

# “And He Took Courage”

**Introduction.** Encouragement is a major function for Christians (1 Thessalonians 5:11). We come together to worship God, and to encourage and build each 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 didn't 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 Jesus told Paul to take courage in prison and John 16:33 where Jesus told His disciples to be of good cheer. We're going to examine six items that encouraged Paul when he saw them in his brethren. They'll 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 (cp. 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 (2 Corinthians 7:13). They lift and refresh our spirits because we share the greatest bond God created (Philemon 7). We recognize that some Christians aren't what they should be, but constant exposure to non-Christians can wear on us. We need the encouragement that being around people of 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 time together will include reproofing and rebuking (2 Timothy 4:2), but we also need to praise when necessary. We need to know that we sometimes do what's right and are provoked to do it more (Hebrews 10:24, 32-39)!

## ***III. He Took Courage Seeing Brethren Concerned***

- A. Galatians 6:2 tells us to bear one another's burdens (John 13:34; James 2:8). A “burden” is an excessive weight that needs the help of other saints to shoulder (cp. Matthew 20:12; Galatians 6:17).
- B. John asserted that we demonstrate the love of God 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 8:16-17; cp. 14:14). We're to have a tender heart toward those who struggle with the

burdens of life (cp. 1 Kings 17:8-16). However, the greatest compassion we can show is attempting 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 commands Timothy 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 church will expand is through the hard work of its members who are unashamed to present the full gospel message to friends and family who will listen (Matthew 10:32-33; cp. Acts 4:18-21, 31; 5:12-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:8). Don't be a Christian who will stand for everything as long as you can stand in a closet.
- C. It's disgraceful to see how many "churches" try to market the gospel as they would market a car and make churches into a "user-friendly" commodity. The truth that'll save people is sometimes a hard pill to deliver and swallow (Matthew 10:34).

#### ***V. He Took Courage Seeing Brethren Being Thoughtful***

- A. Paul outlined the humility 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 in evangelism. 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 abound even more.
- C. The gospel advocates the viewing of others as more important than ourselves. God wants sacrifice, not self-centeredness (cp. Leviticus 25:35; Deuteronomy 15:7-8). 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 (cp. Romans 15:25-27).
- B. In Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-35, and 11:27-30 brethren sacrificed because they wanted to, not because they were coerced or forced. They wanted to make sure the poor received proper care.
- C. It thrills the heart to see brethren act in a manner that pleases the Lord. We live in a cynical society and it's easy to take the approach that brethren will only do the least amount they have to, but that's not true. The body of Christ is full of brothers and sisters who are willing to do so much to help the disadvantaged.

**Conclusion.** Let's encourage and provoke one another to reflect all the good qualities of God's saints. 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.

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

I am deeply indebted to Bobby K. Thompson for the use of his material.