

Words of the New Testament

PARRÈSIA

▶ BOLDNESS, OPENNESS, CONFIDENCE

GREEK: *παρρησία* (*parrèsia*)**LATIN:** *fiducia, palam*

Used only once in the Synoptics (Mark 8:32), the word *parrèsia* is typical of johannine writings, with thirteen occurrences in the gospel and in the first letter of John. Yet it appears, both in the letters of Paul and in the book of Acts, as characteristic of the early apostolic proclamation and teaching, as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit: “When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).

In all gospel passages (Mark and John)—except for John 7:13 referring to divisions among Jews about Jesus for fear of the authorities—the word *parrèsia* is related to the work and teaching of Jesus as Messiah, so as to highlight the paradox of his revelation. On the one hand, Jesus had been speaking “in figures of speech” (John 16:25) and was even rebuked by Peter when he began to teach “openly” his disciples “that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering” (Mark 8:31-32). On the other hand, when celebrat-

ing his last Passover with his disciples, Jesus solemnly proclaims that “the hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but will tell you plainly of the Father” (John 16:25).

In the book of Acts, the word *parrèsia* is used to qualify, at both ends of the book (4:13, 29, 31 and 28:31) the courage of Peter and John on the one hand when facing persecution from religious authorities in Jerusalem and of Paul who had been placed under house arrest in Rome. In both instances, the lesson seems to be the same: no one can stop the Apostles from witnessing to Christ “with boldness.”

“Boldness” is not exclusive to the Apostles. Both in Paul and in 1 John, “boldness” is applied to all disciples of Christ and typifies a new relationship to God: “In Christ Jesus our Lord... we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him” (Eph 3:11-12); “Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask” (1 John 3:21). **GW**

Occurrences in New Testament:

31

1) JOHN	9
2) ACTS	5
3) HEBREWS & 1 JOHN	4 each