



A Spiritual Encouragement Message
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Brethren Encouraged

by Randall Jarrell

(Phil. 1:14)

Another effect that Paul's imprisonment was having in being used for the greater progress of the gospel was the encouragement it gave to other Christians in their ministries. Verse 14 states, "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." As the next few verses will show, there were different motives about why they were doing this, but the fact is that Paul being in prison became a reason they became more bold in preaching the gospel. To be sure, it was not everyone, for there would be those that would become afraid that they too might go to prison since Paul had been sent there, but as the text indicates, the reaction of most of the brethren there was an increased boldness.

Envy or Good Will – vs. 15

The motivation behind this boldness in preaching the gospel varied. In verse 15 we find that "Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will." There were those that were envious of Paul. Envy is from *φθονος* / *phthonos* which "is the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others" (Vines). In this case they were not envious that Paul was imprisoned, but that Paul was held in such high esteem and respected by other Christians. Tragically, it is not that uncommon to find immature Christians who are envious of other believers because of the ministry that God has given to someone else. Immature people do not want others to receive more attention, fame, prestige, or even spiritual success than themselves. I wish it were not true, but when I am at conferences, I will usually run into some who are envious of others who have larger ministries. We should rejoice since we are all on the same team, but pride often places the goal of the team as secondary to its own ego.

Paul joins envy with strife. Strife “is the expression of enmity” (Vines) and so could also be translated with words such as contention, quarreling or rivalry. Paul had to correct the church at Corinth for this. In 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 Paul writes them, “Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s [people,] that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, “I am of Paul,” and “I of Apollos,” and “I of Cephas,” and “I of Christ.” Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” The same kind of attitudes were being exhibited in Rome as some who were envious of Paul’s ministry sought to gain followers for themselves. But Paul also points out here in 1:15 that others were encouraged to speak the word of God without fear out of good will. They had proper motive. They were supportive and grateful of Paul’s ministry and only desired to add to what God was doing regardless of any personal gain or loss that might result. Verse 16 tells us that in addition to their good will, these people were also doing it “out of love, knowing that [Paul] was appointed for the defense of the gospel.” Certainly it was out of a love for Jesus Christ that they were preaching the gospel, but the context here is that their personal love for Paul and what he was going through encouraged them to proclaim God’s word all the more. Paul adds here that part of the reason for this is that these were people that clearly understood that God had appointed Paul for the defense of the gospel. Anyone that heard Paul’s testimony of his conversion from Saul the persecutor of the church to Paul the proclaimer of its truth should have understood that.

In addition, many of them may have known what the Lord had revealed to Ananias in Acts 9:15,16, “But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.” Not only was Paul specifically chosen to proclaim the gospel, but he would also suffer for his testimony. Therefore, they would not have been surprised at Paul’s imprisonment and the reason for it.