

tion did not stop him, indeed, could not stop him from fulfilling the mission Yeshua had given him. Surely Paul stands among many who present to us a strong faith and commitment to be witnesses for our risen and reigning Savior regardless of the cost.

...has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else – Here Paul makes it clear that the gospel, the cause of Yeshua, had become “well known” (φανερός, *phoneros*) throughout the whole praetorian guard. The Greek *phoneros* means “that which is made plain and clear, evident.”¹ Undoubtedly this would come about by repeated contact and conversation with those who were guarding the prisoners. There is some evidence that by the phrase “praetorian guard” Paul is referring to the building which housed the soldiers, which would mean that wherever he was moved within the structure, he was able to give witness of the gospel. However, there is sufficient evidence that by “praetorian guard” Paul means the soldiers themselves.² Likewise, Paul adds “and to everyone else,” which means the prisoners themselves gave audience to Paul’s message of the gospel. Thus, he indicates clearly that by God’s all powerful hand, Paul was able to proclaim the gospel to the vast majority of people who were connected with or incarcerated in the prison.

What lesson do we learn from this? It is obvious: nothing can stand in the way of God’s design to have the gospel known. Let us therefore never be afraid or for some other reasons remain silent when the opportunity presents itself to share the gospel, or even to plant a single seed that might lead to further inquiries about the gospel. As Paul wrote:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Rom 1:16)

14 – 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.

Having expressed the manner in which the Lord had enabled him to be a witness for Yeshua and the gospel, not only to those who guard-

1 BDAG, “φανερός,” p. 1047.

2 See J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians* (Zondervan, 1953), pp. 99–104.

ed him in prison but also to other prisoners as well, Paul now rejoices in the fact that even in his imprisonment, many of the believers were emboldened to be active witnesses for Yeshua.

It is important, first of all, as we consider this verse, to address the different approaches that various English bibles have taken in their respective translations. The issue is how the Greek is to be understood, and particularly to what the phrase “in the Lord” (ἐν κυρίῳ, *en kruiō*) is to be attached. The two options are: “trusting in the Lord” or “brethren of the Lord.” Relying simply upon the word order of the Greek (τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐν κυρίῳ), some translations have opted for “brethren in the Lord” (ASB, CJB, HCSB, CEV, REB). Others, however, connect “in the Lord” with the verb *πείθω* (*peithō*) which immediately follows the words “in the Lord” (ἐν κυρίῳ *πεποιθότας*), thus yielding the translation “trusting in the Lord” (so NASB, ESV, NIV, CEB, NET), and this has the support of the Greek grammar as well as Paul’s word-pattern in this immediate context. For if Paul intend the meaning to be “the brethren in the Lord,” the Greek would normally expect an article τῶν (*tōn*, “the”) before *κυρίῳ*, thus “in the Lord”¹ though some consider it possible that the grammar would support the meaning “the brothers who are in the Lord” even though the second definite article is not written.² However, there are at least two factors that give greater weight that Paul intended his words to be taken to mean “to trust in the Lord.” First is that the common use of the title “the brethren” in the Apostolic Scriptures is that it is automatically understood to be believers, both men and women. There would be no need, then, to add a modifier “who trust in the Lord” in order to describe “believers.” Second is the fact that in our verse Paul places all modifiers of a clause in first position. Thus in the clause ἐν κυρίῳ *πεποιθότας*, literally “in the Lord trusting,” the modifier “in the Lord” is first in the clause giving it particular emphasis, and thus connects with the verb “trusting” which follows.

