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Series: Acts
Title: Comfort for Witnesses
Text: Acts 23: 11
Date: June 3, 2010
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

The Lord Jesus Christ is ever-present to uphold and comfort his people. In his power, he speaks peace and calms the troubled heart. Our Lord calls and keeps us by his power in order that we bear witness of his power to others.

Acts 23: 11: And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

“AND THE NIGHT FOLLOWING, THE LORD STOOD BY HIM”

I. THE LORD IS AN EVERY PRESENT HELP TO THE BELIEVER IN ALL OUR TROUBLE

A. Trouble will come from those who reject this gospel of free grace.

Our Lord tells us to expect it. The servant is not greater than his lord. Self-righteous, self-willed, proud religious men rejected Christ. They will reject you too.

So much of what Paul did and what happened to Paul at Jerusalem bears a remarkable resemblance to what our Lord did and how he was rejected of religious men.

- The Lord was accused of being against the law of Moses. So was Paul. The accusation is still aimed at believers in our day.
- Christ came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it. He separated himself that he might sanctify his brethren. He was willingly made under the law to pay the wages his brethren could not pay. By doing so Christ Jesus redeemed each one of his elect from the curse of the law. Paul was willing to be "at charges" for his brethren, to pay what they could not pay, to redeem them from the law.
- The angry mob laid hands on Christ Jesus, falsely accusing him, enraged at him. He was smitten upon the face. Paul, too, endured these same afflictions.
- Our Lord declared the gospel before all—that he is the Messiah, the Son of the living God—his name is Jesus for he SHALL save HIS PEOPLE from their sins. Paul stood before these men and preached Christ Jesus.
- Finally, when our Lord had finished the work, he gave up the ghost and was buried in a dark, tomb—that grave compared to a prison. But God the Father would not suffer his Holy One to see corruption. Satisfaction having been made by the one offering of his Son—God the Father raised his Son from the grave to his right hand. Now here, we find Paul, in the darkness of night, cast into a prison. And Christ Jesus comes to raise him in spirit.

Psalm 46: 1: God is our refuge and strength A VERY PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE. 2: Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

But when rejected and condemned by men for the cause of Christ remember his promise:

Psalm 109:31:...he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul.—**THE LORD STOOD BY HIM!**

B. God uses those who reject us to teach us to trust him and not ourselves.

The Lord sees to it that we ever cease trusting ourselves and depend entirely on God's all-sufficient grace. Paul has been rejected by men, in prison, down cast, things are mighty dark for Paul. None of this was out of God's control but on purpose. This is what Paul said about a similar trial. Read 2 Co 1: 8-10

Jeremiah 15:20: And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

Application: Brethren, whatever the prison we find ourselves in: it is Christ who is anointed to "open the prison to *them that are bound*."

- Under all trials, all difficulties
- There can be no trial but what he knows
- No difficulty that can alter or interrupt his purpose
- He says, "I know the thoughts that I think towards you; thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."
- Remember that!

II. CHRIST CALMS THE TROUBLED HEART BY THE POWER OF HIS COMMAND--OUR LORD SPEAKS PEACE INTO THE HEART.

Acts 23: 11: And the night following the Lord stood by him, AND SAID, Be of good cheer, Paul:

A. This is more than a recommendation, this is an effectual command...

1. In that first hour of Paul's conversion the Lord spoke in power. (Read Acts 22: 6-9—A VOICE SAYING UNTO ME--Paul hit the ground.

2. Paul thought he was righteous by the law—"But when the commandment came"—the Voice speaking unto me—"sin revived and I died." Paul was looking at outward acts as his righteousness—he was made to know his sin—on the precipice of hell—the chief of sinners!

3. Then when Paul was broken and contrite, like the Lord said to the man sick of the palsy, the Lord said to Paul, "Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." He said through Ananias. And there was peace in Paul's heart.

