"Make My Joy Complete": The Price of Partnership in the Letter of Paul to the Philippians

Mark Avery Jennings
Marquette University

Recommended Citation
http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/509
“MAKE MY JOY COMPLETE”: THE PRICE OF PARTNERSHIP IN THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

by

Mark A. Jennings, B.A., M.Ed., M.A., M.A.

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School, Marquette University, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

May 2015
ABSTRACT

“MAKE MY JOY COMPLETE”: THE PRICE OF PARTNERSHIP IN THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Mark A. Jennings, B.A., M.Ed., M.A., M.A.

Marquette University, May 2015

My study challenges the consensus that there is no discernable, single purpose that shapes the entire epistle to the Philippians. I argue that Paul writes Philippians with the sole intent of persuading the church to maintain its exclusive partnership with him and his gospel mission. I examine each section of Philippians using standard historical-critical methods, rhetorical criticism, and social-scientific methods. Special attention is given to those passages where the majority of scholars have argued that Paul has changed subjects. The grammatical imperatives (especially those in 1:27; 2:2, 12, 14, 29; 3:17) factor significantly in this analysis.

After surveying the scholarship on Philippians in Chapter One, I argue in Chapter Two that Phil 1:1–11, as the exordium, prefaces what is to follow regarding Paul’s view of the Philippians’ fellowship with him in his mission. In Chapter Three, I propose that Phil 1:12–26 (the narratio) provides the hermeneutical key for understanding the division Paul establishes between himself / his partners and his rivals. Contrary to most interpretations, I contend that Paul is not affirming the theological position of his rivals in 1:18a.

In Chapters Four and Five, I consider the propositio (1:27–30) and the heart of the letter, the probatio (2:1–2:18). I maintain that Paul’s attention to unity in 1:27–2:4 does not address potential fractures within the Philippian church, but is directed towards their corporate unity with him. He continues by presenting three pieces of evidence in support of the propositio: the pattern of Christ (2:5–11); the dichotomy between faithful and apostate Israel (2:12–16a); and his own posture of sacrificial giving (2:16b–18). In Chapter Six, I propose that, following Greco-Roman rhetorical convention, Paul introduces Epaphroditus, Timothy, and himself as examples (2:19–4:1). Finally, in Chapter Seven I examine 4:2–20, and argue that Paul delays discussing squarely the Philippians’ gift until he has established the proper background for understanding it. Further, I suggest that Paul considers the Philippians’ support to be a sanctified, righteous fruit that authenticates their faith and demonstrates their faithfulness to him and his gospel mission. In the Conclusions, I briefly summarize the study.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mark A. Jennings, B.A., M.Ed., M.A., M.A.

It is by the efforts of many that this study has been made possible. I would like to begin by thanking the Department of Theology and Marquette University for their support, including the granting of a dissertation fellowship. I offer my gratitude to the members of my dissertation committee — Andrei A. Orlov, William S. Kurz, and D. Stephen Long — for their willingness to consider this manuscript, for their welcome advice on how I might improve it, and for their kindness to me during my defense. Of course, from the outset of this project, I have been indebted to my adviser Julian V. Hills. I shudder to think about the number of missteps that he prevented me from taking on this project. His commitment to me and to this study has been an immeasurable gift. I deem it quite an honor to be numbered among those who can call him Doktorvater.

Thanks are especially due to my family for their endless encouragement: to my parents, David and Mary Jennings, for loving me, for teaching me the inestimable value of great deeds and of small ones, and especially for filling my world with the beauty of Holy Scripture; to my in-laws, Bill and Jan Moore, for trusting their daughter into my hands and for the continual pride that they take in having me as their son-in-law; and most of all, to my wife. The path we have taken together, with its unique and unrelenting demands, has required much of Kim, and she has never failed. She is a living sermon, showing me what it means to be content and joyful in all things. I give thanks for her, and for our three beautiful sons Avery, Josiah, and Harry.

Soli Deo gloria.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. i  
Abbreviations ........................................................................................................................ vi  
Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 1  

Thesis and Methodology ........................................................................................................... 5  

Chapter One ~ Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: Setting the Scene ............................................ 11  

1.1. Overview .......................................................................................................................... 11  
1.2. Integrity of the Epistle ..................................................................................................... 11  
1.3. Friendship-Letter vs. Family-Letter ................................................................................. 20  
1.4. Paul’s Incarceration and the Dating of the Epistle ......................................................... 23  
1.5. Disunity or Unity .............................................................................................................. 27  
1.6. Gospel / Gospel Mission ................................................................................................. 30  
1.7. Perseverance .................................................................................................................... 35  
1.8. The Philippians’ Gift ....................................................................................................... 38  

Chapter Two ~ The Way Forward for Interpreting Philippians: Philippians 1:1–11 .............. 40  

2.1. Overview .......................................................................................................................... 40  
2.2. Philippians 1:3–8 ............................................................................................................ 42  
2.3. Philippians 1:9–11 ............................................................................................................ 54  
2.4. Summary and the Way Forward ......................................................................................... 57  

