

## HOPE

**“When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved” (Acts 27:20)**

It was a terrible storm with winds of hurricane force. The ship was swept along by such strong winds that they could not steer and were at the mercy of the storm.. When blown under the lee of a small island named Cauda they were able to hoist a life boat on board and pass ropes around the ship to hold it together. Fearing they would be driven aground on the sandbars of Syrtis they lowered the anchor. Being battered by the tempest the next day they began throwing the cargo overboard. The third day they also began throwing the ships tackle overboard with their own hands. After many days of not being able to eat and not being able to see the sun or stars, they finally gave up all hope of being saved.

The Psalmist described a similar situation and wrote: **“For he (the Lord) spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits’ end. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress” (Ps. 107 25 - 28).**

“Encourage” and “discourage” both involve courage. One gives it and the other takes it away. In the midst of the storm God sent an angel to stand by Paul and give him hope. The angel assured him that he would not die in the storm but would live to stand before Caesar. Further, because Paul was on the ship God graciously decided to save everyone. Note! It was the presence of Paul on that ship that saved everybody. The angel said to Paul **“God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you” (Acts 27:24)**. Based on this good news Paul told them to keep up their “courage” for he had faith in God that it would be just as the angel promised.

The angel did add, however, that they would run aground on a certain island. This proves that they were not lost at all. God was directing the storm and guiding the ship all the time. In addition to appearing before Caesar, Paul also had a divine appointment with the chief official of that island whose name was Publius. His father was sick and God sent Paul there to heal him. After Paul healed that men the **“rest of the sick on the island came and were cured” (Acts 28:9)**.

Now the sailors had both hope and courage. Without hope they would have given up and without them the ship would not have been saved (Acts 27:31).

Paul reminded the Ephesians that when they were separated from Christ, excluded from the citizenship in Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, they were “without hope and without God” (Eph. 2:11, 12). This delineates a dramatic difference between believers and unbelievers. Both are mistreated. Both get sick. Both suffer. Both die. But those in Christ do not grieve like those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). In fact, it is our hope that saves us (Rom. 8:24). While unbelievers lose courage and quit, we rejoice in hope (Rom. 12:12) and our hope makes us steadfast because we know that as we have been made partakers of sufferings, we shall also be partakers of reward.

Take another look at the dispirited sailors who had given up all hope of being saved. Like galley slaves in chains of deep despair they were paralyzed by their discouragement. Then came that message from heaven. Would they believe it or not? Evidently they did! It was hope that gave them the energy to take soundings on the depth of the water. As famished and fatigued as they were it was hope that “encouraged” them to eat something after fasting for 14 days. Those last hours were critical for their survival and it was hope that enabled those weary sailors to do their duties with such efficiency that every one of the 276 people on board came safely to shore. Don’t lose hope!