

12-19-21 Be of Good Cheer

Acts 23:11-35.

How many have been listening to Christmas songs since November 1st?

Name a Christmas song that puts you in the Christmas mood?

What ones bring you back to when you were younger?

How about Christmas movies, favorite ones?

Anyone have any Christmas traditions?

Christmas season is the time of year to be of good cheer. It's a time to give and receive gifts, to be purposeful in spending time together. It's a time for celebration. It is a time for celebrating the birth of Jesus the Christ, Immanuel, meaning "God with us."

I must admit, I wished that from December 1st through January 2nd nothing bad would happen. No one losing their jobs, no shortage of money, toys, candy, smiles, no death, no empty Christmas trees, and mom's and dads loved on their children.

Isn't this what we hear in Christmas songs, and movies? I mean even in one of the best Christmas movies of all time, Die Hard, (It is a Christmas movie. Just make sure you watch video angel's version) Bruce Willis gets the bad guys, saves his marriage, and makes it home in time to open presents and drink eggnog.

Unfortunately, that isn't real life, is it? Christmas season can be some of the toughest to get through. There are broken homes, broken jobs, broken churches because we are a broken people. And hurt people, hurt people.

God specializes and loves broken, hurt people. They are His peeps! God is the ultimate script writer when it comes to Christmas. I mean come on, a baby born (God's only son) in a cave, in a feed through, to an unwed mother, and stepdad who were dirt poor. Then He chooses shepherds to be the first visitors. I think it is safe to say God wins an Emmy.

Then to take your only beloved son, have him live, walk shoulder to shoulder with the common people, and give him some shady friends, fishermen, tax collectors, even a prostitute?! Watch as he does what none of the religious elite could do, fulfill the law, never sins, put in mankind's place as a sin offering. For the whosoever's of the world. Dies in our place to provide a perfect substitution for us.

God is SO good!

In **Acts 23:11-35**, we find Paul in a rough place. Paul had already given his testimony to the common man and the Sanhedrin, he had been beaten up by a mob of people, had to use his roman citizenship to avoid getting scourged by the Roman soldiers, and ordered to be smacked by the High Priest. I wonder if he is starting to see the writing on the wall. Jesus did say, ***"Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning me."*** (Acts 22:18)

Through it all and although it is not Christmas season, God is encouraging him to, ***"Be of good cheer."*** (v.11)

Why SHOULD Paul be of good cheer? Let me give you three reasons Paul could "**be of good cheer.**" They're the same reasons you and I should "**be of good cheer**" during and out of Christmas season.

I. BE OF GOOD CHEER BECAUSE OF JESUS' PRESENCE (v.11).

- What does the bible say Immanuel means? "**God with us.**"(Matthew 1:22-23)
- Paul MUST have been hurt and disappointed that the Jewish Christians had rebuffed his efforts to bring about a reconciliation between the Jewish and the Gentile believers. And he found himself falsely jailed and at the mercy of unjust and corrupt leaders.
- He was between A ROCK-the harsh custody of the Romans, and A HARD PLACE-the Supreme Court of Israel out to destroy him, if possible, just as they had done to Jesus and Stephen and other Christians.
- Jesus tells Paul, "**Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.**"
- When Jesus appeared to Paul, it was a reminder that Jesus Christ was STILL ALIVE and that He was with him everywhere he was and in every situation.
- "**Good cheer**" in the Greek is tharseo, thar-so meaning, take heart, be strong of heart, have courage, be courageous. Jesus is telling Paul to have courage.
- The word thar-so is used in other bible verses as well. Jesus provides His followers with the ability to have courage, take heart and be courageous, in the face of anything.

Jesus used it in healing the paralyzed man. **Matthew 9:2, Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."**

When Peter walked on water. **Matthew 14:27, But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."**

John 14:33, These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

- How many of us have been hurt, misunderstood, insulted, in pain, discouraged, in the very valley of despair-and yet, even in our darkest hour, we felt the abiding presence of the Lord Jesus in our lives?
- In the time of trouble or affliction or opposition, remember-Jesus is there! Call out to Him!-Seek His face!-Ask Him to make His presence real to you.

