

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: **Acts: To Be Continued**
TITLE: **A Theology of Hope**
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In Acts, Luke shows Jesus' friends continuing the kingdom mission that Jesus started in his earthly life and ministry. The Book of Acts is all about Jesus' followers continuing his mission in the world. We are the ones God has entrusted with carrying the message of Jesus forward.

In this message, we take another look at Acts 26, in which Paul is making his defense to King Agrippa.

Paul considers HOPE to be the reason he is on trial.

- Israel's ancient HOPE was for a return to Eden (Isaiah 65-66).
- Paul has HOPE because he believes Jesus' resurrection means the New Eden has begun.
- His point to Agrippa (v. 8): If Jews believe God is going to raise his covenant people on that final day, why is it so hard to believe he has already started the great resurrection with Jesus as his Messiah?

Paul's hope, mission, and purpose are not rooted in experience or chance, but rather in God's promises in scripture.

Festus is listening as Paul speaks to Agrippa and finally can't take it anymore, saying Paul is out of his mind to believe such things. But Paul responds respectfully, because he considers every single interaction to be a gospel-opportunity.

Agrippa doesn't see why Paul should be condemned, saying he could go free except that he appealed to Caesar. But he doesn't understand that simply "getting out of jail" is not Paul's ultimate goal. Rather, Paul's ultimate desire is to extend resurrection hope to all peoples, specifically the Gentiles. Chains and trials couldn't shackle Paul's HOPE!

So how can we have what Paul has? What is this lasting HOPE supposed to look and feel like?

- 1. If death is our final fear, and if resurrection hope has dealt with death, then there is no fear or despair that will have the last word.**
2. Because of Jesus, things like worry and doubt, your past, cancer, anger and pride, politics, or finances don't get the last word!

3. If you are in Christ, the strongest lusts that lure you and the deepest despairs that discourage you... *they will not win.*
4. **True HOPE does not yield inactivity. Instead, true HOPE should animate both passion and mission.**
5. Optimism waits to see what will be... But HOPE acts prior to the proof.
6. Your level of glad participation in continuing Jesus' mission is directly proportional to how you grasp the surety of Christian HOPE.
7. In every context in which we live... God has called us to bring the grace and truth of Jesus to bear on the hopelessness around us... and that should humble us and excite us!

Will you live your life jumping from false hope to false hope—discouraged and confused? Or will you give yourself fully to the despair-killing, sin-silencing, mission-empowering HOPE of Jesus? In asking us to give ourselves fully to this HOPE, Jesus is simply asking us to *follow after him.*

For Discussion:

1. When you think about passionately pursuing life and mission with Jesus, does that feel more like a “have to” than a “get to”? Does it feel burdensome? If it does, then there's possibility that you're not understanding hope correctly.
2. If people had to write about your faith and hope in Jesus, how would they describe it?
3. How can you bring the grace and truth of Jesus to the hopelessness around you?