and for our expectations – and we can still use a phone with a cracked screen – and we are spending more time protecting things that can be replaced.
- **Paul tells Timothy in 2nd Tim 2 to protect yourself from these things – What are these things? False teaching that spreads like gang green – also called godless chatter – I didn’t know that Paul had a Twitter account – and here he tells us to protect ourselves from godless chatter – Paul also tells us to avoid stupid arguments.**
- **Here is why I’m sharing Act 28 with you today: Even though the vessel carrying Paul broke into pieces – what was carrying Paul wasn’t important – what was important is what Paul was carrying – there are two ships in the passage – when is nautical does what ships are supposed to do – the other vessel in the passage is the apostle Paul – who is going to Rome because he had a case to stand before Caesar – to defend the gospel of Jesus Christ.**
- There’s something more important than the survival of the shipwreck of Paul – there’s something important that happens to Paul after the shipwreck that is even more important than what caused the shipwreck to begin with.
- We all spend a lot of mental energy trying to figure out why things are what they are – triggering us to come to conclusions that aren’t necessarily accurate – where we try to connect things and say the reason this happened was because of that.
- Recall what Paul says in Acts 27: “21 After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: “Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. 22 But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. 23 Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me 24 and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’ 25 So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. 26 Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island.”
- **So which vessel is God interested in protecting? Paul is telling the people on the ship to keep their courage despite impossible conditions. The important vessel it’s not the ship that was carrying them – the most important vessel or container it’s not something that carries you – it is**

the heart that God has given you – it is the calling that God has given you – it is the assignment that God has given you – it is the gift that God has given you – it is the imagination that you carry into the world – and the significance of this story will apply to anyone in this room – There's something that you are carrying - that only you can carry – and Paul knew that he was carrying something that was a lot more important than the boat – that was significant to God – so whatever is breaking apart in your life any given point in time is not as important as what God has put on the inside of you – therefore protect the vessel.

- **Don't put a protective case on your cell phone and then use the phone to expose your heart – Many of us are consumed with fear by eating meat (cancer), fish (mercury poison), or dairy products – where we are so careful about what we put into our body – and this is great – just know that this thinking does form all wisdom – some of it is fear-based – And here's the irony – we eat clean but we think crap – so we live long and healthy but we hate life – where we are protecting the shed but not maintaining the equipment inside – where we are managing our profile and our physical appearance in something that will eventually break – Yes take care of your body but the real vessel is not something that we can counted with calories and carbohydrates. This is why Paul tells us to let go of the boat and keep up your courage.**
- See Acts 28:3.
- Have you ever helped somebody and in the process of helping them you got hurt?
- Paul is trying to be useful and gets bit by snake.
- So ask ourselves this question: Without getting too complicated, why did the snake bit Paul? Was it because of the Devil? Was it God because everything happens for reason? Just shut up on this point! Answer: it is crazy how many somersaults we will do to get around what is stated in the text – Acts 28 tells us that the viper was driven out by the heat. It was nothing more than a natural consequence of the fire.
- Here is what I want to show you: While Paul has a snake hanging from his hand, everybody's pointing and talking about why Paul has a snake hanging on his hand – these kind of people get on my nerves – when people say things like – well if you read the books I read, your kids would be better."
- Even those with the nicest of intentions have a tendency to point at a situation and make incorrect assumptions – See Acts 28: 4 to 6 – others around Paul are interpreting his identity through the lens of an event – saying things like if this is happening then you must be _____ (fill in the blank).
- **The pointer finger is the logo for a lot of bad Christianity – where we say things like “those people – that lifestyle” – and “if you had not wasted that season of your life God would have blessed you” – “if you had listened” – “if you had been at church” – I have never personally seen any power released through a pointed finger – in the Bible we hear a lot more about the hand of God then we do the finger of God – the pointed figure kills – the open hand heals. (Kev note: Dang!!!)**
- While we are talking about the devil let's discuss what the term “Satan” means – it means “accuser” – this is Satan's logo and not God's logo.
- Yes there is a time for strong teaching – but that is not the nature of God – God could've certainly done that to Peter when he tried to get out of the boat and walk on water – Jesus extended his hand to Peter – and what we have to decide with our lives is either project the pointed finger or

the extend healing hand – and this is the title of my sermon today “The pointed finger and the healing hand.”