While there may be some ambiguity here, the weight of evidence surely supports Paul’s meaning to be that the majority of the believers who were aware of Paul’s imprisonment were having their faith “in the Lord” strengthened rather than weakened. One could imagine that there were those who professed faith in Yeshua who, having heard of Paul’s imprisonment, were concerned that their association with Paul

1 See Hellerman, *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament: Philippians* (B&H Pub., 2015), p. 45,

2 Moule, C. F. D., *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1959), p. 108.

might diminish their own safety and result in persecution coming their way. But this is no doubt why Paul indicates that “most of the brethren” were demonstrating even stronger courage to live out their faith, be active in proclaiming the gospel in Yeshua to others as well. As Bruce notes:

When Paul says that this is true of most of the brothers, he does not mean that there was a minority that refused to seize this opportunity for evangelization; he means that so many did so that their action characterized the Roman church as a whole. Nothing could have given Paul greater delight.¹

...trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment – It seems clear that Paul has in mind the believers in Rome where he is currently imprisoned as well as in Philippi, for the believers in Rome undoubtedly were also seeking to aid Paul during his incarceration. Here we see the true response of genuine faith. For though one could imagine that seeing a prominent leader such as Paul being persecuted for his open faith in Yeshua, others might seek to hide their faith to avoid being persecuted, the believers both in Rome and in Philippi were emboldened to be even more diligent in sharing their faith and the truth about Yeshua. This is, in fact, the true essence of saving faith, for when believers recognize that being public about their faith in Yeshua may bring increased persecution, their faith is strengthened by the work of the Ruach, so that the message of the gospel flourishes.

This obvious fact is emphasized by Paul’s words “trusting in the Lord.” Our faith is not in a religious organization nor its leaders but in the Lord Yeshua Himself. And there are times when the Lord uses difficulties and even persecution to strengthen the faith of His children and to embolden their resolve to be victorious in living out their life of faith. Moreover, it is in difficult times that one’s faith is proven to be genuine, for true faith perseveres. Here we are reminded that we need not fear what the future holds, for Paul reminds us once again that we may entrust our future to the Lord and as we do, He will enable us to face whatever comes in the future with strengthened faith and thus the ability to honor Him in all things.

Indeed, the important emphasis is in the phrase “trusting in the Lord,” for this is the work of the Ruach in the life of every believer, to

1 F. F. Bruce, *Philippians in Understanding the Bible Commentary* (Baker, 2012), p. 42.

recognize that our lives are in His hands and that He will enable us to live for His glory regardless of the challenges we face in this life. The word translated “trusting” is *πειθοίτης* (< *πείθω*, *peithō*), which carries the sense “to cause to come to a particular point of view or course of action, to be convince and persuaded.”¹ Further, Paul writes this word as a perfect participle in our text. The perfect participle pictures an action that is completed in the past but continues to have an on-going effect in the future.² Thus, the language emphasizes that a genuine exercise of saving faith in Yeshua takes place at a point in time but continues to be enlarged and to be strengthened in order to have God’s purposes lived out more and more throughout one’s life. Here, once again, we see that saving faith is inevitably evidenced by a growth in sanctification. For what God has begun He always completes. Therefore, all who have been granted faith to believe will persevere in that faith by becoming more and more conformed to the very image of Yeshua our Messiah. “Persevere we must, persevere we will!”

... *have far more courage* – It was even in the face of persecution that the believers in Yeshua were strengthened in their faith and resolve to live out their faith. The words Paul uses here indicate that God had surely strengthened their faith beyond what one would normally consider, given the difficulties they faced. The phrase “having far more courage” translates just two words in the Greek: *περισσότερως τολμᾶν* (*perissoterōs tolman*). *Perissoterōs* depicts “an abundance” or “to a much greater degree, far more”³ while *tolman* is an infinitive meaning “to show boldness or resolution in the face of danger, opposition, or a problem.”⁴ The believers whom Paul describes are therefore a valid picture of what God will do when His children face such persecution and troubling times. As we seek His face and claim His promises, we will be strengthened and enabled to face whatever difficulties confront us, and do so with the power and courage He provides. This teaches us once again that we need not fear the future. For even though we do not know what the future holds, we know Who holds the future!

... *to speak the word of God without fear*. – “To speak the word” obviously means to openly give testimony and witness of one’s faith,” to proclaim the gospel in all of its glory as we walk in this world. This may be simply to “plant the seeds of the gospel” to those we may meet

1 BDAG, “πείθω,” p. 791.

2 See the notes on v. 12 above, p. 29.

3 BDAG, “περισσότερως,” p. 806.

4 BDAG, “τολμάω,” p. 1010.

only in passing, or to continue to speak and live out the gospel to those with whom we have regular contact.

