He shares the gospel regardless of circumstances

- a. Paul faced dark circumstances: He was a prisoner in Rome
- b. Paul used his dark circumstances to spread the gospel
 - 1) Spread thru the elite guard of Rome: In the palace & everywhere else
 - 2) Spread by encouraging believers to be more fearless witnesses
- 2 He holds no personal

C. The Marks of a Mature Witness, 1:12-19

12 But I would ye should contention, understand, brethren, the things which happened my bonds: unto me rather unto the furtherance of knowing that I am set for the the gospel;

places;

without fear.

15 Some indeed preach

Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16 The one preach Christ of not that supposing to add affliction to

defence of the gospel.

bonds in 18 What then? notwith-Christ are manifest in all the standing, every way, whether palace, and in all other in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do 14 And many of the breth-rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

ren in the Lord, waxing con- 19 For I know that this shall 3 fident by my bonds, are much turn to my salvation through more bold to speak the word your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

jealousy nor desire for credit or prestige

- a. Others preached Christ with jealous & contentious spirits, hoping to cause trouble for Paul
- b. Still others preached in love, supporting Paul
- c. Paul rejoiced in this one thing: Christ was being preached-whether from false motives or true, Christ was preached He possesses the assurance of a happy ending: Salvation
- a. Through prayer
- b. Through the Holy Spirit

THE MARKS OF GOD'S PEOPLE, 1:3-30

The Marks of a Mature Witness, 1:12-19

(1:12-19) Introduction: circumstances often throw and defeat people. The maturity of a person can be seen by how well he handles the things that happen to him—the things that affect a person with mood changes ranging from mild to severe. The one thing that a believer must do is to learn to live above circumstances—to keep his witness for Christ strong and mature. This is the subject of the present passage: the marks of a mature witness.

He shares the gospel regardless of circumstances (v.12-14).

He holds no personal jealousy nor desire for credit or prestige (v.15-18).

He possesses the assurance of a happy ending: salvation (v. 19).

(1:12-14) Witnessing—Believer: a mature witness shares the gospel regardless of circumstances. Note two significant points.

Paul faced dark circumstances: he was a prisoner in Rome. The dark circumstances stared Paul right in the face. No circumstances could ever be any more severe—no matter what they were. Paul was waiting to appear before the Supreme Court of Rome: he was facing a trial before Nero, the Roman Emperor, and he was innocent. He had done nothing that should cause his arrest and imprisonment. Yet there he was, and he was having to wait the arrival of his Jewish prosecutors with their trumped-up and malicious charges. True, he had some privileges—renting his own house and receiving friends—but these privileges were minor when the strains of his sufferings are seen. He was imprisoned for over two years, and as is the case with all prisoners, the days wore on ever so slowly—hour by hour and day after day. Whatever pressures hang over a man's head who is awaiting a trial that is to determine whether he lives or dies hung over Paul's head. As he says in Eph.3:13, his tribulations were intense and protracted.

But note something: Paul...

did not grumble and complain

- did not question God and wonder why
- did not whine and murmur

did not fall to pieces

did not curse God nor give up his faith

- Paul used his dark circumstances to spread the gospel. Paul did not see himself as a prisoner of Rome nor of Nero. He saw himself as a prisoner for Jesus Christ. He did not see himself as a victim; he saw himself as a conqueror for Jesus Christ. In Acts 28:20 Paul says he was "bound with this chain," and in Eph.6:20 he calls himself an "ambassador in bonds." The word "halusis" is used. The "halusis" was a small length of chain that bound a prisoner to the wrist of a guard to prevent his escape. Just imagine! Paul was bound to a Roman guard every day and night for over two years. What do you suppose Paul talked about with the guards? He tells us: "The things which happened to me have fallen out to the futherance of the gospel."
 - a. Paul spread the gospel through the Praetorian Guard, the elite of the Roman army. These soldiers were the Imperial Guard of Rome, men who had been hand-picked to protect the emperor and to carry out the major armed functions of the state. There were sixteen thousand of them, most of whom were stationed in Rome at any given time (William Barclay, The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, p.26). It was these soldiers who guarded and were chained to the wrist of Paul day and night for two years—young men who were the elite of Roman youth. How many Paul led to the Lord is unknown. But note: Christ was shared so much that the gospel spread throughout...
 - the whole Praetorian guard.
 - the palace of the emperor.

all other places.