- If Paul believes what those around him are saying at the fire pit - then he dies. Nor is Paul survival assured if he continues to hold on what is hurting him.
- Let's now consider Exodus 4: 2 So the Lord said to him, “What is that in your hand?” He said, “A rod.” 3 And He said, “Cast it on the ground.” So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. 4 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Reach out your hand and take it by the tail” (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand).”
- Moses was a mighty man of God and also a murderer killing in an Egyptian by trying to do Gods will his way – and the people of Malta are pointing at Paul suggesting that he must be a murderer – but he really was a messenger. God asks Moses what is in your hand – Moses has to throw down a stick for it to become a snake – For Paul to see God's power, he had to throw down the snake.
- Protecting the vessel in our lives means not believing everything that everyone says about us – including ourselves.
- The most dangerous and sabotaging think about this does not come from other people pointing their finger in your face – if the enemy has their way with you, he will have you stand in front of a mirror and have you tell yourself that you are the problem – and then we are not able to see a way forward anymore.
- Kev note: See sermon notes from Pastor Furtick's sermon “It Had to Happen” from July 23, 2017 at the end of these sermon notes.
- **For some seasons of our lives, we hold onto something that hurt us – How long are you going to have a snake get free rent on your hand? It's just a question – because I get offended too – because I get bitter too – the snake only kills Paul if the venom is allowed to get into the vessel – it's only a surface wound if we remove it quickly – yet we have a habit of making trophies out of our trials – and we hold onto them so tightly that we over-identify with them – so much so that we become identified by our experiences – and we start saying things to ourselves like what the people of Malta said to Paul – Where we say things like – “you must be a bad person” – “you must be a screw-up or trash” – “you must be worthless” – “what is wrong with me?” – this is not God – The God we know is an open hand.**
- Why is the enemy primary strategy accusation? Because if he can keep us pointing your finger, we never open our hands – this is how resentment works.
- **Will you do with Paul did? Lead with an open hand – and Paul really didn't care what the people of Malta probably felt because he knew he had an appointment in Rome – And the security of his purpose made him impervious to the opinions of others – there is a sense when you know that God's hand is on us – even in the mistakes – even in the bad decisions – God is sovereign even in our screwups.**
- Paul knows that he is neither a God nor a murderer – and he knows who he is – and God told him who he was – even in the storm – and Paul does not need the people of Malta to define him.
- See Acts 27: 23 Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me 24 and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’

- There is power in what Paul is saying here: He could've blamed the sailors for the situation he was in at the Island of Malta – but there is no power in blame – When we place blame, we give it power.
- Publius only wanted to talk to the one that got bit by a snake and didn't get bitter – bitterness and pointing your finger will not get you healed – however an open hand will heal. In a marriage, a pointed finger kills (kills communication – kills empathy) but an open hand heals.
- All of us can point to something in our lives that makes us weak – and that is fine – and it's OK for the snake to fasten itself to your hand – but it's not OK for you to hold onto it longer than you're supposed to – we can all point to our past that illuminates a character defect that is with us today – however this only gets us so far.
- When Paul enters Publius' house he realizes there's an opportunity – Paul being a “Christian opportunist” – a worldly opportunity is when I see something that looks compelling and I give my all to it – when I see someone that can give me an advantage. A Christian opportunist realizes that great strength resides in weakness – and the entire island of Malta gets healed because of a sick man – and the sick man encountered the apostle Paul because of a snake bite hand.
- Note the connection here: Why did the snake bite Paul? Because of the fire – yet Paul determined after the fact that he was going to use this event for a greater purpose – say this to ourselves - God is going to use “this” (the adverse situation) too. The ship took people to certain places – but the snake took Paul to Publius' house – confess this to yourself: God is going to use “this” too – transitioning from a posture of pain to a posture of power – but it is going to be a different kind of power – it is going to be a 2nd Cor 4 kind of power.
- See 2nd Cor 4: 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.
- We have this glory and messy situations – we have this hope in choppy waters – we have this certainty in a crazy and chaotic world – we have this treasure in human weakness – we have this confidence in great chaos – we have this treasure in earthen vessels – we have this healing in snake-bitten hands.
- This is how we protect the vessel - See Acts 28: 8 to 9 – we pray about it – not just ruminating over things – not just worrying about it – not just freaking out - processing things at the level of your spirit and not just your thoughts – Paul did something so simple – he prayed – because he knew he could not heal Publius if he had venom in his own vessel.
- As we pictured this – now picture this in the current season of your life – saying “I should be there or should be here” – pointing at where we should be will not result in progress or peace – we can all do that – saying things like “if they didn't . . . I thought I'd be . . . If I had they had I would have . . . Pointing with both hands.
- See yourself doing what Paul is doing – after Paul prayed over Publius' father, Paul placed both his good hand and his hurt hand (from the snakebite) on Publius' father - does this now give you a picture of what God wants to do through you – based on what you have been through? Recall that a snake had been attached to Paul's bad hand just a few days ago – this inspires us to ask