Chapter Three ~ Paul’s Circumstances and the Question of Legitimacy: Philippians 1:12–26 ................................................................................................................................. 59  

3.1. Overview .......................................................................................................................... 59  
3.2. Philippians 1:12–18a ........................................................................................................ 62  
3.2.1. Philippians 1:12–14 .................................................................................................... 64
3.2.2. Philippians 1:15–18a ................................................................. 70

3.3. Philippians 1:18b–26 ........................................................................ 84

3.3.1. Philippians 1:18b–20 ................................................................. 85

3.3.2. Philippians 1:21–26 .................................................................... 94

3.4. Summary ......................................................................................... 100

Chapter Four ~ To Persevere as the People of God, 1: Philippians 1:27–2:4 ............ 101

4.1. Overview .......................................................................................... 101

4.2. τὸν αὐτὸν ἁγίων ἔχοντες, οἶν εἶδετε ἐν ἑμοὶ καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε ἐν ἑμοί (Phil 1:30) ................................................................. 102

4.3. πολιτεύσθε (Phil 1:27a) .................................................................... 109

4.4. Philippians 1:27a.............................................................................. 114

4.5. Philippians 1:27b–30 ....................................................................... 116

4.6. Philippians 2:1–4 ............................................................................. 123

4.6.1. Philippians 2:1 ........................................................................... 124

4.6.2. πληρώσατε μου τὴν χαράν ................................................................ 128

4.6.3. Philippians 2:2–4 ....................................................................... 129

4.7. Summary ......................................................................................... 133

Chapter Five ~ To Persevere as the People of God, 2: Philippians 2:5–18 ............ 134

5.1. Overview .......................................................................................... 134

5.2. Philippians 2:5–11 .......................................................................... 135

5.2.1. Philippians 2:5 ......................................................................... 136

5.2.2. Philippians 2:6–11 .................................................................... 141

5.3. Philippians 2:12–16a ..................................................................... 148

5.3.1. Philippians 2:12–13 ................................................................... 148

5.3.2. Philippians 2:14–16a ................................................................ 155
5.4. Philippians 2:16b–18 ........................................................................................................................................... 169
5.5. Summary .................................................................................................................................................. 172
Chapter Six ~ The “Ocular Proof” of Fidelity and Fellowship: Philippians 2:19–4:1.............. 173
6.1. Overview ................................................................................................................................................. 173
6.2. Form and Purpose of Phil 2:19–30 .......................................................................................................... 174
6.3. Philippians 2:19–24 .................................................................................................................................. 177
6.4. Philippians 2:25–30 .................................................................................................................................. 182
   6.4.1. The Epithets of Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25) ......................................................................................... 183
   6.4.2. Philippians 2:25–30 ......................................................................................................................... 188
6.5. Summary of 2:19–30 ................................................................................................................................ 192
6.6. Philippians 3:1–4:1 .................................................................................................................................. 192
   6.6.1. Philippians 3:2–16 ............................................................................................................................... 197
   6.6.2. Philippians 3:17–21 ............................................................................................................................. 204
   6.6.3. Philippians 4:1 ...................................................................................................................................... 212
6.7. Summary .................................................................................................................................................. 213
Chapter Seven ~ To Continue the Fellowship in the Gospel: Philippians 4:2–20 .......... 215
7.1. Overview .................................................................................................................................................. 215
7.2. Philippians 4:2–3 ...................................................................................................................................... 216
7.3. Philippians 4:4–9 ...................................................................................................................................... 223
   7.3.1. Philippians 4:4–7 ................................................................................................................................. 224
   7.3.2. Philippians 4:8–9 ................................................................................................................................. 230
   7.3.3. Summary of 4:4–9 ............................................................................................................................... 234
7.4. Philippians 4:10–20 .................................................................................................................................. 235
   7.4.1. The Delay of 4:10–20 ............................................................................................................................ 235
   7.4.2. Philippians 4:10–14 ............................................................................................................................. 239
7.4.3. Philippians 4:15–20 ................................................................. 248

7.5. Summary .................................................................................. 254

Conclusions .................................................................................. 256

