

DISRUPTION

July 11, 2021

Walking with Jesus is a Life of Encouragement

The Continued Story....

Acts 23:1-24 Gazing intently at the high council, Paul began: “Brothers, I have always lived before God with a clear conscience!” ² Instantly Ananias the high priest commanded those close to Paul to slap him on the mouth. ³ But Paul said to him, “God will slap you, you corrupt hypocrite! What kind of judge are you to break the law yourself by ordering me struck like that?” ⁴ Those standing near Paul said to him, “Do you dare to insult God’s high priest?” ⁵ “I’m sorry, brothers. I didn’t realize he was the high priest,” Paul replied, “for the Scriptures say, ‘You must not speak evil of any of your rulers.’” ⁶ Paul realized that some members of the high council were Sadducees and some were Pharisees, so he shouted, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, as were my ancestors! And I am on trial because my hope is in the resurrection of the dead!” ⁷ This divided the council—the Pharisees against the Sadducees— ⁸ for the Sadducees say there is no resurrection or angels or spirits, but the Pharisees believe in all of these. ⁹ So there was a great uproar. Some of the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees jumped up and began to argue forcefully. “We see nothing wrong with him,” they shouted. “Perhaps a spirit or an angel spoke to him.” ¹⁰ As the conflict grew more violent, the commander was afraid they would tear Paul apart. So he ordered his soldiers to go and rescue him by force and take him back to the fortress. ¹¹ That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, “Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well.” ¹² The next morning a group of Jews got together and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. ¹³ There were more than forty of them in the conspiracy. ¹⁴ They went to the leading priests and elders and told them, “We have bound ourselves with an oath to eat nothing until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ So you and the high council should ask the commander to bring Paul back to the council again. Pretend you want to examine his case more fully. We will kill him on the way.” But Paul’s nephew—his sister’s son—heard of their plan and went to the fortress and told Paul. ¹⁷ Paul called for one of the Roman officers^[e] and said, “Take this young man to the commander. He has something important to tell him.” ¹⁸ So the officer

did, explaining, "Paul, the prisoner, called me over and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you." ¹⁹ The commander took his hand, led him aside, and asked, "What is it you want to tell me?" ²⁰ Paul's nephew told him, "Some Jews are going to ask you to bring Paul before the high council tomorrow, pretending they want to get some more information. ²¹ But don't do it! There are more than forty men hiding along the way ready to ambush him. They have vowed not to eat or drink anything until they have killed him. They are ready now, just waiting for your consent." ²² "Don't let anyone know you told me this," the commander warned the young man. ²³ Then the commander called two of his officers and ordered, "Get 200 soldiers ready to leave for Caesarea at nine o'clock tonight. Also take 200 spearmen and 70 mounted troops. ²⁴ Provide horses for Paul to ride, and get him safely to Governor Felix."

Jesus encourages us in our difficult circumstances. Isaiah 54:17 *But in that coming day no weapon turned against you will succeed. You will silence every voice raised up to accuse you. These benefits are enjoyed by the servants of the LORD; their vindication will come from me. I, the LORD, have spoken!*

He knows all your difficulties. Matthew 11:28-30 *Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."*

He is right in the middle of your difficulties. Hebrews 13:5-6 *Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." ⁶ So we can say with confidence, "The LORD is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?"*

He understands how we feel in all our circumstances. 1 Peter 5:7 *Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.*

Jesus didn't condemn Paul for feeling discouraged, but he didn't want him to stay that way. His "take courage" is really a command.

Jesus encourages Paul with praise for his past service. Hebrews 6:10 *For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers, as you still do.*

1 Corinthians 15:58 *So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.*

Jesus encourages Paul with a promise for future service. We have a hope and a future!

Hebrews 12:2-3 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ² We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. ³ Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up.*

1 Corinthians 1:3-5 *All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. ⁴ He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. ⁵ For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ.*

Small Group Discussion

Opening: Do you have any prayer requests, praises, or words from God or sins to confess?

- 1. Share a time when you have been discouraged. What did you do?**
- 2. Pastor Rex said that Jesus encourages us in our difficult circumstances. How do you feel about that statement?**
- 3. He said he is with us, he knows just what you are going through, and He is right there with us in the middle of it. He also knows how you feel.**
- 4. Pastor Rex said it is okay to have feelings of discouragement, but not stay there, why do you think Jesus would say that?**

- 5. Jesus praises Paul on his past service—he knew what Paul had done, and what Paul was going to do. Does that encourage you? Why or why not?**
- 6. Jesus encouraged Paul with a hope and a future...what is our hope and future, ultimately, and how can that be an encouragement?**