God this question: God, what do you want me to do from all of the places I've been hurt (with less finger pointing and more open hands)? God's hand has always been on you – in every valley you have walked into - and every dumb decision you have made – and every bad thing you believed about yourself – and every bad thing someone has done to you. There's never been a question about the hand of God – what about your hand? Are you going to walk around with that snake attached to your hand for another year? Are you going to be a negative elderly person sharing snake stories for the rest your life? The same hand that could've killed Paul became an instrument a revival.

- The reason I did not name my sermon when I started is because we don't necessarily know what to call it until after it's over – Malta was called honey but Paul brought healing to the island – Malta means refuge by Paul Pratt revival to the island. The whole island of Malta got healed because Paul did not lead with a pointed finger but rather an open hand.
- We can't pointer a finger and lead with an open hand at the same time – so which is it going to be? – when we let our identity be consumed by a negative experience, we always limit the flow of gods power into your situation – note that life begins when we lead with an open hand (and not a pointed finger).
- Closing Prayer by Pastor Furtick on 3/28/2021: The pointed finger kills and an open hand heals – the pointed finger is an accusation and the open hand is acceptance – Paul says I might as well go over to see Publius for dinner and I don't know what God has in store for me – God can't provide us a solution if we are pointing our fingers – Father I thank you for your spirit in tender moments like these – For some of us, keeping people at a distance is more satisfying – God allow us to open our hands because we know that our open hands heal – We release those that hurt us even though they don't deserve it – because we do not want to spend the rest of our lives attached to something that nearly killed us – nor do we want to be defined by that – In the name of Jesus we shake all shame off into the fire – we shake off all accusation and condemnation into the fire – for “there is no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus” (Kev note: See Romans 8:1 to 2) – we shake it off like the dirt on our feet and the snake on our hand – It did not kill you and this is why you were still here – Now take that same hand or that place that was hurt and lay it onto the next thing that God puts on your life. Because all the wisdom that God gave you – and all the passion that he gave you – and all the healing that he gave you – just like the nail prints in the hands of Jesus – this will be the place our greatest release (and greatest revival) in your life – I declare this – I stand in agreement with you for it – and I testify of it – we have this treasure in earthen vessels – protect your vessel – protect your heart – Don't keep your car cleaner then you keep your heart – What you are carrying is much more important than what is carrying you – Let things fall away that I have to follow way – What you need for where you are headed is in your hand – We lift our hands to bless you Lord – we give you thanks for your purpose – in Jesus's name amen.

See Kev bonus study from July 23, 2017 by Pastor Steven Furtick – “It Had to Happen”

Acts 27 and 28: “It Had to Happen” by Pastor Steven Furtick:

- Recall Pastor Steven prior message “It Will Happen” from 2013 where he unpacked Acts 27 for us.

