

1. New courage and new strength comes when his most intimate friends arrive
 - a. There are some relationships whose mere presence comforts and strengthens us
 - i. They lighten our hearts! (sometimes even just the memory)
 - ii. ILLUSTRATION: Riding motorcycle past the herd of cattle reminded me of my grandparents and brought joy to my heart
 - b. This new courage freed him from the fear of other people’s approval of him
 - i. Before they arrived, he had continued to try and persuade the synagogue attendees, but without becoming so offensive that they would reject him
 - ii. But, after his friends come, he became “gripped by the Word”
 1. That is, he was willing to let the Word of God offend where necessary
 - iii. Rather than merely seek to gain decisions from his Jewish brothers, he made explicit what had been implicit: to reject God’s proclamation of salvation is to be doomed
 1. This is the courage which Paul gained, the constraint of the message itself, the Reality which, once expressed to bring its full weight, angers the self-righteous
 - c. The gospel of the absolute necessity and sufficiency of the Cross of Christ and the incapability of Man to justify himself before God angers the self-righteous
 - i. The self-righteous want to control their fate through their sacrifices, their good works, whatever they believe makes them good people
 - ii. But the gospel of grace, which demands the sacrifice of another in our place, means that we cannot control our fate – that our sacrifices are insufficient, our good works are not good enough to gain favor with God, and that we cannot be categorized as “good”
 1. Even in say this – we are not good people – your heart responds with tension, does it not?
 - a. Why? Because we naturally presume that by saying this we are, then, merely worthless, unsalvageable, nothings
 - b. We, frankly, don’t believe that Jesus is enough to answer for this accusation, this condemnation of unworthiness, that God’s mercy in Christ is somehow not enough
 2. However, rather than defending his goodness, Paul could claim “Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am the chief” (1 Tim 1:15) and “God justifies the ungodly” (Rom 4:5)
 - a. It is the immaculate mercy of God in Christ which enables us to look genuinely at our sin and the holiness of God and yet not despair, but hope – not in ourselves, but in Christ alone
 - b. “I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me – and the life I do live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Gal 2:20-21)
 - d. The Cross of Christ is both judgment and salvation
 - i. “Either sin is lying upon your shoulders, or upon Christ’s. If it lies upon Christ, then you are free.” (Martin Luther)
 - ii. He announces judgment upon them as a prophet whose message of salvation was rejected
 - iii. The courage that he gained is demonstrative: he pronounced judgment like an OT prophet upon those who opposed the gospel of God’s grace
 1. To shake out one’s garments is a sign of protest
 - a. Nehemiah 5:13
 2. To have blood upon one’s own head was an announcement of guilt
 - a. 2 Samuel 1:16
 - i. The young man was guilty of “killing the messiah of YHWH”
 - ii. This is the reason that David said, “Your blood is on your own head”

- iii. That is, he was guilty and his life was forfeit
 - b. So what Paul is announcing is that those who rejected Jesus as the Messiah are guilty of his blood, and their guilt is before God
 - i. Paul did not have the right to execute the judgment (as David did), but he announced the guilt with the same words, implying that they were worthy of death
 - c. We are all guilty of killing the Messiah, for it was because of our sins that the Son of God had to die
 - i. Isaiah 53:1-11
 - 3. To be innocent of one's blood is to faithfully announce a message whereby one could be saved
 - a. Ezekiel 33:1-9
 - b. Paul is claiming the role of the prophet here, bringing the message from the LORD, and he has faithfully delivered it
 - c. The rejection of the message is not his guilt – he has done what God has commanded him faithfully
 - i. This is evangelistically important
 - ii. Our role is to communicate the message, striving to persuade, but our role is not to “win decisions”
 - 1. Decisions are the work of a heart regenerated by the Spirit of God and are not in our purview or our responsibility
 - 2. All we are called to do is be faithful to deliver the message
2. New Courage Boldly Establishes a Multicultural Church
 - a. Reasoning with the religious of common background
 - i. He continued to debate that Jesus is the Messiah, but was meeting some fierce opposition from his fellow Jews
 - 1. He was following his pattern of preaching to the Jews in the synagogue first, seeking to demonstrate from the Hebrew Scriptures (the OT) that Jesus is the promised Messiah
 - ii. It is important to note that even though Paul may have been discouraged, even afraid at times, he continued to entrust Himself to the Lord and work to proclaim the gospel
 - 1. He didn't just go to bed
 - 2. He didn't just buy a motorcycle and ride away
 - 3. He labored through the difficulty
 - iii. He later characterized this proclamation as “not with eloquent words of wisdom”
 - 1. Thus, the burden of persuasion was not upon Paul to come up with amazing thoughts or ideas or words that would blow people away
 - 2. Rather, they were the words of “the cross, which is foolishness to the world”
 - iv. Crispus, the synagogue president, and his family were of this ‘religious’ group
 - 1. The synagogue president was the layperson in charge of setting up the worship elements in the synagogue
 - 2. They were the ones in charge of the worship services in the synagogue, a worship leader, so to speak
 - b. Reasoning with the irreligious (unchurched)
 - i. This new courage compelled him then to set up the new church's meeting place in the house of Titius Justus *right next door to the synagogue!*
 - 1. That is bold!
 - 2. It also would have increased the tensions, further distinguishing the gospel from the common Jewish interpretation of the OT
 - ii. Many “Corinthians” were of this ‘irreligious’ group

