

Take Courage

- I. Our study today comes from someone whom you and I may not picture as someone who needed encouragement during their walk because they were so steady. That person is the apostle Paul. We are going to see in our study today that he did indeed need encouragement and it came from the best encourager there is...Jesus Christ Himself.
 - a. You may not have thought about that much, but did you realize that being an encourager is part of the character of Jesus Christ?
 - b. This is what we are going to study today. How Jesus encouraged others. And true to His character, Jesus' encouragement to others was always very thoughtful.
- II. We are going to do this today by reviewing a time in Paul's life when he had reached a low point in his ministry and his missionary journeys.
- III. Through a series of events Paul finds himself in a spot we can assume he had always dreamed of. Speaking to a very, very large crowd of Jewish people in Jerusalem.
- IV. In a very real sense this was it! Paul was getting the opportunity to talk the group of people that he so badly wanted to see come to belief in Jesus Christ. It had just so happened to work out that he was physically in a spot where he could do that and he had many of these folks attention.
- V. Acts 22 tells us about this encounter:

Acts 22:1-7 (NASB95) 1 "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I now offer to you." 2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said, 3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today. 4 "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, 5 as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished. 6 "But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, 7 and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'

- In effect Paul begins giving this group of Jews his testimony. It's a bit lengthy and takes up most of chapter 22. We won't cover it all for time's sake but Paul covers the following:
 - He proceeds to tell this group he was blinded, a man named Ananias gives him his sight back and tells him that God wants him to tell everyone about his conversion.
 - Paul tells this group that years ago, not long after his conversion, he was in Jerusalem, like he is now, with the intention of telling this group he's now talking to about that conversion. It was Jesus who told him not to and to leave:

Acts 22:17-24 (NASB95) 17 “It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, 18 and I saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.’ 19 “And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. 20 ‘And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.’ 21 “And He said to me, ‘Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’” 22 They listened to him up to this statement, and then they raised their voices and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!” 23 And as they were crying out and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air, 24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason why they were shouting against him that way.

Acts 23:11

11 But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."

- I. Notice in this passage Jesus begins what He has to say to Paul with these two words: *"Take courage."* While we might see this and easily move past it, I believe there's something worthwhile to take some time to dig into with this saying of Jesus. Here's why:
 - a. Jesus is fond of saying this to people He cares for. As a matter of fact He said it several different times in scripture (we will review some of them shortly).
 - b. Every time Jesus uses this saying He always followed it with the reason why an individual ought to "Take courage."
 - i. **"Take courage** - tharseō (thär-se'-ō) – to have courage, to be of good courage, be of good cheer
 1. The dictionary says that encouraged means: *give support, confidence, or hope to (someone).*

II. HOW JESUS USED THIS SAYING

- a. **Matthew 9:2 (NASB)** And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, *"Take courage,* son; your sins are forgiven."
- b. **Matthew 9:22 (NASB)** But Jesus turning and seeing her said, "Daughter, *take courage;* your faith has made you well." At once the woman was made well.
- c. **Mark 6:50 (NASB)** for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and *said to them, *"Take courage;* it is I, do not be afraid."

III. THOUGHTS ON TAKE COURAGE FROM THESE PASSAGES

- I. When Jesus tells someone or a group to “Take Courage” He doesn’t do it as an empty statement. Sometimes we can give encouragement for the sake of the emotional high that the encouragement gives another person. What we can appreciate about Jesus’ encouragement is the substance that He has behind that encouragement. Notice in His encouragement His “Why” for giving encouragement in each of the verses we just looked at:
 - a. **Matthew 9:2 (NASB)** And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, “Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven.”
 - i. In Matthew 9:2 with the paralytic Jesus tells him to “take courage” His why for taking courage is, because “your sins are forgiven.” What a great reminder! How often do I forget that one of the greatest reasons that I ought to be encouraged, why I ought to have an underlying joy, in this life (regardless of my circumstances) is that my eternal future is secure.
 1. This reminds me of when Jesus told the disciples who were so excited about the fact that the demons obeyed them, Jesus response: **Luke 10:20 (NLT)** But don’t rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven.”
 2. **2 Corinthians 4:17 (NASB95)** For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,
 - a. It’s the idea of a two armed balance scale where one would compare the weight or value of of the money in question by putting a sum of money on one side and in the other there side weighted stones would be used to balance the scale and show the value of the money put on the other side.
 - b. Paul is saying here, that there’s no trial one can endure here that can be put on the other side of the scale that can even compare to the value of the glory that awaits the Believer in eternity.
 - c. When was the last time you took a moment and took courage about your future as a Believer?
 - b. **Matthew 9:22 (NASB)** But Jesus turning and seeing her said, “Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.” At once the woman was made well.
 - i. In Matthew 9:22 Jesus tells the woman to “Take Courage” because “*your faith has made you well.*”

1. I think it's important that we establish something about what Jesus is telling this woman to take courage in.
 2. Notice He doesn't tell her to take courage because she's been made well. If that was the case He would have said that. Instead, He says to take courage in her faith. There's something about her faith that Jesus says she can take courage in.
 - a. **Faith** - pistis (pis'-tis) - belief with the predominate idea of trust (or confidence) whether in God or in Christ, springing from faith in the same.
 3. Is this passage contradicting Jim's message last week over faith? I don't believe it is, I believe it compliments it.
 4. Jesus was commending this woman on the caliber of her faith. Yes He healed her but we also need to understand why Jesus healed people during this time frame that He was on earth. His primary purpose for healing people then was so people would believe He was who He said He was:
 - a. **John 5:36 (NASB95)** "But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish--the very works that I do--testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.
 5. In order to see what it is about her faith we need to look at the two verses prior to verse 22:
 - a. **Matthew 9:20-21 (NASB95)** 20 And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; 21 for she was saying to herself, "If I only touch His garment, I will get well."
 6. It's all about the object of faith!
 7. Jesus is commending this woman, because this woman has the type of faith and intense trust in Him that so few people find. It's the "walk about faith" that Jim spoke about last week.
 8. Jesus is encouraging this woman because she has the type of faith in Him that one must arrive at to live this life well.
- c. **Mark 6:50 (NASB)** for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and *said to them, "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid."
 - d. For more context around this passage let's expand it a bit to see the verses around it:

