

Understanding the Old Testament
Message #5 of 8
“Hope”

Read Romans 15:4-6

- **For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (5) **May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, (6) that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.****

Last week:

- Encouragement – using God’s plan within the Feasts of the Lord – that God WILL keep His promise of Jesus’ Second Coming.

Today’s message is on a simple word: **HOPE**.

- Right there in v4.
- That through the encouragement of the Old Testament Scriptures we might have HOPE.
- And there are MANY examples to choose from!
 - Abraham, Joseph, Joshua, Esther, Daniel, David, Hezekiah, Nehemiah... the list is long.

MORE SPECIFICALLY, Today’s Objective:

- **We leave here today with a greater “Attitude of Hope”**
- Genuine HOPE includes more than just wishing something to be true.
 - HOPE – as the Hebrew language defines it – is much deeper than that.

Defining HOPE:

- The Hebrew word translated “hope” more than another other Hebrew word is:
- **qâvâh = to bind together (perhaps by twisting), that is, collect; (figuratively) to expect: - gather (together), look, patiently, tarry, wait (for, on, upon). - Total occurrences: 49 (83 in all forms)**
- It is often translated “wait”:
 - **Psa 27:14 “Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!”**
 - **In today’s English, “to wait” means the condition of staying in one place until we receive more clarity to move.**
 - It has lost any “results will follow” in its meaning.
 - It’s almost become a negative word to an impulsive generation.
 - Why? Because it has come to mean “do nothing.”
 - My dad, in the car to bad drivers: “Do SOMETHING, even if it’s wrong!”
 - But in the Hebrew...
 - **Isa 40:31 “they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”**
 - There is a direct RESULT tied to the waiting.
 - And in that is where we see HOPE as a better translation.
 - HOPE carries with it the expectancy of action to follow.
 - Whereas “wait” today could mean nothing will follow.
 - qâvâh’s noun form is literally translated “cord”

- One that is to be twisted together with, like a braid.
- Therefore, to “wait” or “hope” upon the Lord is to be braided together with Him.
- It means to move with HIM, stay with HIM, to KNOW Him so well, your movement only happens in harmony with His.
 - Like a shadow
 - A flock of birds
 - And archer and his arrow
 - God is the archer, I’m the arrow
 - He desires to fashion me perfectly, straight, sharp, all my feathers aligned... He shoots, and I hit the target He aimed for.
- **Psa 37:34 Wait for the LORD and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land**

3 Attitudes of “Hope” in the OT:

- Naomi (Ruth)
- Saul (1 Samuel 10-13)
- Joshua (“Chazaq amats!”)

Naomi...

- I taught on the book of Ruth 3 years ago this month (Nov/2014).
- Now RUTH, Naomi’s daughter-in-law, is an awesome example of HOPE.
- But for my first “example” of hoping in the Lord, I want to show a not-so-awesome example.
- Naomi fits that well.
 - Now, don’t get me wrong – in many ways, she was a wonderful woman.
 - She followed her husband into a foreign land
 - But then lost her husband and two sons
 - Her daughters-in-law have no children (her family line ends with her)
 - Socially, this was akin to banishment like Cinderella in the tower.
 - She felt useless, unloved, and abandoned by God Himself.
 - She decides to head back to Judah, where her extended family still lived.
 - Content to live in a hopeless state – but also to communicate that hopeless state.
 - **“The hand of the LORD has gone out against me.” (v13)**
 - She even desires her name to be permanently changed from “Naomi” which means “pleasant,” to Mara which means “Bitter.”
- Are you aware that hopelessness is contagious?
 - Just like the life of the party can get a room going, an attitude of hopelessness can kill it.
 - Wanna suck the life out of another person?
 - Whine about how nothing goes right for you.
 - No matter what you do, today is gonna be bad.
 - And when someone tries to cheer you up, just rinse and repeat.
- **Prov. 18:21 says “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”**
 - The book of Ruth doesn’t allude to how her peers received what she said, or that they tried to comfort her, but I imagine they did.
 - And I imagine – based on her attitude and the implications in the text – that she simply wouldn’t be comforted for a long while.
 - She genuinely was ready to live her life out as one rejected by God.

- Fastforward to the end of Ruth, chapter 4, where Boaz and Ruth marry and have a son.
 - Naomi is renowned by her friends as an example of one whom God restores.
 - She is the beautiful, redeemed woman at the Ball with the prince, minus the Fairy Godmother and the slippers.
 - And one of the things I love about God – nobody ever refers to her as Mara!
 - While she did her best to pull people into her hopelessness, God used her story to reveal his love!
 - To her credit, she began to slowly come out of this poor attitude as the book moves along, so God uses her as a poor example for what HOPE looks like, but a great example of what His restoration looks like!

