

The Better Way

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SPRING CHURCH OF CHRIST

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY

Bible Study.....9:00 a.m.
Worship.....10:00 a.m.
Afternoon Worship.....1:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study.....7:30 p.m.
(via Zoom Meetings)

ELDERS

David P. Brown
Ken Cohn
John West

DEACONS

Bret Bailey
J. D. Gunter
Eric Paluka

EVANGELIST

David P. Brown

SECRETARY

Sonya West

THANKSGIVING AND COURAGE

L. O. Sanderson

It was a long, long journey from Caesarea to Rome, and one fraught with delays and danger. But **“Paul and certain other prisoners”** were nearing the end of the tiresome trip. Somehow brethren at Rome had heard of the coming of Paul and his company, and had met them at **“Appi forum, and The three taverns.”** Such a welcome, with its demonstration of love and interest, could not but touch and warm the heart of **“the prisoner of Jesus;”** and when Paul saw this evidence of concern and affection, **“he thanked God, and took courage”** (Acts 28:15). In this simple statement Luke reveals Paul’s gratitude and courage—his thought of the past, his joy of the present, and his hope for the future. He thanked God!

Undoubtedly, he was grateful to the brethren from Rome for this thoughtfulness. Any true gospel preacher finds joy even in adverse conditions when Christian brethren lend encouragement. Though he may not boast personal acquaintance, the sight and fellowship of those of like faith lend strength to the weary heart. “Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.” But the text says **“he thanked God.”** Was not God faithfully fulfilling His promise that Paul bear witness also at Rome? And was it not Paul who counted God **“able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us”** (Eph. 3:20)? Now he looks back on the time of his peril at Jerusalem when the mob apprehended him and his rescue by the captain and soldiers. He remembers the chains and the false charges, and how the Roman citizenship saved him from cruel punishment, if not death. Memory brings back the accusations of Tertullus and his own speeches in self-defense. He recalls leaving the country of his greatest works as a prisoner—how, on that journey, the winds were contrary and the sailing slow and dangerous; he sees again those fourteen frightful days, when they were by tempest tossed, when ship and lading were lost. But all of that is past, and through it all he depended on the comfort of the Almighty: **“Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee”** (Acts 27:24).

Observe, too, that he **thanked** God. He did not simply *feel* grateful, nor leave God to interpret the thanks of his heart; his was not a recognition better felt than expressed, for gratitude, if unexpressed, is for value greatly pressed. He was grateful for his existence, his preservation, his comforts and enjoyments, and for the tokens of divine approval of the course pursued, and he made acknowledgment therefore. The same word here translated *thanked* is also found in Acts 27:35, where Paul **“gave thanks to God in presence of them all.”** This was an audible expression of thanks—people heard his words; and in our text he thanked—he spake his thanks to—God.

But there were things present for which Paul was thankful. Though he was a prisoner, he had found friends—Christian friends. He was grateful

that they were neither ashamed of him nor of the gospel which he preached. It was good to find some place where brethren dwelt in peace and boldly marked their ties with Christianity. Even the Jews, who knew **“that every where”** this **“sect”** was **“spoken against” (Acts 28:22)**, did not here make havoc of the church. That was something for which to be thankful. Possibly Paul also found joy in the thought that others of his fellow workers, from back home, were with him; and, as Nichol and others suggest, there may have been some in Rome he had known before—Aquila and Priscilla, for instance. He was ready to preach to those who were in Rome, and he is about to realize that desire. He is grateful.

Paul also **“took courage” (Acts 28:15)**. Webster says that *courage* is that firmness of spirit which meets danger without fear. That could not be the full meaning here, for meeting brethren was not dangerous, nor was there more, or even as much, reason to expect harsher treatment at Rome than he had experienced. Experiences of the past often inspire and encourage us as respects the future. Why? Because we shall not pass the past again—no more must we experience trials, persecutions, and sorrows already experienced. We may have similar ones, but not the same ones. The Red Sea was crossed but once; the Israelites traversed the wilderness but once; Christ died but once. So Paul could take courage because some sufferings had passed.