- If God can save Paul and the other men from the storm can he also save my ship from damage and loss? A Pastor Steven Classic: No. There is always something that you are going to lose, however, you will never lose what is most important.
- Paul knows this because of how God spoke to him during the prior evening. See Acts 27: 24 to 28.
- “It will happen just as he told me” says Paul. This was the anchor verse from a sermon called “It will happen” in 2013.
- Never the less, we must run aground say Paul.
- This forms the sequel of this study of Acts.
- For all of the difficult things some have been going through, today’s message is “It had to happen.”
- We should be very glad for Paul. We learn the following from Paul:
 - We can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
 - Galatians 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
- In Acts 27, Paul is going to prison for being a preacher. He did not do anything wrong.
- Sometimes, to be in the will and purpose of God will have consequences.
- Paul seems to be communicating both a lot of faith and some level of frustration.
- While Paul is on board with 275 other prisoners, he tried tell the sailors that sailing from Crete was a bad idea. And you can hear some level of frustration in his voice and nor was he so sanctified that he was not beyond the point of telling the sailors “I told you so.”
- Despite Paul’s current station as an exceptional man of God, he still feels the need to provide reason for something.
- Like many other people, we want to know the reason for something. What is the real reason vs the apparent reason for something. For example, watch what people do vs. what they say.
- Note the two situations with Paul:
 - What is about the happen to the ship is inevitable
 - But the situation was avoidable
- We all need to deal with these two stations: Somethings that happen to us was not due to the devil. Somethings that happen to us are the result of a our own poor decisions. Both start with the letter D.
- Sometimes we quote “No weapon formed against me shall prosper (Isaiah 54:17) but yet sometimes we form weapons against ourselves. Call this self-sabotage.
- You should not have _____ says Paul.
- But as soon as Paul says this, he says but now _____.
- **Paul teaching here is profound: You can spend only so long thinking about why that you are in situation before it becomes counter-productive. This is a very difficult thing to address in your life.**
- We are probably ok when God sends us into a storm that we did not create.
- It is a little more difficult to believe in this phrase “He will deliver me” when it was something we did or did not do that put us into an adverse situation – that was the result of our own bad decisions.
- We should be grateful that it does not matter that we got into the boat or bad situation. What matters is that we realize the revelation of the love of God.
- You can call on God from any shore or any situation.
- Key point: sometimes you need God to deliver you from a situation that you created.
- Pastor Steven classic sarcasm: Just sit there and look like you don’t know what I am talking about – since this only applies to other people and not you. Is there anyone going through something right now? If not,

cart yourself to one of our outreach partners to be treated for a nearest mental illness. We all have stuff that we are dealing with.

- Paul has something better than a reason. He had a revelation.
- Recall Pastor Steven's story where he and a friend were trying to untangle a situation that they were going through together and neither understood why. It is easier if you know the reason for something as to why you are going through something. The pastoral response is the say that time will provide clarity and understanding – further along we will understand it and know all about it.
- Some of the stuff that we experience, we try to understand too soon.
- Some of the stuff that we go through, we try to make sense of too soon.
- Some of the stuff that experience in life you label it before you live through it – so that we can live through it.
- Comment to friend: In about a year from now, we will understand why this situation had to happen.
- Do you really believe that it had to happen?
- Do you really believe that it was unavoidable?
- From a preacher's perspective, this sounds like a convenient thing to say during a time of crisis – where preachers can hide behind a bible verse and say it had to happen.
- For some situations, it was extremely difficult and inappropriate to look into the eyes of a victim of abuse and say, it had to happen. Yes, preachers can quote a bible verse and say that everything is under the sovereign control of God.
- Yet, we are left asking this difficult question: If God could stop the storm and rescue the men, why didn't he?
- So, there is this tension in all of our hearts when we try to rise above it – why do we have go through this situation? We want a reason so that we know that we are going to come out on the other side stronger.
- Recall the story of Pastor Steven attempting to answer a question from his son who wanted to know the reason before doing a particular task.
- Paul says: some of this is your fault.
- **Key point. We don't need a reason. We just need a revelation as to who told you to. Your father. For some of the things that we are going through, we don't need a reason, we need a revelation – see Ephesians 3:20: "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, Upon hearing the news, Jesus left the area to be in a boat and to be alone."**
- We don't know what Island we will find ourselves on. One thing that we do know is that God showed up at this stor– for the one who is with me is able to do immeasurably more.
- We need reminder of who God like Lazarus – he is the resurrection and the light.
- We need a reminder of who God is – he is the front man in the fiery furnace.
- **We need a reminder of who God is – we don't have a reason when we are going through it.**
- We all have things that we have gone through that we do not have a reason for.
- **Whatever you are going through, there is the power of the revelation.**
- **Paul says: It will happen, I have faith in God, and I have a revelation that exceeds reason. If you live life always needing a reason, your faith will only take you so far.**
- **Even whenever you encounter a person going through a difficult situation, we should skip straight to the prayer. We should not try to provide the list of 17 reason why a person is in crisis. The reason will be**

revealed when the time comes. In the moment of crisis, the reason is not important. What is important is the response.

