

“And He Took Courage”

Introduction. Encouragement is a major function for Christians (1 Thessalonians 5:11). We come together not only for the purpose of worshipping God, but also for encouraging and building one another up (Hebrews 10:25).

In Acts 28:15, Paul had just arrived in Italy after his long and arduous voyage from Caesarea. He naturally would have great anxiety and discouragement since he did not know if the Romans would still be faithful or if persecution had driven them from their homes. However, he found them well and resumed his journey with an eager and buoyant hope.

The word “courage” means “confidence” and is used in Acts 23:11 where the Lord told Paul to take courage in prison and in John 16:33 where Jesus told His disciples to be of good cheer. We are going to examine six items that encouraged Paul when he saw them in his brethren. They will encourage us when we see them in our brethren, too.

I. ***He Took Courage Seeing Brethren Of Like Faith***

- A. In Romans 1:11-12 Paul longed to see the Roman brethren because their faith would encourage him (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:18; 2 Timothy 1:16). He could likewise refresh the Roman’s spirit (Romans 15:32).
- B. In 2 Peter 1:1 Peter wrote to those who had received a faith of equal standing with the apostles through their careful study and conduct of life. Titus was Paul’s “son after the common faith” and we all share that “common faith” (1:4).
- C. Nothing is more encouraging than spending time with brethren in Christ (2 Corinthians 7:13). They lift and refresh our spirits because we share the greatest bond God created (Philemon 7). Working with non-Christians is depressing. We need the encouragement that being around brethren of like faith provides (Romans 12:10).

II. ***He Took Courage Seeing Brethren Rightfully Praised***

- A. The Roman brethren were worthy of praise because their faith was being proclaimed throughout the whole world (Romans 1:8).
- B. As Paul concluded the letter, he reiterated the great faith and obedience of those brethren (Romans 16:19).
- C. Our purpose should always be one of reproof and rebuke where necessary (2 Timothy 4:2), but we also need to be praising where necessary. We need to know that we sometimes do what is right and are provoked to do it more (Hebrews 10:24)!

III. *He Took Courage Seeing Brethren Concerned*

- A. 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.
- B. John asserted that we demonstrate the love of God within us by how we help other Christians in their time of need (1 John 3:17).
- C. The Lord's people are to be compassionate, just like Jesus (Matthew 14:14). We need to be diligent to have a tender heart toward those who struggle with the trials of this life. The greatest compassion we can show is to teach and invite the lost (Matthew 9:36-38).

IV. *He Took Courage Seeing Brethren Unashamed*

- A. In 2 Timothy 1:12-16 Paul gives commands to follow the truth and cites examples of both those who held fast to the standard of sound words and those who fell away.
- B. The only way the Lord's church will expand is through the hard work of its members who are unashamed to present the full gospel message to those around them. Unfortunately, some Christians will stand for everything as long as they can stand in a closet!
- C. It is disgraceful to see how many "churches" try to market the gospel as they would market a car and to make churches into a "user-friendly" commodity. The truth which will save people's souls is sometimes a hard pill to swallow and deliver.

V. *He Took Courage Seeing Brethren Being Thoughtful*

- A. Paul outlined the humility of mind necessary for a Christian and then gave Christ as the perfect example (Philippians 2:3-5).
- B. 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.
- C. All of the gospel embraces the tenant of viewing others as more important than ourselves. God wants sacrifice, not self-centeredness. The quicker we lose ourselves the quicker we will start living appropriately with our fellow man.

VI. *He Took Courage Seeing Brethren Do The Unexpected*

- A. 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 poor.
- B. In Acts 2:44-45 brethren sacrificed because they wanted to, not because they were forced. They wanted to make sure the poor received proper care.

C. It thrills the heart to see brethren act in a manner which pleases the Lord. We live in a cynical society and it is easy to take the approach that brethren will only do the least amount they have to, but that is not true. The Lord's body is full of brothers and sisters in Christ who are willing to go above and beyond the call of duty 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.

How refreshing it is to surround ourselves with people whose character reflects the supreme character, Jesus Christ, in a world so full of evil. It is only through living according to this example that we become like the Lord. If you have never obeyed the gospel, and these qualities appeal to you and you are ready be forgiven, obey today. If you are a Christian but have stumbled into a life that negates these attributes, then you need to repent and come back to God.