Parrhesia

A. Classical

1. In classical writings, the noun *parrhesia* (παρρήσια) meant, “frankness in speech, openness in speech, outspokenness, boldness in speech.”

2. The meaning of this Attic Greek noun *parrhesia* corresponds to its etymology where it is formed from *pas*, “all,” and *rhesis*, “speech, word.”

3. The word has both a negative connotation attached to it as well as a positive one.

4. The Greeks cherished their freedom and particularly their freedom of speech within the *polis*.

5. Since in practice this freedom of speech encountered opposition periodically, *parrhesia* acquired the further meaning of “fearlessness, frankness.”

6. A negative overtone is also perceptible in some instances where freedom of speech is abused to the point of bluntness and shamelessness.

7. In an extended sense *parrhesia* can mean “confidence” and “joyfulness.”

8. Its cognate verb is *parrhesiazomai*, “to speak openly, fearlessly, boldly.”

9. The verb is formed from *pas*, “all,” plus *rhesis*, “speech, word,” and *ero*, “say, speak,” and means “freedom to say all.”

10. This word group is first found in Euripides and Aristophanes and belonged originally in the sphere of politics.

11. It signifies the right of a full citizen of a Greek city-state.

12. In the public assembly (*ekklesia*) of the people one may speak out freely one’s opinion (Polybius, The Rise of the Roman Empire, Book 2.38.6).

13. This right is the characteristic of democracy, but there is a danger of its misuse according to Plato (The Republic, Book 8.557b).

14. To have *parrhesia* is to be a full citizen of a Greek *polis*.

15. At the height of Greek democracy the full citizen alone has the right to say anything publicly in the *ekklesia*.

16. Aliens and slaves had no such right.

17. For this reason there is no higher possession and no greater responsibility not to misuse *parrhesia* and no greater loss than to lose it according to Demosthenes.

18. It is regarded as a typical characteristic, and also as a reason for the fall of the Greek *polis*, that *parrhesia* is the privilege of all who live in the *polis* as attested by Demosthenes (Or. 9, 3, 56, 68).

19. It is inevitable in a democracy that privilege of freedom of speech is abused because of a lack of restraint of certain individuals (Plato, The Republic VIII, 557b).

20. At this point the word’s meaning changes and acquires the sense of shamelessness.

   a. Outspokenness, frankness, freedom of speech
   b. In a bad sense, license of tongue
   c. Freedom of action; license, permission
   d. Liberality, lavishness

22. In the political sphere the word may be understood from 3 angles and is thus used with 3 shades of meaning which more or less persist in its later development according to Heinrich Schlier of Bonn University (Kittel’s Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, volume 5, pages 871-875): (1) Political sphere (2) Private sphere (3) Moral concept.

23. Political sphere:
   a. The element of the right to say anything may be emphasized in *parrhesia*.
   b. The full citizen of the Greek *polis* has the objective right to manifest himself in the *logos*, “word.”
   c. But stress may be placed on the fact that in *parrhesia* the actuality of things is stated, so that there is a close relation to truth.
   d. Thus, *parrhesia* takes on the sense of openness to truth (Demosthenes, Or. 6, 31; 4, 51; 10, 53).
   e. This openness is controlled by the object and by one’s relation to the object to which one turns, and it resists the tendency of things to conceal themselves, and man’s tendency to conceal them from himself (Plato, Leg. III, 694b).
   f. The term *parrhesia* may also have in view the fact that to the right and openness of full freedom of speech obstacles may be posed by those to whom *parrhesia* applies.
   g. In the face of such obstacles *parrhesia* is the courage of openness, i.e., candor.
h. This candor or courage opposes all those who would limit the right to reveal the truth or hamper the unveiling of the truth.

i. By defending the right to say anything, notwithstanding the anger of the tyrant, it keeps the reality of things open in candid objectivity.