He could be encouraged, too, because his Lord was ever the same. Men change, times change, circumstances are altered; problems vary; but the Lord is **“the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb. 13:8)**. Whether at home or abroad, there the Christian has an ever-watchful eye looking on. Christ, in His love, His pity, His sympathy, His power, His faithfulness, His intercession, remains unaltered and unalterable. His word, which is our guide, our comfort, our sword in the fight of faith, our dependence, our hope, and our pledge of better things, continues with its same power unto salvation. The worlds may pass away, but not the word of our God! God’s promises to sustain, to urge on, to give hope now and evermore, come upon us like a ray of the bright shining sun, touching and lifting in every part of the earth. The **“great and precious promises” (2 Pet. 1:4)** bring their comfort and their joy and encourage us with the definite possibility of meeting after death around the throne of God to live forever with the Lord and those of like precious faith.

And, bringing this lesson to bear on our own situations, we have much for which to be grateful, much to give us courage. Do we not live in a country where freedom of worship is guaranteed? Have we not witnessed a steady, substantial growth in the body of Christ in spite of opposition? Looking farther back, we were once strangers, foreigners, without God and without hope in the world; but God called us by the gospel, made of us lively stones in a beautiful temple, members of His divine family, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. The Lord has built and He dwells in Zion. What a privilege to be one of her citizens! Here we find a sweet retreat from the scorns of the world, the cares of everyday life, the anxieties of the day, and the dangers of the pathway. Here we send our petitions to God with hope of reply; here we sing our songs of praise; here we unite our hearts in devotion to our heavenly Father. For this we should thank God and take courage. **“Our willing hearts should stay in such a frame as this, and sing, and teach, and give, and pray to everlasting bliss.”**

Finally may we urge that our thanks and courage should not remain a secret with us. Let us tell about them. Be vocal. By Christ **“let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb. 13:15)**. May we speak to ourselves with **“psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Eph. 5:19)**, and speak **“the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15)**. Be not ashamed to speak complimentary. Paul did not hesitate to give honor to rulers whom he addressed, and the churches of Asia are given credit along with their condemnation. But while we compliment, let us not forget that there is a **“time”** for all things. Sometimes we must rebuke, correct, and indoctrinate. There is a heaven, but there is also a hell. Let us be thankful that we can exhort and encourage, and that we can convict and condemn.~

Deceased



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FAINTING IN YOUR SOUL

J. Roy Vaughan

The Christian is often exhorted to be strong in the Lord. There is so much danger of falling by the way. Paul said: **“Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”** (Gal. 6:9). **“For consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls”** (Heb. 12:3). Paul said of himself and his fellow apostles: **“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we faint not”** (2 Cor. 4:1). And the psalmist said: **“I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living”** (Psa. 27:13). When one faints physically, the heart beats weak, respiration becomes feeble, and the face becomes pale, and he loses consciousness through lack of the blood supply to the brain. He is then helpless and useless. This is also true when one faints in his soul. Once in a great while someone will faint during the hour of worship. Regardless of how earnestly he may have entered into the service before, now that he has fainted he has lost all interest in the worship. He cannot sing, he cannot pray, he cannot listen to the sermon—he has fainted. Where one faints physically, scores faint in their souls, and they become useless in the church. Furthermore, they become a liability. Whereas they one time were earnest servants of God, they have now lost all interest in the work of the Lord. They are no longer seen in the assembly of the saints, and their warm, spiritual influence is no longer felt in the community. One time the Lord could depend upon them to carry on His work, but now He cannot. They have fainted in their souls. Preachers sometimes faint in the pulpit, and until revived they can no longer preach the gospel. The church is not as zealous in preaching the gospel today as it was in the first century, and one reason is: too many Christians faint in their souls. They can no more preach the gospel than can the preacher who faints in the pulpit. Men all around us have their lives cluttered up with half-finished work, because they fainted under their task. Many good books that would have edified the church were never finished, and timely articles were never written. Often we planned to do some visiting, but never did; and good deeds were never done which we fully intended to get around to some day, because we fainted at the task. As men fail in business, not from lack of wealth or ability or failing health, but from lack of that quality to stick to the

job until it is done, so thousands of Christians faint in their souls. **“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord”** (1 Cor. 15: 58).

It was this quality of endurance that made the heroes of the Bible. We are told that Moses **“endured, as seeing him who is invisible”** (Heb. 11:27). And Abraham **“wavered not through unbelief,”** although it was well toward the setting of the sun in his life before the promise was fulfilled. Nehemiah built the walls of Jerusalem out of the heap of rubbish and against sore opposition, **“for the people had a mind to work.”** Nor did Christ faint in His soul as he suffered the trials incident to living in the flesh. He **“endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”** (Heb. 12:2). Therefore, **“let us not be weary in , well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”** (Gal. 6:9).