King Saul...

- If anyone had “it all,” it was King Saul.
 - He was tall, dark, handsome.
 - He was from a strong, well respected Hebrew family of great wealth.
 - He was in the right place at the right time, when he met Samuel.
 - God appointed him the first King over Israel.
- But a deeper look into Saul’s character reveals an attitude of insecurity.
 - And this insecurity poured out and soaked into the people under his charge.
 - Given the choice between what God said was right, and what Saul thought might be right, Saul continually chose the latter.
 - **Saul would SAY His hope was in God, but his actions betrayed his words.**
 - Imagine being the king of God’s people, but leaning on your own understanding.
 - That’s King Saul.
 - That breeds an attitude of insecurity.
 - And we see it in how Israel’s army responded to Saul...
- Regarding HOPE, let’s look at 1 Samuel 10 thru 13
 - Saul apparently did not exude HOPE at all.
 - He had a sort of false humility about him.
 - Even just before he was anointed king by Samuel, Saul was hiding!
 - In c10, Samuel – a priest and prophet of the Lord – tells Saul to go down to take the Israelite army to a camp and be ready to take out Israel’s enemy, the Philistines. But to WAIT for Samuel – that he be there in 7 days to offering sacrifices to the Lord before the army advanced.
 - Now look at the people’s attitude toward the situation:
 - Keep in mind, they’d HEARD Samuel say God anointed Saul and would use him to defeat the Philistines.
 - But in v8, it says, “**all the people followed him trembling.**”
 - And in v9, “Saul waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and **the people were scattering from him.**”
 - At a very obvious level, the King of Israel’s confidence in the Lord was visibly lacking!
 - And that very night, Saul performed the sacrifices Samuel was to make, himself.
 - In the Mosaic Covenant in which he lived, that was a major offense to God.
 - And Saul KNEW that.
 - Simple: if you weren’t from the line of Levi, you weren’t a priest.
 - Saul was not. Samuel was.

- Imagine the men in the army witnessing this!
 - Men: Dude, what are you doing???
 - Saul: Relax. Old man Samuel is late, and who knows if the Philistines won't attack right now? God will understand I'm simply seeking his favor before we go to war – a victory He already promised!
 - Sound defensible?
 - It should!
 - We do this all the time.
 - ***"God gets me. He understands my true intent. He'll forgive me if I'm wrong."***
 - The kicker: All of the above are true statements, even in the Old Covenant of the Law.
 - The OT says God knows the heart, AND that He forgives even the greatest of transgressions.
 - But our sins have consequences.
 - Psalm 99:8 says you (are) a forgiving God (to individuals), but an avenger of their wrongdoings.
- Back to Saul and the army:
 - In walks Samuel, "What have you done?"
 - Saul gives his poor defense, and Samuel says (paraphrase), "Because you have disobeyed God, God cannot use you as His king."
 - That's the consequence.
 - And Samuel prophesies that God will raise up another king.
 - Two chapters later, David is introduced to us.
- Saul had every reason to hope in God.
 - And I argue that he – were he here to defend himself – would say that he DID!
 - But when God was LATE, or when Saul was given the choice between God's way and His way (especially when his reputation or very life was at stake), Saul chose His own way.
 - **And this character – this ATTITUDE of "hope when it serves ME" – was obvious to those he was charged to lead and protect.**

Now let's compare and contrast Naomi and Saul to **Joshua**.

- Can anybody guess what the Hebrew phrase "Chazaq Amats!" means?
 - If not, I'm gonna tease it for a bit...
- Joshua is introduced in Exodus 17, leading the fight against the Amalekites in the valley while Moses' arms are held up by Aaron and Hur.
- He is then referred to as Moses' assistant in Exodus 32
- In Numbers 13 he is identified as one of the 12 spies commissioned to check out Canaan, and brings back a good report (with Caleb) of God's mighty providence and favor over Israel to take the land.
 - He is young, fired up, and FULLY hopes in the God of Israel.
 - "The LORD is with us! Do not fear!" (Numbers 14:9)
 - But perhaps you know the story:
 - The ten older, wiser spies bring a fearful report.
 - Israel trembles in fear of giants and an impossible task.
 - And they pick up stones to kill Joshua and Caleb!

