Title: **"Unless These Men Stay": God Promises Good and Then Threatens Bad?**
Text: **Acts 27:21-32**

Find the sermon manuscript to follow along with online at mercyhillchurch.org.

Big Idea

In our text, God promises good and then threatens bad. He seems to give with one hand then take back with the other. What are we to make of this? How reliable are the promises and purposes of God really? How secure are we in his love?

1. A Jarring Tension

In vv. 22-25, Paul says that there will be no loss of life. He says that he heard it from God. He says it will play out exactly as he has been told. And then, just a few verses later, Paul seems to be backtracking on all of that: "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved" (v. 31).

Which is it?! Are they going to be saved, or are they going to die? Are the people on this ship going to make it to shore, or are they all going belly up out at sea? Is God going to be true to his prophetic word and promise, or is everything up in the air and subject to the whim and will of man? Does God make good on what he graciously gives, or can he just as easily take it back? Does he speak out of both sides of his mouth? Does he give with one hand and take back with another? Are we preserved by grace, or can a few bad actors and a few bad deeds undo it all? Does he keep us, or do we somehow have to keep ourselves?

Can a few renegade sailors really nullify the promises and upend the plans of almighty God for us? How secure are we really?!

2. An Attempted Resolution

On the one hand, we do not want to say that the certainty of God fulfilling his promise and purpose for us means our choices and actions don't matter. This would be overplaying his sovereignty to the neglect of my responsibility. But, on the other hand, we cannot go so far in this other direction—respecting the legitimacy of human choice and action—that we somehow come to see God himself as subordinate to us in the process. This would be overplaying human responsibility to the neglect of divine sovereignty.

My sense of it is that, while human actions do matter, and the warnings and threats from God in Scripture are real, these warnings are actually part of the means whereby our sovereign God keeps things moving forward according to his good plan and purpose. Considering Acts 27 in particular, if you noticed, ironically, he uses the warning of v. 31 as a means of fulfilling his initial promise back in vv. 22-25. The warnings and threats he issues are not an indication that his promises and plans are vulnerable or up in the air in some way. No! These warnings and threats are, in truth, part of the way he goes about ensuring the fulfillment of his promises and plans.

Example #1: Exodus 32

Example #2: Romans 8 and 11

Example #3: Jude

Whatever storm you may be facing today—however wind-blown and wave-tossed you feel—in Jesus there is an anchor for your soul, ballast for your heart and mind, and bedrock for your feet. If, indeed, you are in Christ then you are secure today, tomorrow, and forevermore. Don't overlook the warnings. But don't overplay them either. Let them drive you back to God and his great and unchanging promises. You are responsible. Your actions matter. But he is still sovereign. And he will not let you go!

Reflection Questions

- Have you ever noticed all the warnings strung throughout Scripture? How have you interpreted them alongside the promises of God? Try to give an example or two. How might today's sermon help you read and apply them a little differently?

WELCOME

SCAN TO FILL OUT A CONNECTION CARD

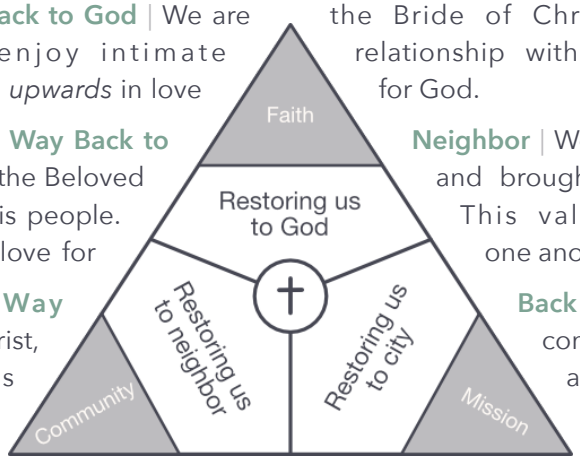
Give your offering online at mercyhillchurch.org/give or place it in the dropbox at the back.

Our Mission & Values

Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.

FAITH: The Way Back to God | We are the Bride of Christ, created and redeemed to enjoy intimate relationship with him. This value presses our church *upwards* in love for God.

COMMUNITY: The Way Back to Neighbor | We are the Family of Christ, adopted in the Beloved and brought into covenantal relationship with his people. This value presses our church *inwards* in love for one another.



MISSION: The Way Back to City | We are the Embassy of Christ, commissioned by the Savior to be his ambassadors. This value presses our church *outwards* in love for the unbelieving.

Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service–it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!

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MERCY HILL

Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

Thanksgiving Sunday - November 29th!

At Mercy Hill, we are now officially dubbing the Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend (11/29): "Thanksgiving Sunday"! Not all that creative, we know. But, nevertheless, it is so important. Our heart for this Sunday is that we would together, as a church, stop and celebrate all that God has done for each one of us personally over the past year. Thanksgiving is not just a meal we eat with family and friends. It's something we do as God's people in light of who he is and what he's done for us in Jesus. So we want to "do" thanksgiving as a church. Here are a few things you can look forward to during this special service:

- We'll have a shorter sermon focusing on giving thanks to God.
- We'll tap some in our community to share their "thanksgiving" with the rest of us (filling out the form linked below will help us identify who might share).
- We'll open up the mic and let others share as God leads.
- This will be a family service (no kids ministry) and we'll get the kids involved in giving thanks along with us!

To fill out the "Thanksgiving Sunday" form, please scan the QR code below and find the appropriate link.

For any questions, please reach out to Joey at joey@mercyhillchurch.org.

Ladies Christmas Tea - December 5th

Short Term Missions Application - Now Available!

Scan the QR code below for more info and clickable content!

SCAN FOR THE SUNDAY SIDEBAR

A digital space designed to supplement your Sunday Service experience.