Men faint in their souls very much for the same reason that men faint physically. As some faint because of bad atmosphere so many faint in their souls because of evil association. There are places that produce a foul influence. The very scenery, the hard faces, the style of clothes, the conversations filled with slang, sarcasm, and filth make it hard for a clean thought to live. But there are some places that produce a wholesome atmosphere. Here is found cheer, gladness, and joy. And here a wicked thought would find it difficult to live. Likewise, some churches create an unwholesome influence. They radiate no cheer, no hope, no faith, no vision, no enthusiasm, and no love. Christians faint in their souls under these conditions. But other churches produce a warm, spiritual influence. Here is love, faith, and zeal. Here the soul is lifted up and made strong in the Lord. Some men faint from weakness, some under chastisement, some under the responsibilities of a Christian life, and some fall by the way through discouragements. Elijah ran away from the wrath of a wicked queen into the wilderness, and **“sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die”** (1 Kin. 19:4). He felt it useless to do any more. No fainting soul would have ever laid a cable across the ocean, or built a railroad across the desert plains, or sailed a ship over an unknown sea to discover a new world. And no fainting soul will gain heaven.

The psalmist said: **“I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living”** (Psa. 27:13). Here was the source of his strength. **“I had fainted, unless I had believed.”** The servant of God cannot go very far in the Christian life without faith. He needs faith in the church. The church is a divine institution, and it can no more fail than God can fail. There may be times when it is weak and despised, but it is, nevertheless, the church of the Lord and will triumph. We need faith in the true value of the church, in the blessings of the church, and in the final triumph of the church.

Luke said that the Lord **“spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint”** (Luke 18:1). Through prayer we have contact with heaven. There is no hour so dark and no circumstance so critical but that our prayers will reach the throne of God. Believe this and believe that God will answer our prayer, and we will not faint in our souls. Furthermore, the servant of God needs to have faith in himself. Israel sinned and was not allowed to enter the promised land on the return of the spies, because ten of the spies destroyed their confidence in themselves. But Caleb said: **“We are well able to overcome it”** (Num. 13:30). Paul said: **“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me”** (Phi. 4:13). Lack of confidence in self has destroyed the usefulness of many in the church.

Finally, the Christian should have faith in the final triumph of truth and righteousness. No one can deny that wickedness goes unchallenged every day; that justice is often denied. The righteous are run over. But there will come a day of reckoning; then truth and righteousness will triumph. Believing this, the servant of God does not faint in his soul. Faith in God will strengthen the soul in every trial of life; for he is the same God that brought Noah through the flood, and blessed Abraham, and led Israel through the Red Sea and the wilderness. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who raised him from the dead; the God of the apostles and the early Christians; He is also *our* God and Father. Have faith in God and faint not in your souls.~

Deceased

TEST YOUR BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

What baby was “exceeding fair”?

Answer to last week’s question:
Tarsus in Cilicia; Acts 22:3

THOSE TO SERVE

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2024

Announcements Ken Cohn
Scripture Reading Gary Blasingame
Genesis 3:1-8
Song Leader Bret Bailey
Prayer David Brown/John West (AM)
 Steven Johnson/Andrew Paluka (PM)
Speaker Eric Paluka

Lord’s Table (AM)
 (Luke 23:44-48)

Gary Blasingame Joshua West
 Jonathan West Stephen Cohn

Lord’s Table (PM)

Eric Paluka J.D. Gunter

Audio/Video Monitor Steven Johnson
Camera/Door Monitor Andrew Paluka

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2024

(via Zoom Meeting)

Announcements J.D. Gunter
Speaker Joshua West
Bible Class Teacher David Brown

FOR NOVEMBER

Prepare Communion Humphrey
Lock Buildings West
Prepare Bulletin Board West

IN NEED OF PRAYERS

Devon & Juliana Paluka, Emma Gomez, April McCain, Gayle Barnett, Noah & Glenda Hackworth, Tania Turcios, Robbie Kirby, Edith Young, Zack Nero, Debbie Brannon, Cynthia Jackson, Elnora Oxendine, Charles & Ann Nero, Chuck & Nancy Verkist, Freda Smith, Orinda Chumbley, and Roelf & Janice Ruffner.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- **Sunday, December 8th:** Youth Holiday Party after afternoon services.
- **Friday, December 13th:** Ladies’ Holiday Party at the home of Jenny Gunter.
- **Saturday, December 14th:** Holiday Hayride at the home of Ken & Nancy Cohn.