II. BE OF GOOD CHEER BECAUSE OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE (vs. 12-22).

- **Read verse 12-22.**
- It's fascinating to see that no matter how much men seek to **thwart** (I used it again) the will of God, they're powerless against it. If God wanted Paul to die, there wasn't a king on earth who could save his life, and if God wanted Paul to LIVE, these forty religious terrorists were POWERLESS to take his life.
- Here we see the amazing providence of God at work. What a coincidence that this young man just HAPPENED to hear of the plot to kill Paul. What a coincidence that he just HAPPENED to be

Paul's nephew! No, there's no such thing as coincidence with God's people. What the world calls coincidence, Christians refer to as God's providence, His plan.

- **Look again at verse 16.** Check your New Testament from beginning to end and you'll not find another reference to Paul's sister or his nephew. By God's design and plan they were set to the side of history all of Paul's life so that they would be in the right place at the right time when Paul was between a rock and a hard place. And then God said, "Nephew, it's time to go on stage. Get out there!"
- It's been said that history is "**His story.**" And when suddenly God writes **HIS STORY**, no matter how difficult the plot appears, He just says, "It's time!" and moves in. He might use an angel, an obscure nephew, an earthquake, or a fish-but He is always right on cue.
- I can look back at all the coincidences in my life, at misfortune, and how God used it to write His-story in my life. When we are in the valley times its hard to see what God is doing. But when we come out of it, we will be able to look back and see how God moved through it and used it.
- Can you see God at work in your life? Can you see His care? Can you see His plan? I am sure Joseph and Mary couldn't see it at times either but they trusted in God's plan.

III. BE OF GOOD CHEER BECAUSE OF GOD'S PROTECTION (Vs. 23-35)

- **Read verses 23-35.**
- Once the plot to murder Paul was exposed, the Lord cranked up the Roman Empire to provide transportation and protection for the new chairman of His "Evangelism Committee" dedicated to spreading the Gospel among the Gentiles within the Roman Empire.
- First, the Romans provided AN ABUNDANCE OF FREE BODYGUARDS. **Verse 23** says there were 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen-a total of 470 men assigned to protect one man-Paul! These 40 religious terrorists would be wiped out by this group in short order!
- Second, the Romans also provided FREE TRANSPORTATION. **Verse 24** says Paul was provided with "mounts"-plural. In other words, Paul travelled in style, being given two horses, maybe more, for the sixty-mile journey to the judgment hall in Herod's palace in Caesarea.
- Third, the Lord even provided SAFE LODGING-Herod's personal quarters.
- One of the great blessings of the Christian life is to know that I have God's protective hand on my life....to know that Satan cannot do one thing to me without God's express permission....to know that GOD is in control-that not one thing can happen to me without a reasonable and good purpose for it in my life.

Conclusion

If you are a follower of God, born-again believer, Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior; I want to tell you, **"Be of good cheer."** Take heart, be of courage, Jesus is with you all the way.

He knows exactly where you are at in this life, He is walking it with you. And He brings only a peace that He can bring when you are in the firing line of life.

John 14:27, Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Hebrews 4:16, Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

John 14:33, These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Be of Good Cheer. Rest knowing Jesus' presence is with you, that His providence (plan) cannot be thwarted by man or Satan and know that you are protected.

If you haven't placed your faith and trust in Jesus, you can.

Admit you're a sinner. "There is none righteous, no, not one;" (Rom. 3:10) "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23)

Trust in God's Providence, (plan). **"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 6:23) "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8)**

Believe in who Jesus is! "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

Confess and be set free! "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Rom. 10:9) "For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

John 17:3, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

1 John 5:13, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, [e]and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God."