- What matters is your response.
- Paul says: Keep up your courage men.
- **For a someone in crisis, what they need most is a prayer and friend.**
- Later we read that the ship crashed in the island of Malta. Malta = refuge.
- See 28:1 to 10.
- **Paul and his men found out the name of the island once they got there. Theologians call this progressive revelation. It means that I don't know where I am headed, but the situation will unfold over time.**
- They got to Malta after fighting a storm for weeks.
- There are a few important points about Malta:
 - It was raining and cold – supposedly a place of refuge.
 - It was unfamiliar
 - The people did not speak the same language
- This is Malta – both unfamiliar and uncomfortable – where most of life happens by the way. Paul was going to Rome, but had to spend some time in Malta.
- In order to explain Malta, we need to go to another part of the bible. The map of Paul's missionary journey.
- Even the maps in your bible will preach to you.
- Paul is in chains but he is only chained to God's purpose.
- Paul understands: Anywhere I go, God is with me. Because I have a revelation and Paul is in a perpetual state of arrival.
- As the wind blows the ship all over the Adriatic/Mediterranean see, they landed in the tiny island of Malta.
- Have you ever been to Malta? I am sure that you have. It is strange place. A place that you never thought that would be. It is raising kids by yourself, it is looking for a job after you had one for 23 years. It is looking for a job after you invested big bucks into an expensive college education – but no one is hiring because the world is screwed up.
- **Malta is the place that you had to go but did not want to go.**
- Anyone else go to Malta? Did you get the tee shirt?
- See 28:3.
- Can we empathize with Paul for a moment? All Paul wanted to do was serve Jesus and for that he is imprisoned, saved the crew, and is ship-wrecked.
- This challenges our theology: If we served God, we will always be at peace. Yet Paul has something to say to you about this theology. And what Paul says it not through what he says but what happens to him and what he does about it.
- It is your response that matters.
- When the islanders see the snake hanging from Paul's hand, they did what all people do. They judged and applied a reason for what Paul was going through. They assumed that Paul had done something wrong and that is the reason for the snake bit.
- WE all need to live a little while. Because we can do everything the right way and you kids can still grow up to be crazy. Oh, she must not be a good Christian. Oh, he must not be faithful.
- **It is the response that matters.**
- See vs 5.

- A Pastor Steven classic (crap this is funny): Paul that preaches one of the most powerful sermons in all of the new testament. This is from the TSV version in the bible. TSV = the Taylor Swift version. “Cause the players gonna play, play, play, play, play, And the haters gonna hate, hate, hate, hate, hate, Baby, I'm just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake. I shake it off, I shake it off. Heartbreakers gonna break, break, break, break, break. And the fakers gonna fake, fake, fake, fake, fake. Baby, I'm just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake. I shake it off, I shake it off”
- Paul did not say something. He did something.
- Watch what he did, because it is what we need to.
- Paul already had a revelation that he was going to Rome. Therefore, he had the power to shake off the snake and deal with everything that was going on in Malta.
- **When you know that you are going to Rome, you can't be killed on Malta.**
- Paul says: This can't kill me. I am going to Rome.
- It had to happen because God was not done with Paul yet.
- **Nothing that people think about you, say about you, or do to you can cancel the purpose of God in your life.**
- God says you do not need to know why. You just need to know who. And God is with you.
- **Faith does not prevent you from getting bit.**
- Paul had to get bit.
- **Faith enables you to bit back. This is not good parenting, but it is good theology.**
- We all need to be more like this.
- **The proof of mature faith is not that you got through a situation. The proof of your faith is that you still serve God when the crisis is over.**
- Not that you just made it to Malta. It is that you made Malta your mission.
- Paul did not want to be in Malta. It was not his fault that he was in Malta and Paul certainly did not want to have to deal with a snake bite.
- See 28: 6 and 7.
- This is why we should never live according to the opinions of other people. People will call you Emanuel on one side and then crucify you on another.
- Lets' look at one more thing to show you the real reason that you had to experience your Malta and to be in the storm.
- **As you can see in Acts 28:7-10, what started out as a mistake turned into a miracle for the island of Malta.**
- Perhaps we should call this sermon miracles by mistake.
- After we learned that Paul did not die following a snake bite, the island of Malta concluded that Paul was indeed a special guy.
- After Paul learns of Publius' sick Dad, he now understands why he was ship wrecked on Malta. He received the revelation and the real reason that he was ship wrecked on Malta.
- The wind was controlling the boat, but God was controlling the wind.
- Do you really believe that?
- It was the wind that blew Paul to Malta. But it was for this moment that Paul came to see Publius.
- Paul says “can I see him?” But he is really sick. Paul then says, no worries. The sicker the better.
- Note there is no recorded conversation between Paul and Publius' Dad. His actions did all of the talking.
- The same hand that was bit by a snake is now releasing the healing power of God – and what Paul went through was not for nothing.

