



November 12, 2023
“Hope for the Hopeless”
Acts 27:13-38
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All of us have seasons when we go through dark times. The emotional weight can be so heavy that it leaves us feeling hopeless. Hope is like oxygen—with it we thrive; without it we can die. But God is the God of hope and comfort who will help us in our time of need. In this study we will discuss six principles from Acts 27 to help us have God’s hope.

1. **Acts 27:13-38** – *“When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete. But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon. So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let her drive. And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty. When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven. And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship. On the third day we threw the ship’s tackle overboard with our own hands. Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up. But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, ‘Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, “Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.” Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. However, we must run aground on a certain island.’ Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land. And they took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found it to be fifteen fathoms. Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and*

prayed for day to come. And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, 'Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.' Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off. And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, 'Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food, and eaten nothing. Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you.' And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat. Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves. And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship. So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw out the wheat into the sea."

2. The apostle Paul gave a word of encouragement
 - a. Paul had been under arrest for two years under a charge of heresy and was being transported from Caesarea to Rome by ship to appeal his case to Caesar
 - b. The ship was caught in a heavy storm called a "Euroclydon"—also known as a "Nor'easter"—for many days, and the men aboard believed they were going to die
 - c. God had spoken a word to Paul telling him neither he nor the other men would die; Paul stood up to encourage the men and tell them the storm would not take their lives
3. Hope is critical
 - a. Dr. Curt Richter's hope experiment
 - i. In 1957, Dr. Curt Richter, an American biologist, took wild rats and placed them in cylinders filled with water and found that they would tread water for an average of sixteen minutes before they would give up and die
 - ii. Dr. Richter then did the experiment again, and right around the sixteen-minute mark, he took the rats out, dried them off, fed them, and then put them back in the water
 - iii. The rats then tread water for an average of three days before giving up
 1. The rats continued treading water because of the hope of again being removed from the cylinder
 - b. **Psalm 31:24** – *"Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the Lord."*
4. Six principles to help us have God's hope
 - a. A word of encouragement goes a long way (v. 22)

- i. Sometimes all we need is one person to speak an encouraging word
 - ii. **1 Thessalonians 5:11** - *“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”* (1984 NIV)
 - iii. **Hebrews 3:13** - *“But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”* (1984 NIV)
 - iv. **Hebrews 10:25** - *“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”* (1984 NIV)
- b. Find encouragement from God’s Word (v. 23-25)
- i. Although Paul’s experience being visited by the Lord was out of the ordinary, God has a message from us in His Word that we can access every day
 - ii. **Romans 15:4** - *“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”* (1984 NIV)
- c. Hold on to that “one promising thing” (v. 24)
- i. Sometimes looking toward something, we are anticipating can give us hope—seeing your kids grow up, writing a book, getting married, etc.
 - ii. **James 1:12** - *“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”*
- d. Pray for a new day (v. 29)
- i. **Psalms 143:8** - *“Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning, for in You do I trust; cause me to know the way in which I should walk, for I lift up my soul to You.”*
- e. Keep up your strength (v. 33-37)
- i. Do not neglect food and rest—when you do not have energy, you will feel even more hopeless
- f. Lighten the load (v. 38)
- i. When ships are facing a storm, those aboard will sometimes throw off supplies that weigh the ship down to stabilize the vessel and keep it above water
 - ii. Do not overcommit yourself—you may have to say no to some opportunities until the storm passes

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Acts 27:13-38** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Why did the men on the ship believe they were going to die? Discuss a time where you struggled to have hope. (See #2b above)

3. Discuss the significance of Dr. Curt Richter’s “hope experiment.” What does this experiment reveal to us? (See #3a above)
4. What is the importance of a “word of encouragement”? Has there ever been a time when someone spoke an encouraging word to you at “just the right moment”? (See #4a above)
5. Read [1 Thessalonians 5:11](#), [Hebrews 3:13](#), and [Hebrews 10:25](#). How can we practice encouraging others? (See #4a-ii, #4a-iii, and #4a-iv above)
6. Read [Romans 15:4](#). How does God’s Word provide hope? (See #4b above)
7. How can looking forward to “that one promising thing” or asking God for a “new day” increase our hope? (See #4c and #4d above)
8. What is the importance of keeping up our strength when we are feeling hopeless? (See #4e above)
9. What are practical ways we can “lighten the load” in seasons of hopelessness? (See #4f above)
10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)