1. This would definitely include Gentiles, both with experience with the God revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures and those who had no experience with the Hebrew Scriptures
 2. Thus, there is a uniting of former opposition, a breakdown of the dividing wall of hostility – a true uniting of unlikely people through one shared work of repentance of their old loves and values and faith upon Jesus
 - c. Both hearing, believing, and being baptized
3. The Greatest Encouraging Community Member is Christ Jesus Himself
- a. Jesus speaks to Paul in a vision
 - i. The Scripture describes a vision, not as a dream, but as an “uncovering” of what is eternal and real, but unseen now
 - ii. It’s as if God pulled back the curtain of the seen and showed Paul a peek of what is underneath it, unshakable, eternal, most substantial, and usually unseen
 - b. The vision was given to encourage Paul with two commands and three reasons
 - i. Commands:
 1. “Do not be afraid”
 - a. Paul was afraid: of the Jewish opposition and the indifferent and volatile Roman overseers
 - b. We see in the story of Gallio that he had a justification for such fears
 - i. The Jewish leaders beat their own leader in broad daylight (Sosthenes)
 - ii. Gallio wasn’t looking for justice, and simply let them beat poor Sosthenes in front of his tribunal without repercussions
 1. When he told them to “deal with them yourselves”, this form of mob violence was approved by him
 - c. Paul had already been pummeled with rocks and left for dead in Lystra, stripped and beaten and tied up in the darkest jail in Philippi, threatened from the outside
 - d. But Paul had also been threatened from in the inside: self-pity
 - i. “For when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn – fighting on the outside, fears from within.” (2 Cor 7:5)
 2. “Keep speaking, that you might not be silent”
 - a. Paul needed to be encouraged to keep speaking the gospel!
 - i. It is easy to slip into the idea that “they will know we are Christ’s disciples by our love for one another” as somehow salvific
 - b. Nobody is saved by our works – they are saved by hearing the gospel proclaimed
 - i. Our good works verify the integrity of the speakers, showing that we actually do follow Christ
 - ii. But they do not grant the content of the gospel, the historical message of the life, death, resurrection, ascension to reign, and gift of the Spirit, of Jesus Christ of Nazareth and all the implications of this gospel
 1. Forgiveness of sins and salvation from God’s wrath, inclusion into God’s inheritance, etc.
 - c. When we don’t see much fruit, we are tempted to entrust the power of salvation to something other than the gospel proclaimed
 - i. Maybe we should try fog machines, face painting, sporting events, and giveaways?