- Paul now realizes his mission.
- Most of us have been so poisoned by our situation that we miss out on the opportunity to understand our mission.
- A Pastor Steven Classic: Paul was able to treat the dad – who might have been punished for naming his kid Publius.
- As you consider why you went through what which you went through, the why does not really matter.
- For Paul, It had to happen.
- Because if Paul did not get bit, we would know that God is greater than his pain.
- **Once Paul has a revelation of who God is, Paul does not need an explanation as to why he was in this particular situation.**
- Say this: It had to happen. I did not want it to happen but it made me who I am.
- Regardless if God Did it, you did it to yourself, or the devil did it, God will use the situation for some greater purpose.
- **Paul thought that he needed Malta because he needed a place to crash. But as it turns out, from God's perspective, Malta needed Paul.**
- Yes, Paul did not choose the situation, but yet he did choose to believe.
- Because of Paul, Publius now has to cancel funeral arrangements for his Dad and open his house to heal others on the island.
- Perhaps this message was not for everybody.
- **For whomever this message is for, God wants you to hear this for some situations. It had to happen. Go back to your Malta – the place where you are stuck in. God says this: You are not stuck, you are stationed.**
- **This is when we realize that Malta can become your mission.**
- God says, go says go back to this place where you never thought that you would be (your Malta) – where the wind blew you to – this tiny little island – the place where your mistakes landed you – and at this place make a declaration – this is my Malta and I am not yet in Rome – where I am to further serve the purpose of God.
- Also make the decision to serve God on your Malta – right here – right now.
- And the whole island was healed.
- **While the crew planned for a ship wreck, God was planning for a revival.**
- Yes you are in your Malta. However, know this revelation: The son of God who I know and who I serve gave up his life for me on the cross. Get off me anxiety. Get off of me tension. Get off of me struggle.
- Closing prayer from Pastor Furtick on 7/23/2017: “Father, we receive you in this moment. We find ourselves in strange situations in our lives. We thank you for every wind the directs us – even at times we did not like it. Today we need to make a decision - right now right here – that nothing will stop Your purpose from operating in our lives. For anything that has happened our lives must now go through a filtration system of your faithfulness so that we realize what it was intended for. Bless your people today. Bless that the people release the honor of God into their lives. Bless that they release every regret. This blessing is for those that are struggling with this question: Why you are where you are - and why do we feel like the sailors that have lost their stars and their sense of guidance – being blown about and tossed about. I Pray for the end of your struggle and I pray for the end of your unbelief. If you have been on Malta and have been hurt by people instead of healing people, such that you can't see what is in front of you. Let Malta become your vision and your mission – where you no longer question why it happened – what matters is our response to this revelation. Yes, the wind might have controlled the boat – but God controls

the wind. Thank you for your sovereign hand over our lives – even in Malta. We thank you for the miracles that are in progress that we do not even know about. We thank you for the ways in which you use us so that someone else can be healed. We thank you for the faithfulness Lord in this moment. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.”