- God's is furious at this final act of hopelessness and lack of trust in Him, and he turns Israel back for the purpose of letting the older generation DIE OFF before he calls them again to take the land 38.5 years later.
 - And the leader is... JOSHUA!
 - Now, twice Joshua has "**Hazaq amats!**" spoken over him.
 - Once by Moses just before He died.
 - Then by God in Joshua chapter 1.
 - "**Be strong and courageous!**"
 - And each time it was spoken over him, it regarded God's hand with him.
 - "I am doing this – only be strong and courageous!"
 - And we see that Joshua got the message so engrained in him, he famously spoke it to Israel as a battle cry to take the land in Joshua 1.
 - Be strong and courageous in the LORD – He will have His victory!
 - And so He did!
 - Among all the ways the Bible could describe Joshua – one of the greatest leaders who ever lived – it's what's MISSING that is truly remarkable:
 - His size, his looks, his wealthy family background...
 - Unlike Saul, if Joshua DID have these things, the Bible doesn't see fit to mention them.
 - Rather, Joshua was everything Saul was NOT:
 - He listened well to his mentors, did exactly what the Lord commanded, waited for the Lord before He moved, was confident, expecting victory, trusted God, and inspired the people with HOPE, and never allowed the "what ifs?" to interrupt what God assured him He was doing.
 - I want to be like Joshua!
 - After the Lord gave him victory in Jericho, the first and biggest wave to hurdle on their way to taking back the promised land, Joshua gathered the people, read the book of the Law to them – with all the instructions of the Mosaic Covenant, and said, "Choose this day whom you will serve! As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."
 - I imagine myself rising up with all of Israel shouting, "Yes – we will serve the Lord!"
 - ***Jos 24:31 Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel.***
 - What an amazing example of HOPE!
 - An entire generation AND the generation after Joshua served the Lord WELL, with the great implication that Joshua's example of HOPE and TRUST as the catalyst.

So there we have **3 Attitudes regarding HOPE:**

- **Naomi** lived most of her life as an example of hopelessness.
 - A Debbie Downer (for those in my generation to understand)
 - She painted a distorted picture of God to her friends and family – a god that cannot redeem, whose hands are tied, who can't bring beauty from ashes.
- **Saul** lived most of his life as an example of hope in his own self-worth.
 - God's clear path was well understood by him, but He trusted in his own wisdom and plans to the detriment of God's purpose being fulfilled in his life.

- The distorted picture he painted: Say the right things about God, but when push comes to shove, do what YOU think is best. Hope in YOURSELF. Look after #1. Self preservation.
- And the result was followers and subordinates living in fear, insecurity, defeat...
- And **Joshua** – exuding confidence not in himself, but in Jehovah God.
 - Uplifting, modeling, never speaking death, but speaking LIFE and victory.
 - Not ad nauseum – speaking words without action.
 - But living the truth by his actions for others to follow.

So **Which one are you?**

- **Do you have a little Naomi in you?**
 - Your favorite kind of party is a pity party?
 - While you ponder that, is your immediate defense something like “Well, I have to be REAL with my feelings!”
 - In which case I would challenge two things:
 - 1) What do you think is REAL in this life?
 - 2) Yes, share your feelings **with God** – not always with others.
- **Are you viewed by others as a Saul?**
 - Ruddy, handsome, got it all in front of you...
 - But also insecure, placing your hope in several sources BEFORE God?
 - Grasping what God wants to do, but sabotaging His ways with your own?
 - The middle ground between being a Naomi and a Saul is if you do this:
 - Complain about life’s problems, and follow it up with, “But God is in control!”
 - DISCLAIMER:
 - All of us have those moments, right?
 - MOMENTS being the key word.
 - Moments of hopelessness, insecurities, “where is God?” – they DO happen!
 - I’m trying to encourage you to not be DEFINED by how you FEEL in those moments.
 - Let it out – TO GOD most of the time – and then live in an attitude of HOPE.
- **Be a Joshua!**
 - For your own sake – health, walk of faith, and looking expectantly to the LORD constantly.
 - But also for the sake of others watching you.
 - Jesus once asked his followers: “Who do people say that I am?”
 - If it’s cool for God to ask that question, it’s cool for us, right?
 - How do people view you when it comes to your HOPE?
 - Do you not wish they would answer, “You’re like a modern day Joshua. You constantly challenge me to trust God for big things and small things. If you ever do complain, it’s behind closed doors to God Himself. And it teaches me to go to God with all my emotions – but above all, to trust in His victories and blessings all my days.”

(next) Therefore, I set that challenge before you via this summary:

- Know the Lord and the Covenant of Grace in which you live.

- Don't sweep your feelings about your circumstances under the rug, but speak to HIM about them, and allow His truth to wash over you.
- Make "in this world you will have trouble, but take heart, Jesus has overcome the world" one of your life verses. Not dwelling on the first part, but the middle "take heart" part, because the END is true!
- And in so doing, model HOPE well to all people around you.

Let me close with a NT verse from 1 Peter that addresses leaders, young people, and EVERYONE:

1 Peter 5:2-10, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."

Go and be the church!