Paul—his imprisonment and stand for Christ and the gospel which he preached—became the conversation throughout Rome, the conversation among all the social circles including the upper strata, the very palace of the emperor himself.

Thought 1. The lesson for us is this: we must never let circumstances get us down—never let them defeat our testimony and witness for Christ, no matter what they are...

• persecution

bankruptcy

rejection

• imprisonment

poverty

accidentfailure

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sin

loss of a loved one

ageabuse

financial lossdivorce

• divorce

If we are living for Christ, we must know that God is in control of our lives. He will strengthen us to bear whatever circumstances fall upon us. We must use the circumstances to witness to the saving power of Christ—to

the eternal hope He gives of forgiveness and of living forever. We must witness to all around us when we...

• lie in the bed of sickness

• are in the midst of death

• are facing money problems

• are being abused and persecuted

And if we have sinned and failed—no matter how terribly—we must repent and get back to the task of witnessing, overcoming the circumstances of having failed and sinned so much. We must do all we can to conquer the circumstances for Christ and continue to witness, sharing all the good we can in order to reach all we can. All must be done for Christ, for He is worthy. He has died for us, bearing our sin and punishment and freeing us to live perfectly before God for all eternity. The world does not know this—the world does not know that the cure for the cancer of sin is now available. They cannot know unless we tell them. We must share the good news—share it regardless of circumstances. We must always remember:

⇒ we conquer circumstances for Jesus Christ.

⇒ we are not the victim of circumstances; we are the conquerors of circumstances—all for Jesus Christ.

we are not to allow our circumstances to discourage others; we are to use our circumstances to encourage others.

b. Paul spread the gospel by encouraging other believers to be more fearless in witnessing. How was this possible? Note several things.

⇒ Paul's dynamic witness and the converts among the Imperial guard were being noised about all over the city. Of course, the new converts among the soldiers were beginning to share Christ.

⇒ Paul's fellow ministers who visited him (Timothy and others) were sharing news about Paul and witnessing themselves.

⇒ Paul was allowed visitors. While a prisoner, many of the believers throughout Rome visited him and he shared Christ with them—boldly shared Christ. Note what is said:

"And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (Acts 28:30-31. Read the brief account for an encouraging picture of just how much Paul shared the gospel—no matter his circumstances, Acts 28:17-31.)

Paul's dynamic witness made a strong impact upon all those around him. His strong witness, despite his terrible circumstances, stirred many believers to become much more confident in their own witnessing. Many of the believers began to witness wherever they were—no matter their circumstances.

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk.16:15).

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk.19:10).

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (Jn.20:21).

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

"We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak" (2 Cor. 4:13).

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim.1:8).

"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (Tit.2:15).

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pt.3:15).

(1:15-18) Faithfulness—Jealousy—Self-seeking: a mature witness holds no personal jealousy nor desire for credit or prestige. This is a strange experience shared by Paul, yet it is an experience that is so often and tragically repeated in the church and among believers. Some preachers in Rome were jealous of Paul and envious...

of the results he was having.

• of the favorable attention and prestige he was gaining from society and the social circles of the community.

of the support and loyalty believers were giving him.

• of the attention he was receiving from so many of their members.

of the position he was gaining as the leader of the Christian community in Rome.

Note: the preachers were true followers of Christ. They were not the Judaizers, the false preachers who sometimes followed and opposed Paul. These were genuine preachers who were ministers in and around the metropolis of Rome. We know this because Paul agreed with their preaching; he just regretted their opposition to him. Instead of supporting him, they were speaking out against him, hoping to silence his influence and to get rid of him (v.16).