24. Private sphere:
   a. Both the noun and the verb played a role in the private life of the Greeks.
   b. This meaning came from the political arena.
   c. In the private sphere parrhesia had the meaning of candor or openness between friends.
   d. At times the word can mean “liberality,” or “impudence,” abuse of freedom of speech.

25. Moral Concept:
   a. The morally free man has parrhesia.
   b. The man dominated by passions is shameless.
   c. He who has parrhesia leads a public life.
   d. This is the abiding mark of the philosopher, who now exercises parrhesia.
   e. Diogenes is the ideal here.

B. LXX
1. Parrhesia occurs 12 times and only 6 of which are canonical.
2. The verb parrhesiazomai 6 times in the LXX.
3. Parrhesia has only 1 Hebrew counterpart.
4. In the single canonical text with a Hebrew original the reference is to God’s leading Israel out of its bondage in Egypt qomemiuth (Lev. 26:13), which literally means “with heads held high.”
5. Usually the preposition meta, “with” occurs with this noun.
6. Parrhesia also means “confidence” in some passages (Job 22:26; 27:10).
7. It also appears in Leviticus 26:13 where it is used as an adverb meaning, “upright.”
8. The Greek understanding of parrhesia was taken over in the Hellenistic Judaism.
9. Parrhesia is used by Philo to describe a man’s attitude in prayer (Rev. Div. Her. 5-29).
10. The word is also used of the confidence of the righteous in the end times (2 Esd. 7:9ff.).

C. NT
1. The noun parrhesia appears 31 times in the NT and the verb parrhesiazomai is found only 9 times.
2. Parrhesia can be used of openness and confidence to approach both God and men.
3. It is used for both confidence to speak before both God and men.
4. Parrhesia in the NT can have the following meanings depending upon the context of the passage:
   b. “Openness to the public before whom speaking and actions take place” (John 7:3; 11:54; Acts 4:13; 11:54; 2 Cor. 3:12; Col. 2:16).
5. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, "parrhesia, from pas, "all," rhesis, "speech" (see A, No. 2), denotes (a), primarily, "freedom of speech, unreservedness of utterance," Acts 4:29,31; 2 Cor 3:12; 7:4; Philem 8; or "to speak without ambiguity, plainly," John 10:24; or "without figures of speech," John 16:25; (b) "the absence of fear in speaking boldly; hence, confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, without any connection necessarily with speech"; the RV has "boldness" in the following; Acts 4:13; Eph 3:12; 1 Tim 3:13; Heb 3:6; 4:16; 10:19,35; 1 John 2:28; 3:21; 4:17; 5:14; (c) the deportment by which one becomes conspicuous, John 7:4; 11:54, acts openly, or secures publicity, Col 2:15. See CONFIDENCE, OPENLY, PLAINNESS."
   a. Refers properly to one’s freedom to say anything and thence to straightforwardness and openness in speech.
   b. In Jewish texts, freedom, confidence, joyous trust; boldness of the wise and of God’s friends; eschatologically, assurance of future joy with God.
   c. In the NT, publicness, openness of speech and action; public recognition, openly, public, plainly, without concealment, fearlessness, candor, joyous confidence, frankness, boldness, open glorification of Christ in one’s life inhibited by nothing, confidence, assurance, certainty.
   a. Freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech
   b. Free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, assurance
   c. The deportment by which one becomes conspicuous or secures publicity

   a. Outspokenness, frankness, plainness of speech, that conceals nothing and passes over nothing
   b. Openness sometimes develops into openness to the public, before whom speaking and actions take place
   c. Courage, confidence, boldness, fearlessness, especially in the presence of persons of high rank.

9. The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised (page 311):
   a. Freedom in speaking, boldness of speech
   b. As an adverb, freely, openly
   c. License, authority
   d. Confidence, assurance
   e. Adverbially, openly, plainly, perspiciously, unambiguously
   f. Publicly before all

10. Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domains (volume 2):
    b. *En parrhesia*, in an evident or publicly known manner – ‘publicly, in an evident manner’ (page 338).