

Bible Study Live

A Splinter of Hope Acts: 27: 18 – 25

What Does the World Say About Hope?

The way we typically use the word “hope” conveys a sense of doubt. For instance we might say – “I hope it doesn’t rain; or when responding to the question “will you go to heaven?” some might respond “I hope so. For many people hope is simply a strong wish that things work out in our favor. The world’s definition of hope carries with it a sense of uncertainty. **QUESTIONS:** What did Jessie Jackson’s famous statement: “Keep Hope Alive!”- really mean? Reverend Jackson’s words were said in attempt to encourage others to continue to strive for a certain positive outcome even though the evidence for such an outcome was scarce. When the majority of the world uses the word “hope,” it is always mixed with some doubt and uncertainty. So then, the world “hopes for the best but prepares for the worst.”

What Does Hope Mean to the Believer?

For the Christian hope takes on a much different meaning. Our hope is not anchored or supported by man-made promises – but our confidence is in Him that hath begun a good work in “us!” Because of this the concept of doubt is not a part of the Christian’s definition of the word “hope. Biblically speaking hope is a confident expectation or assurance based upon a sure foundation.

Faith and Hope: READ Hebrews 11:1 – 2

One translation reads: “Now, faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we cannot see with our eyes.” The King James Version of the bible reads: “Now, faith is the *substance* of things hoped for...” The word substance can be interpreted to mean “foundation.” **READ: Luke 15: 13 – 17**

QUESTION: According to this parable of Jesus, exactly what was it that the Prodigal Son “wasted?” So, if we apply the previously given definition of hope, we can see that what the Prodigal lost was not just his money but he lost his foundation. In the absence of hope in God we have no foundation for our faith to stand on. Practically speaking faith is a noun and hope is a verb. Faith is the confidence in the thing we are hoping for. **READ: Rom 8:24** Hope is a strong confidence that something that hasn’t happen will actually happen – so then hope reaches out expecting to encounter that which has not yet been seen.

The Christian’s hope is constructed upon the confidence in the word of God. All of the individuals mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11 were able to produce such miraculous actions because of the confidence they had in their God.

QUESTION: For a Christian, is hope a feeling? Spiritually speaking, hope is a divinely constructed foundation built upon God’s promises. Things like fear and discouragement are feelings and occur naturally within the human experience. But biblical hope does not occur naturally, but godly hope must be created within the heart of a believer. Hope is not a “feeling” hope is a “knowing.”

Hope’s Struggle

The Christian’s hope is constantly under attack. In many ways, the world attempts to undermine our hope in God by trying to convince us to put our hope in something or someone else. We are encouraged to have hope in America, or hope in a new medical procedure or hope in some new financial venture.

QUESTION: How would hope in these types of things be detrimental to our “godly hope?”

Hope Can Come in Pieces

In the story we read in Acts chapter 27, we can see several factors that converged together to cause the author Luke to write:

Acts 27:20

And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. KJV Let's examine some of the factors present in this story that can cause our hope to be taken away.

1) **Acts: 27:20** The realities of life can cause you to lose your hope. Prior to the ship ever leaving port, the Apostle Paul had warned the captain and the crew not to go out to sea because God had warned him that a great storm would overtake them. I've often said, "if you don't want to live with reality, then , at some point, reality will come and live with you." **QUESTIONS:** Can trying to keep a positive attitude prevent you from being effected by the reality of what you are experiencing? Is trusting in God the same as keeping a positive attitude? 2) **Acts 27: 18 – 20** Experiencing a great loss can make you lose your hope. **QUESTIONS:** What were the sailors willing to sacrifice in order to try to improve their circumstances? The scripture tells us that these sailors were willing to part with their most prized possessions if it meant they could improve their odds for survival. **QUESTIONS:** What sacrifices have you made in your life trying to make things better for you or for others? Do such sacrifices always work out as you expected?

Hope In the Word of God READ: Acts 27: 23 – 32

Hope came to Apostle Paul through the angelic visitation. It was during that divine visit that Paul received a word from the Lord... "fear not!" Paul shared this word with the captain and his crew; emphasizing that fact that "...I believe God!..." – Acts 27:25. **QUESTION:** How do you think the captain and the crew might have responded to Paul's advice? – what were the shipman attempting to do according to verse 30? What was Paul's final word to everyone in verse 31? How did the shipman respond in verse 32? Paul instructed the shipman and the passengers to "abide in the ship." The sailors then confirmed their faith by cutting the ropes to the lifeboats which would have been their only physical means of escaping the ship. Their action showed they had committed to the word that God had given Paul.

Lord, I Did What You Said... Now What? READ Acts 27:41

After taking the necessary actions of cutting away the lifeboats and committing to "abide in the ship" as the Apostle Paul had instructed – what happened? What happened was; the ship ran into a big rock and ended up shattered into pieces! **QUESTIONS:** Why would God tell the people to stay in something that He must have known would eventually be totally destroyed? God had instructed the people to "abide in the ship" but now the ship had been shredded! What were they to do now? **QUESTION:** Why would God allow the very thing you have been depending on to be taken away? It is quite possible that the shipman and the other passengers had come to believe that it was the ship itself that was keeping them from the perils of the stormy sea and by removing the ship, God would clearly demonstrate that it wasn't the ship that was keeping them alive- it was God himself!

God Is A Keeper READ Acts 27: 42 – 44

In these passages, Satan's real plans are revealed. All of these things were orchestrated by Satan to try to kill the Apostle Paul thus ending his ministry. Paul was on his way to Rome and was later to be imprisoned in Rome. It was while Paul was in prison that he wrote the majority of his epistles. Had Satan been successful in killing Paul at sea we would not have the blessing of his writings in our bible today.

QUESTION: According to Acts 27:44, how did the survivors make it? Satan wants to take away all your hope so he can destroy your faith and render you useless for God's kingdom work. Just as God kept the Apostle Paul, God can keep you as well. Keep your hope firmly anchored to your faith and don't succumb to the stormy circumstances surrounding you!