



Courage To Speak the Word of God

Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. [Phil 1:12-14](#)

After a heartfelt and encouraging opening in this letter to the Philippians, Paul afforded these believers with an update on his situation. As we saw before, it is evident that the church in Philippi was spiritually healthy and exhibiting agape love for others and for their brother Paul. So, it is reasonable to assume they would have been greatly concerned for Paul's well-being.

He says, "***my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel.***" Instead of complaining and griping about his situation, Paul focuses on the positive and sees that what is happening to him is not only for the good of the gospel, but also that the Lord's hand is in it. God was using Paul's present, temporary circumstances to accomplish His eternal purpose and will.

We also see in this passage historical support that Paul wrote this epistle while imprisoned in Rome. He writes, "***my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else.***" The praetorian was the headquarters of a Roman camp, where the commander-in-chief would run operations. It was also associated with the palace of the Roman governor. Therefore, the soldiers who watched over Paul were closely linked with Roman civil and military leaders. While a Hebrew, Paul was born a Roman citizen in the region of Tarsus (cf: [Acts 21:39](#)). Perhaps God used Paul's Jewish heritage and Roman citizenship as a means for him to witness and minister to many who would otherwise be unapproachable, and it's likely some of those guards came to know Christ through Paul's 'prison ministry'.

Paul goes on to say, "***most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.***" This begs the question... why would I have more courage to preach the gospel if I saw my brother suffering in prison for doing that very thing?! This is where going to the Greek text helped bring some additional clarity to Paul's comment.



The word translated here as **trusting** is the Greek **peithō** which means *persuaded, confident, or convinced by words*. I believe this tells us that **most of the brethren** were *persuaded to be stronger* in the faith because of what they witnessed through Paul. He was an excellent example to these believers, and it gave them confidence both in God and that Paul's faith was genuine. Likewise, **tolmaō** is the Greek word translated as **courage**, and it speaks of being *bold, without dread, and to bring oneself to something* that may be considered fearsome.

With this in mind, we can begin to see the bigger context of Paul's statement. Witnessing a fellow Christian joyfully endure suffering for the cause of Christ can be an opportunity for us to grow in faith, to see God's sustaining power, and give us more resolve to proclaim the gospel in the face of opposition. And on the flip side, when we suffer for doing good, we must consider how our attitude and outward posture will be viewed by others. Are we enduring with joy, as **James** tells us to do and Paul exemplified for us? Or are we whining and grumbling about our present circumstances, which robs God of glory and diminishes our power to preach the gospel?

This is yet another great reminder for us to look for God's sovereign hand in our circumstances, and to be mindful of how our attitude impacts our witness. It's so easy to go negative and focus on the bad, especially when we can't necessarily see how our situation could be used by the Lord. But Paul shows us that no matter what we're going through, good or bad, it can be a witness for Christ and a means for **the greater progress of the gospel**.

To God be the glory!

~Associate Pastor Jeremy Preece