4. The result was repentance and faith. Paul turned from his false refuge, his false hope, all those vain works of righteousness he once counted gain—Paul said,

Philippians 3: 8: Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9: And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

Question: Will I hear an audible voice? No. How will I know? When the Holy Spirit makes a new heart, refreshes, it will be a still small voice, a voice you cannot resist. The evidence will be "You will be willing to repent from all falsehood and believe on Christ." You will repent from your former righteousness's, your former experiences, your former false religion, your former false doctrine, you will renounce the hidden things of dishonesty and in true faith you will cast all your care on Christ.

"thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence."

Why? Because...

John 10: 3: ...he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out...

Ps 85:8: I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.

Zec 9:10: And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

B. Just as the command came in the first hour, the command comes to Paul now, over 20 years later: "Be of good cheer." Christ commands peace in our hearts in every troubled time after our conversion—read Mark 4: 37-41.

1. When Christ Jesus commands good cheer into our hearts, we can be in the midst of the storm but your heart is calmed. How so? His word makes you to stop fearing the waves and your refreshed to behold and submit to him whom the waves obey, "What a Savior!"

"He who fears God has nothing else to fear." --C. H. Spurgeon

Have you heard the call? Have you heard the call from the Power and Wisdom of God, Jesus Christ himself?

C. The reason sinners cannot resist this command is because the source and substance of this good cheer is God our Savior seen in the person and work of Christ Jesus. person and work.

- **Isaiah 43: 1-3**

III. OUR LORD CALLS, KEEPS AND COMFORTS EACH BELIEVER FOR HIS SPECIFIC PURPOSE.

Acts 23: 11: And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

A. The Lord saves sinners to save other sinners. Our Lord comforts the believer to comfort other believers. (2 Cor 1: 3-7.)

1. The Lord saved Ananias so he could bear witness of the Lord to Paul. He saved Paul to bear witness of him to others.

Acts 22: 14: And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. 15: For THOU shalt be HIS WITNESS unto ALL MEN of what thou hast SEEN and HEARD.

2. Back in Corinth, the Lord told Paul, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:...for I have much people in this city."

3. The Lord comforted Paul here and later he stands up in the midst of hurricane and declares to all on board the ship...

Acts 27: 22: And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. 23: For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, 24: Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. 25: Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

Application: Everything God has ever done for me—his choosing, his redeeming, his calling, his preserving through every trial, his commanding peace in my own heart—is so I can stand right here, right now and bear witness—"I have seen and heard him do all that he promises to do—Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." And brethren, the purpose for which the Lord called each of you and keeps you and comforts you is for this same purpose—so you can bear witness of him.

Application: Heat in the hayfield. So many times when it gets so hot in this field of tribulation, let us remember if we are still here it is because it is more needful for his saints and for those who are yet lost.

John 17: 15: I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.... 18: As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world...20: Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

Application: The first true saints the Lord used to preach the true and living Christ to you? Those are precious feet to you aren't they? Aren't you glad the Lord did not take them out of the world until they could bear witness of Christ to you?

Gadarene...Mark 5: 18:...“he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. 19: Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him,Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”

Illustration: Brother Scott Richardson was scheduled to preach on Wednesday night—the Sunday before, Brother Scott said to Marvin, “I have something say, if the Lord is willing for me to say it”—Brother Scott was ready, but Tuesday morning the Lord took him home. What a blessing to be ready to bear witness right up until the day the Lord takes you home!

B. One last question:...Did the Lord succeed in his purpose for Paul to preach at Rome?

- Ac 28: 23-24, 30-31

God said he will send pastors after his own heart to feed you with knowledge and understanding. In Jeremiah 23 he said of the false prophets, I did not send them and they shall not profit my people at all. We are not talking about this worlds idol god, false religions idol jesus, we are talking about the true and living God of heaven and earth.

Isaiah 46: 11: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

And he promises those whom he calls in power:

John 14: 18: I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. 19:...because I live, ye shall live also. 20: At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

Believe him!

AMEN!