

Acts 23:10-12 (NIV)

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¹¹The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”

¹²The next morning the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul.

44-22-01-Christ’s Encouraging Presence
presence, encouragement, serving, hardships

Acts 23:10-12

Jesus will never forsake His servants.

INTRODUCTION:

–There are 3 verses in our **text: Acts 23:10-12**, ¹⁰*The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.* ¹¹*The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”*

¹²*The next morning the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. Sandwiched between his arrest and threatened assassination in v.10 & 12 is v.11, which encouraged Paul in his harsh circumstances... and can do the same for us (re-read v.11).*

–Paul’s story may be more dramatic than ours, but *in times of trial*, all Christians need *Christ’s encouraging presence* (**title**). We need to know that **HOM.idea**. And that’s what we learn in v.11... first that...

I. The Lord’s Real Presence Will Be with Us– v.11, *The following night the Lord stood near Paul...*

A. Christ ended His *Great Commission* by saying in Mat 28:20b, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Jesus is *with us* in the troubles all of us face as messengers of His Good News– John 16:33b, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”— That’s *an encouragement only* because He’s *with us*.)

B. We **know** *He lives inside us*, and *is in our midst when we gather in His name*, but at times we feel Him near in a special way. [As did the chorus-writer who wrote: “Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place / I can feel His mighty power and its grace / I can hear the brush of angel’s wings / I see glory on each face / Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.”]

TRANS: Christ rarely appears as He did to Paul [or Gulshan Esther], but we each have *experiences of Christ’s felt presence*. [I wrote “I Wasn’t There” to capture mine: *I wasn’t there when Jesus rose from death. / I didn’t see the risen Christ, my Lord. / But I have felt Him blow His gentle breath / When, on my knees, His blessing I implored. // I wasn’t there when Thomas voiced his doubt / And failed to trust, until the Lord appeared. / But I was here when troubles thrashed about, / Till Jesus led me past the things I feared. // I wasn’t there when He returned on high / To reign beside His Father on the throne. / But I will hold His hand the day*

*I die / And feel the touch that I have always known.] During times of trouble, **Jesus will never forsake His servants.** When we experience His *felt* presence, it's so precious! But He gives more than that...*

II. The Lord Will Speak Encouragement to Us— v.11, the Lord... said
“Take courage!” [NKJV, “Be of good cheer.”]

- A. A *bright countenance* of “good cheer” comes when Jesus lifts up our downcast feelings from *discouragement* to *confidence*. [The NKJV renders **John 16:33b**, “In the world you will have tribulation; but **be of good cheer**, I have overcome the world.”] (Again, this “good cheer” comes by knowing that His *“Take courage!”* is coming directly from Jesus.)
- B. In Scripture, prayer is a two-way conversation: we speak, God listens; God speaks, we listen. [**Many of us** grew up in churches where it was taught that, once the Bible was complete, God stopped speaking. Belief in that false idea caused many of us to stop listening.] (Now we have books on *How to Hear from God*, but all we really need is to read in the Bible God’s promise to speak, and then expect Him to do it.)

TRANS: During trials, **Jesus will never forsake His servants.** Bible verses do encourage us, and so do words of friends and relatives. But we also need to listen for Christ’s voice— John 10:27 (NKJV), “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” *Hearing His voice* brings us “good cheer,” because, as *servants of the King*, we’re not on our own. We have *His felt presence*, we hear *His inner voice*, and *finally...*

III. The Lord Will Affirm Our Place in His Plans— v.11, “As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”

- A. The affirmation we seek in Heaven is in **Mat 25:21**, “Well done, good and faithful servant! Come and share your master’s happiness!” (But when *troubles distract us* from being “faithful servants,” Jesus reorients us by affirming to us **who we really are: we are His witnesses.**)
- B. By these last words in **v.11**, Jesus told Paul, “*I still have work for you to do.*” (Each day we wake up still on earth, if we’ll keep our spiritual ears open, we’ll hear Jesus saying, “*Your mission’s isn’t over yet.*” [**My pastoral advice** for those anxious to go home to Heaven is: “*Your mission isn’t complete till you pray your last prayer, so keep praying!*”])
- C. Whether behind bars threatened with death; or in an ICU bed with Covid; or facing other difficult circumstances, nothing can stop

our mission till Jesus says, “Come home, My faithful servant!”

CONCLUSION:

—No matter what troublesome circumstances we face, Jesus will never forsake His servants. Through every trial, He is present with us. If we can get our focus off hardships and listen with our hearts, we will hear His encouraging voice. Amid threatening circumstances, He’s beside us to affirm His plan for us. And His encouragement will last right up till the moment we leave for Heaven. If things look bleak, just remember His promise: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”