However, not all the preachers throughout Rome opposed Paul. Some were preaching Christ out of love, and they were encouraging their members to show their love for Paul by visiting and supporting him in his ministry of proclaiming

Christ.

Thought 1. How often has this scene been repeated? How many are repeating the scene right now? How many believers and Christian workers are jealous and envious...

• of the position of someone else?

• of the attention, support, and loyalty that someone else receives?

of the results that another worker is having?

How many of us begin to question and speak against a Lord's servant because of these things—speak quietly

perhaps to only one or two others; nevertheless, we do speak out? God forgive us!

We must always remember: we are all ministers and workers if we have been truly called by Christ to preach and teach His gospel. Each one has his call, and no matter the call, the road is always difficult. Therefore, we must support each other. The Lord does not require big ministries and big names and big followers from us all. What he requires is faithfulness—only faithfulness in the ministry to which he has called us. Therefore, let us be faithful and support all the ministers of the gospel of Christ.

"Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me" (Jn.21:21-22).

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor.4:1-2).

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor.4:5).

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre [personal gain], but of a ready mind" (1 Pt.5:2).

"His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter" (Is.56:10-11).

"And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowl-

edge and understanding" (Jer.3:15).

"Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord" (Jer.23:2).

"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?" (Ezk.34:2).

(1:19) Deliverance: a mature witness possesses the assurance of a happy ending—that of deliverance. Again, remember Paul's circumstances: he was in prison, but he was, as always, preaching Christ. No matter his circumstances, he was always preaching Christ; and because he was so faithful to his call, God was honoring his preaching. Tremendous results were occurring: unbelievers from all over were being saved, and believers were being encouraged to step forward and become bolder witnesses for Christ. The result was that everyone throughout all of Rome, believers and non-believers, were talking about Paul, esteeming and holding him ever so highly in their minds. However, some were beginning to show so much attention and support and loyalty to him that some of the local preachers were becoming nervous, jealous, and envious, so they began to speak out against Paul and his ministry.

The point of the present verse is this: Paul is sure God will save and deliver him from their criticism and opposition. He

is sure of God's help and deliverance because of two things:

1. There was the prayer of those who supported him—both those in Rome and those around the world who were praying for him daily. Note that he was writing to the Philippians, so he knew they would begin to pray for him immediately, and God answered their prayer. Therefore, he knew that God would deliver him from such antagonistic opposition because the Philippians were praying for him even if no one else was.

Thought 1. What a glorious teaching for a church—a church so strong in the Lord that the answer to its prayers are always answered.

- 2. The supply of the Holy Spirit would deliver him. Paul knew that the Holy Spirit would supply whatever he needed to get through his circumstances. No matter what our need is nor how great our need is, the Holy Spirit will deliver us. Strauss points out why the Holy Spirit has been given to believers, and Paul knew the reasons; therefore, he knew that he would be delivered (*Devotional Studies in Philippians*, p.79).
 - a. The Holy Spirit was given to be our compassion.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (Jn.14:16).

b. The Holy Spirit was given to counsel us.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (Jn.14:26).

c. The Holy Spirit was given to give us courage for witnessing no matter the circumstances.

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (Jn.15:26-27).

d. The Holy Spirit was given to put conviction in our lives and ministry.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (Jn.16:7-8).

e. The Holy Spirit was given to share the deep things of God with us.

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor.2:9-10).

f. The Holy Spirit was given to pray and intercede for us and to help us pray.

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Ro.8:26).

g. The Holy Spirit was given to bear His fruit in us.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal.5:22-23).

h. The Holy Spirit was given to fill us and to put a song and joy in our hearts despite circumstances.

"...be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph.5:18-19).

i. The Holy Spirit was given to give us assurance that we are children and heirs of God.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Ro.8:16-17).