- ii. We attempt to bring life by appealing to the dead things, as if we assume that garden grows from the manure and not the seeds
 - 1. If you appeal to worldly desires to attract people to the church, you will have to appeal to worldly desires to keep people in the church
 - 2. Such thoughts have destroyed the witness of churches, by the grace of God may it never be so for EBF.
 - d. “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about the Christ” (Rom 10:17)
 - i. “The gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile” (Rom 1:16)
- ii. Reasons:
 - 1. “I am with you”
 - a. This is the same message God gave to Moses when he was afraid
 - b. It is the same message God gave to Joseph when he was afraid
 - c. It is the same message God gave to Gideon when he was afraid
 - d. It is the same message Jesus gave his disciples when He ascended and promised to send the Spirit
 - i. “Behold! I am with you always, even to the end of the ages.”
 - e. Our fears, especially the ones which lead to silence on gospel which offends the self-righteous hearer, are always empowered by the idea that we are alone
 - i. That we have no hope, no help, and no honor in this moment
 - ii. Such an idea, that we are alone and must deal with God and others ourselves is antithetical to the gospel and something which the enemy of Christ wants you to believe
 - 1. He wants you to think that you are an orphan, not a child, and that you are utterly alone
 - 2. But that is a lie!
 - f. Therefore, the *reason* that Jesus gives to Paul for not being afraid is His own presence with him
 - i. What does it mean if JESUS is with you?
 - ii. Is there hope? Is there help? Is there honor?
 - iii. Then, can you speak with hope?
 - iv. What should we expect as we proclaim the gospel with Jesus?
 - 1. We should expect to see the same things that Jesus saw when He proclaimed the gospel!
 - 2. Faith and Fury
 - 3. Death and RESURRECTION
 - g. We are “having been baptized into Christ, you clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal 3:27)
 - i. You are immersed in Him – He covers you all over
 - 1. Like being immersed in water means that you are wet
 - 2. Being immersed in Christ means that you are heirs of the promised inheritance of God
 - ii. You are clothed with Christ
 - 1. He is our identity – as He died, we died, as He lives, we live, as He is glorified, we are glorified, as He is accepted, we are accepted
 - 2. All by faith, dependence upon Him alone
 - iii. WE NEED NOTHING ELSE BUT CHRIST
 - 1. No comfort or ease

2. No control or security
 3. No strength or power
 4. No approval or honor
 5. WE ARE IN CHRIST and CHRIST IS IN GOD...what else do we *really* need?
2. “No one will harm you”
 - a. Paul gets a particular promise for him – that nobody would harm him in Corinth
 - i. This is not a promise to us, necessarily, nor even to Paul in other cities
 - ii. He would be harmed in Jerusalem and in Rome, saying “I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure has arrived. I have run the race...” (2 Tim 4:6-7a)
 - b. God proves this promise, I think to encourage Paul, through Gallio’s indifference at the tribunal
 3. “I have many people in this city”
 - a. The two-fold promise would give hope of fruitfulness and responsibility to proclaim the gospel to the city
 - b. Jesus did not tell Paul which people were his – he still had to preach to all, but Jesus had particular people whom were His
 - i. The effectual call of the gospel is certain to bring God’s chosen people to Himself through the preaching of it
 - ii. Notice how Jesus calls these people already His! There is no doubt of their conversions because Jesus has claimed them.

Conclusion:

The promise of the presence and certain purposes of Christ empower us to endure great difficulties, to speak the truth without fear, and to know with certainty that God is at work in the unseen things, beneath the surface of people’s disdain and beneath our frustrations. Christ is here. He is present for the purpose of building His Church. He has promised that, when he said, “I will build my Church and the gates of the dead will not overcome it.”

Oh, you who are discouraged today because the world seems so wicked. What greater promise do we have than the presence of Christ with us?

Oh, you who are discouraged today because you have failed to honor Christ well at work: Do you think that Christ has left you? He will not.

Oh, you who are discouraged because someone has threatened your livelihood and your ability to build your life the way you want it: What greater hope do we have than the promise of resurrection? This is not your kingdom and this is not your home. Remember the Kingdom.

We need one another to remind us these two great promises when we are discouraged, to patiently labor together in the smaller things and to bind ourselves to our discouraged brothers and sisters while they struggle and remind them of the power, the purity, and the presence of Jesus with them for the sake of His kingdom.

The name, Sosthenes, means “strength of salvation”. How can you and I be bold? Because Jesus is our Sosthenes, bearing the wrath, not of mere men, but of God. He took the worst of all imaginable things so that you and I could leave God’s tribunal without accusation and without threat.

This Christ is with you. The one who loves you and gave himself for you. The one who was crucified for you and you with him, so that you are free from the judgment of God. You died with Him. You were raised with Him, O Christian. He who loves you this much is with you. So take heart! Do not fear! And let the gospel ring through this city so that all who belong to Christ will hear and believe.