Some of the popular English bibles simply have “the word,” e.g., ESV, NIV, CEB, TLV) rather than “the word of God” as is found in the NASB. The reason why some have “the word” rather than “the word of God” is because some manuscripts do not include the word “God” in this phrase. However, though there may be some textual critical arguments that seek to show the original to not have had the words τοῦ θεοῦ (*tou theou*), “God” in this phrase, there is surely sufficient manuscript evidence to indicate that “the word of God” is to be received.¹ Even though the UBS committee decided that “of God” was secondary, the textual evidence is strong enough to indicate it to be what Paul wrote. Metzger remarks:

It must be acknowledged that, on the weight and variety of external evidence, the reading λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ λαλεῖν [*to speak the word of God*] seems to be preferable.²

The reason I think it is important to make this point is because even though “the word” in this context would clearly be referring to the proclamation of the gospel, the added “the word of God” reminds us that the gospel message we are privileged to proclaim must always be that which conforms to the Scriptures themselves. In our times, and indeed, throughout history, the genuine message of the “goodnews,” the gospel of God’s way of saving sinners and bringing them to have eternal fellowship with Him, has often been distorted and changed to fit man’s own perspective and desires. When Paul proclaimed in his epistle to the Romans,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Rom 1:16)

he is referring to the very gospel that was revealed to mankind from the beginning and seen to be fully invested in the saving work Yeshua accomplishes in His death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession.

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- 1 These are the manuscripts that contain the words “of God.” ⚭, A B P Ψ 33 81 629 1241 it⁶¹ vg syr^{p, h} with * cop^{sa, bo, fay} goth arm eth.
 - 2 Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 611. [English translation added]

We know that the gospel was revealed from the beginning, for Paul states:

The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU." (Gal 3:8)

We likewise see that the saving work of Yeshua was made known even to Adam and Chavah, for God Himself proclaims to Satan, the enemy:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel. (Gen 3:15)

Thus, we see two important applications for our lives from this text. First is that we should be strengthened to be people who proclaim the gospel at every opportunity we have, whether it is to those whom we see regularly or even by planting seeds of the good news to those we may meet in passing, as God opens the way to do so. Second, we should be careful to test our understanding of the gospel message against the Scriptures, and always thereby to be able to give the gospel message and truth as God intends. For it is the gospel message of the Scriptures that is used of the Lord to bring His chosen ones to Himself, forgiving their sin and granting them abundant life here and eternity with Him.

Let us, therefore, put to work the courage and strength that God provides in order "to speak the word of God without fear."

15 – Some, to be sure, are preaching Messiah even from envy and strife, but some also from good will;

In order to properly understand Paul's point in this and the following verses, we must have well in mind what he states in v. 18. For there he says that even if the motives for "preaching Messiah" are wrong, if in fact the truth regarding "Messiah is proclaimed," then the outcome remains in the hands of God. This helps us understand that in this and the following verses he is describing the motives of those who are "preaching Messiah," not the content of the message. For surely if those who are described in our present text were giving a false "gospel," then it would have been impossible for Paul to say in v. 18 that he rejoices in their message and proclamations.

Note first that Paul indicates that those he mentions in our verse

were, in fact, “preaching Messiah,” but they were doing so from “envy and strife.” It seems very probable that there were those who felt Paul had no right to have such a prominent position as an Apostle in the believing community, given his former hatred of those who believed in Yeshua. His own testimony gives us the picture.

So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities. (Acts 26:9–11)

Consider the possibility that there were those who had family members who were imprisoned and possibly even executed on account of the work and false testimonies of Paul. One could surely imagine that there were those who thought prison was the perfect place for Paul and were striving to put themselves in the place of authority and leadership that was now vacated with Paul in prison. This could well picture people doing their best to gain a following of believers by proclaiming the truth about Messiah but doing so in order to displace Paul from his position as one of Yeshua’s Apostles and thus stripping him of the authority that came with his apostolic appointment.