- i. **Mark 6:47-51 (NASB95)** 47 When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. 48 Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them. 49 But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; 50 for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid." 51 Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished,
- ii. Important points for us to see here:
 1. Jesus had His eye on His disciples and was watching out for them.
 2. He goes out to them because of their hardship.
 3. When they see Him they think He's a ghost and they are terrified.
 4. Jesus immediately identifies Himself. He doesn't want them tormented and terrified and tells them to take courage because He is with them.
 5. He then goes an extra step further and gets in the boat with them and calms the storm.
- iii. There's great application here for us. How many of us forget this incredibly important truth about the fear we experience during the storms that pop up in our lives? How good is it to be reminded that we can take courage in these facts:
 1. He is always thinking about us.
 2. He is always looking out for us.
 3. He is in the boat with us.
- iv. The truth that we have the only One with us who can get us through these storms. The only One who can actually calm the storms!
 1. **Isaiah 41:10 (NASB)** 'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'
- a. We've reviewed several different places where Jesus says to take courage and we see that He always gives the individuals He is saying this to the tangible reason they can take courage. With this idea in mind let's go back to our passage where He is telling Paul to take courage and review *why* He tells Paul He can:

- IV. **Acts 23:11 (NASB)** 11 But on the night immediately following, the **Lord stood at his side** and said, "**Take courage**; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."
- a. Why does Jesus tell Paul to take courage?
 - b. I believe we can conclude that Jesus is telling Paul to take courage because he knows that Paul is ***discouraged***.
 - c. That leads us to another question about this passage then, why would Paul be discouraged?
 - i. I want to remind us of how much Paul was able to get through in this particular speech to his Jewish brethren. He doesn't get the chance to arrive at His point about this group accepting Jesus as the Messiah. He gets shut down right after telling this group that Jesus wanted him to present the good news to the Gentiles.
 - ii. After Paul tells them this they want to kill him, as evidenced by their statement in Acts 22:22... "*Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!*"
 - d. How did Paul feel about his one and only opportunity to witness in Jerusalem?
 - i. We know that this is a group of people that Paul desperately wanted to see come to Christ (he had even said he'd trade his salvation for theirs!!).
 - ii. Did he feel it failed, missed the mark?
 - iii. Did he feel like maybe he pushed it too hard?
 - iv. Maybe he didn't push it hard enough?
 - v. Maybe he spent too much time getting to the point of his message.
 - e. **Acts 23:11 (NASB)** 11 But on the night immediately following, the **Lord stood at his side** and said, "**Take courage**; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."
 - i. **Stood at his side** - ephistemi (ef-is'-tay-mee) - of persons coming upon one suddenly
 1. Used several times in scripture for someone appearing suddenly to someone:
 - a. **Luke 2:9 (NASB95)** And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.
 - b. **Luke 24:4 (NASB95)** While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing;

- c. **Acts 12:7 (NASB95)** And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands.
 - ii. What we can take from this is that Jesus, was literally there with Paul.
 - iii. Jesus, the King of Kings, comes and stands where? He comes and stands at Paul's *side*.
 - iv. He stands at a place that a friend would stand when that friend needs comfort and companionship. He stands at Paul's side and then tells Him *exactly* what Paul needed to hear:
- f. **"Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."**
 - i. **Take Courage** – as previously mentioned it means to have courage.
 - 1. **Imperative Mood** - a command for the distressed to be encouraged. And since it is a command, the implication is we can choose to obey or disobey.
 - a. This is why Jesus doesn't simply tell us to take courage without giving a practical reason for having courage.
 - b. Jesus will give the reasons to be encouraged and then ask us to trust Him that this reason is the truth and it is enough.
 - c. What reason does Jesus give Paul to "take courage"?
- g. **for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem**
 - i. **Solemnly Witnessed** - (diamartyromai) dē-ä-mär-tü'-ro-mī - to confirm a thing by testimony, to testify, cause it to be believed
 - 1. **Solemnly** (dictionary.com)- gravely or somberly impressive; **causing serious thoughts or a grave mood:**
- h. While Paul may have been feeling that he didn't accomplish what Christ had wanted from him, Jesus has a different message for him:
 - i. He tells Paul **"Take courage."** He then tells Paul *why* He could take courage. Paul had testified about Him and His cause precisely how He wanted it done. In other words He was saying "Paul you can have hope, this wasn't a failure. You did what I asked you to do and you did it well. There's serious thought going on about what you said. That's the seed I wanted planted. And besides Paul, remember, you don't save people, I do and I'm ultimately the judge of hearts and situations. You did what I asked you to do here and I want you to be encouraged despite how you may be interpreting things went."

- ii. How much of this is like us today? We want to see tangible results, we interpret how things go by what we see and how people react to what has been said. We tend to filter things based on our judgement when in actuality all Christ wants us to do is to listen to Him, submit to what He is asking of us and then let Him be the ultimate Judge of how He uses us.
- V. Jesus used “Take Courage” in another verse in scripture and I’d like to close our study with it:
 - a. **John 16:33 (NASB)** “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but **take courage**; I have overcome the world.”