

“And He Took Courage”

We come together not only for the purpose of worshiping God, but also for encouraging and building one another up (1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 10:25). Acts 28:15 says, *“And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.”* Paul had just arrived in Italy after his arduous voyage from Caesarea. He had great anxiety and discouragement since it had been so long since Paul had received word about his brethren. However, he found them well and resumed his journey with an eager and buoyant hope. Paul spoke a number of times of Christians who had refreshed his spirit. We are going to examine six traits that encouraged Paul when he saw them in his brethren.

He Took Courage Seeing Brethren Of Like Faith

In Romans 1:11-12 Paul longed to see the Roman brethren because their faith would encourage him. In 2 Peter 1:1, the apostle wrote to those who had received a faith of equal standing with the apostles through their careful study and conduct of life. Nothing is more encouraging than spending time with brethren in Christ. They lift and refresh our spirits because we share one of the greatest bonds God ever created (Romans 12:10).

He Took Courage Seeing Brethren Rightfully Praised

The Roman brethren were worthy of praise because their faith was being proclaimed throughout the whole world (Romans 1:8). As Paul concluded the letter, he reiterated the great faith and obedience of those brethren (Romans 16:19). Our purpose should always be one of reproof and rebuking where necessary, but we also need to be praising where necessary. We need to know that we sometimes we do things right.

He Took Courage Seeing Brethren Concerned

Galatians 6:2 gives us a command to bear one another's burdens. This is an excessive weight that needs the help of other children of God. John asserted that we demonstrate the love of God within us by how we help needy Christians (1 John 3:17). The Lord's people are to be compassionate. We need to be diligent to have a tender heart toward those who struggle with the trials of this life. Let us not close our heart

against them.

He Took Courage Seeing Brethren Unashamed

In 2 Timothy 1:12-16 Paul gives commands to follow the truth and cites examples of both those who held fast and those who fell away. The only way the Lord's church will expand is through the hard work of its members who are unashamed to teach the gospel to the lost. It is disgraceful to see how many "churches" try to market the gospel as they would market a car and to make churches as "user-friendly" as possible. The truth which will save people's souls is sometimes a hard pill to swallow and deliver.

He Took Courage Seeing Brethren Being Thoughtful

Paul outlined the humility of mind necessary for a Christian and then gave Christ as the perfect example (Philippians 2:3-5). In Philippians 4:15-17 Paul commended the Philippians for their participation with him in the spreading of the gospel. It was not the money which he needed, but he was appreciative of the gift because it taught the Philippians about the grace of God. When working with Paul, their gracious spirit would grow to even greater heights. God wants sacrifice, not self-centeredness. The quicker we lose ourselves the quicker we will our fellow man well.

He Took Courage Seeing Brethren Do The Unexpected

In 2 Corinthians 8:3-5 Paul was truly touched by the gift of the churches of Macedonia. They had a genuine concern and deep liberality, even though they were in poverty themselves. In Acts 2:44-45, we read of brethren who took these sacrificing steps because they wanted to, not because they were forced. It thrills the heart to see brethren act in a manner which would please the Lord. Thankfully, the Lord's body is full of brothers and sisters in Christ who are willing to go above and beyond to help those in need.

Conclusion

Let's encourage one another and make sure our lives reflect all the good qualities of the Lord's people. When we learn to associate with brethren of like faith, praise what is good, be concerned for the welfare of others, be unashamed to proclaim the true gospel, be thoughtful and do the unexpected, we grow. The world is so full of evil and how refreshing it is to surround ourselves with men and women whose characters reflect the

supreme character, Jesus Christ. It is only through living according to this example that we become like the Lord (Romans 8:29).

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