Thus, we should most likely understand the “envy and strife” of our verse as that which motivated those who wished to diminish Paul’s authority. On the other hand, those who were declaring the truth about Yeshua as the true Messiah out of “good will” were those who believed the truth about Paul, that the Messiah Himself had appeared to him and had commissioned him to be one of His Apostles. What is more, these were happy to see themselves sharing in Paul’s ministry and even helping him as co-laborers.

16-17 the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.

Here we see that what motivated those who proclaimed the truth of the gospel in Yeshua out of good will toward Paul did so because they

fully believed the truth about Yeshua's Damascus road appearance to Paul and thus recognized him as one who was appointed by Yeshua Himself. His appointment to be an Apostle (one sent out) was directly spoken by Yeshua Himself and thus to refuse to accept that appointment is to undermine the very work to which Paul was duly appointed.

Paul speaks of being appointed "for the defense of the gospel." The Greek word translated "appointed" is *κεῖμαι* (*keimai*) and carries the sense of "be appointed, set, destined unto."¹ Surely God had gifted Paul and endowed Him with the strength to be a witness of the power of the gospel, for only the miraculous work of Yeshua Himself could have changed such a person as Paul into a man who was willing to give his life for the truth of Yeshua and His divine work in saving sinners.

...the former proclaim Messiah out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives – Here Paul tells us clearly that even those who wished to cause him grief nevertheless still proclaimed the truth about Yeshua, that He was the promised Messiah and that it was through His work that salvation is secure for those who believe in Him. And they did this even though their motives were fueled by selfishness. It seems clear that they hoped to gain a following of disciples and by doing so to diminish Paul's influence and perhaps even the support that was being given to him while in prison.

Here is an important point we may learn from this: it is the truth of the message that God uses to turn the wayward heart to Himself and to grant the one who repents and believes full forgiveness and eternal life. Even wrong motives cannot undue that power of the gospel if, in fact, the gospel which is proclaimed is in agreement with the Scriptures themselves. What is so very damaging, however, is when the gospel as centered in Yeshua is edited by man's own designs and desires, and by a false "gospel" many are led astray all the while believing that they have earned God's favor.

... thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. – Even in the time of the 1st Century there were those who sought to use "religion" for their own purposes and to gain their own following. Clearly Paul did not preach Yeshua in this way! For he was himself forsaken by many who previously applauded his stand against Yeshua and those who were His followers. But we know that those who sought to diminish Paul's influence and to exploit his imprisonment for their own purposes were doing so out of "selfish ambition rather than pure motives."

Now, after thousands of years, there remain those who not only

1 BDAG, "κεῖμαι," p. 537.

despise the true teaching of the Scriptures, but have fabricated a false “gospel” and by doing so have led countless numbers astray. Yet even in spite of this, God’s sovereign plan has not and cannot be thwarted. We therefore ought to be greatly encouraged to share the true message of the gospel to people everywhere, rejoicing to be servants of the Lord to be used of Him by proclaiming the eternal glory of the gospel in Yeshua.

18 – What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Messiah is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,

Paul now expresses his own affirmation to trust in God’s all encompassing power and promises. Instead of harboring ill feelings against those who were seeking to undermine his authority and position as an Apostle of Yeshua, he commits himself to rejoicing! This is a genuine display of faith, for the whole reality of eternal salvation is, in every aspect, the work of God. And He will lose none of those He has chosen.

But what is the very basis of Paul’s joy? That Messiah is proclaimed, that is, that Yeshua is proclaimed to be the true, eternal, promised Messiah of the Tanach, and that He has proven this conclusively by His incarnation, His death and resurrection on the third day.

So here we have an excellent example of how all who are in any position of leadership ought to feel toward those who may seek to undermine their work or to diminish their effectiveness. If we are truly depending upon the Lord, than we are able to rejoice even when others may seek to diminish our effectiveness. We must set our focus upon the very thing Paul emphasizes and find true joy in this, that the Messiah Yeshua is proclaimed and that His work of procuring salvation for all who have been given to Him has been accomplished, even as the prophets foretold and the inspired Scriptures make clear.