Bibliography .................................................................................. 262
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AASF</td>
<td>Annales Academiae scientiarum fennicae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABD</td>
<td>Anchor Bible Dictionary. Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, N.Y., 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABRL</td>
<td>Anchor Bible Reference Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJA</td>
<td>American Journal of Archaeology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AnSo</td>
<td>Ancient Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANTC</td>
<td>Abingdon New Testament Commentaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AqS</td>
<td>Aquinas Scripture Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASNU</td>
<td>Acta seminarii neotestamentici upsaliensis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBR</td>
<td>Bulletin for Biblical Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BECNT</td>
<td>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bib</td>
<td>Biblica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BibInt</td>
<td>Biblical Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJRL</td>
<td>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNTC</td>
<td>Black’s New Testament Commentaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BS</td>
<td>The Biblical Seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSac</td>
<td>Bibliotheca sacra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td>The Bible Translator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTB</td>
<td>Biblical Theology Bulletin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTN</td>
<td>Bibliotheca Theologica Norvegica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWA(N)T</td>
<td>Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten (und Neuen) Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BZ</td>
<td>Biblische Zeitschrift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BZW</td>
<td>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BZNW</td>
<td>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBET</td>
<td>Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CICoT</td>
<td>Classics and Contemporary Thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNTC</td>
<td>Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNTUOT</td>
<td>Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ConBNT</td>
<td>Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CQ</td>
<td>Classical Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTR</td>
<td>Criswell Theological Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBib (n.s.)</td>
<td>Etudes bibliques (nouvelle sérée)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Epworth Commentaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECIL</td>
<td>Early Christianity and Its Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETL</td>
<td><em>Ephemerides theoligicae lovanienses</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExpTim</td>
<td><em>Expository Times</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF</td>
<td>Foundations and Facets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBS</td>
<td>Guides to Biblical Scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCT</td>
<td>Gender, Culture, Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBT</td>
<td><em>Horizons in Biblical Theology</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNT</td>
<td><em>Handbuch zum Neuen Testament</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNTC</td>
<td>Harper’s New Testament Commentaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTKNT</td>
<td>Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTR</td>
<td><em>Harvard Theological Review</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTS</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUT</td>
<td>Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBC</td>
<td><em>Interpretation: A Biblical Commentary for Teaching and Preaching</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IG</td>
<td><em>Inscriptiones graecae. Editio minor. Berlin, 1924–</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int</td>
<td><em>Interpretation</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td><em>Journal of Biblical Literature</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEH</td>
<td><em>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JETS</td>
<td><em>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JGRChJ</td>
<td><em>Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JHS</td>
<td><em>Journal of Hellenic Studies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSNT</td>
<td><em>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSNTSup</td>
<td><em>Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTC</td>
<td><em>Journal for Theology and the Church</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTS n.s.</td>
<td><em>Journal of Theological Studies</em> (new series)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JWV</td>
<td>Julius-Wellhausen-Vorlesung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEK</td>
<td>Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBRS</td>
<td>Lexham Biblical Reference Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCBI</td>
<td>Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCL</td>
<td>Loeb Classical Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>Library of Early Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LNStAS</td>
<td>Leicester-Nottingham Studies in Ancient Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LNTS</td>
<td>Library of New Testament Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCNT</td>
<td>Meyer’s Commentary on the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MdB</td>
<td><em>Le Monde de la Bible</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNNTC</td>
<td>Moffatt New Testament Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neot</td>
<td><em>Neotestamentica</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIB</td>
<td><em>The New Interpreter’s Bible</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIBCNT</td>
<td>New International Biblical Commentary on the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICNT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIGTC</td>
<td>New International Greek Testament Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NovT</td>
<td><em>Novum Testamentum</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NovTSup</td>
<td>Novum Testamentum Supplements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSBT</td>
<td>New Studies in Biblical Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTL</td>
<td>New Testament Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTM</td>
<td>New Testament Message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTR</td>
<td>New Testament Readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTS</td>
<td>New Testament Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTTh</td>
<td>New Testament Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTTS</td>
<td>New Testament Tools and Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OJT</td>
<td><em>Ogbomoso Journal of Theology</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBM</td>
<td>Paternoster Biblical Monographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PilNTC</td>
<td>Pillar New Testament Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRSt</td>
<td><em>Perspectives in Religious Studies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ResQ</td>
<td>Restoration Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RevExp</td>
<td><em>Review and Expositor</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RevScRel</td>
<td><em>Revue des sciences religieuses</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAQ</td>
<td>Sammlung ausgewählter Kirchen- und dogmengeschichtlicher Quellenschriften</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBL</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBLAB</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBLDS</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBLSBS</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBLSP</td>
<td><em>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHNT</td>
<td>Studia ad corpus hellenisticum Novi Testamenti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNTSMS</td>
<td>Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNTW</td>
<td>Studies of the New Testament and Its World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StTh</td>
<td>Studies in Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBS</td>
<td>Tools for Biblical Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>Tyndale Biblical Commentaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THNTC</td>
<td>Two Horizons New Testament Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THKNT</td>
<td>Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TJ</td>
<td><em>Trinity Journal</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TynBul</td>
<td><em>Tyndale Bulletin</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TZ</td>
<td><em>Theologische Zeitschrift</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBC</td>
<td>Word Biblical Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WMANT</td>
<td>Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTJ</td>
<td><em>Westminster Theological Journal</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WUNT</td>
<td>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WZ</td>
<td><em>Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZBK</td>
<td>Zürcher Bibelkommentare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZECNT</td>
<td>Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZNW</td>
<td><em>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In his introduction to his commentary on St. Paul’s epistle to the Philippians, Thomas Aquinas writes:

From these words [Prov 4:18] we can gather the subject matter of this letter. For the Philippians were on Christ’s narrow way, enduring many tribulations for Christ. They were enlightened by faith: “Among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15). Furthermore, they were making progress, as is clear from the entire letter. Therefore after the letter to the Ephesians, in which an instruction was given on preserving Church unity, it was fitting that those who best preserved it should be held up as an example of preserving the unity of the Church.¹

Modern scholarship has generally held the same opinion, depicting the church at Philippi as faithful and designating the epistle as a letter of friendship.² In Philippians, Paul praises the church for its partnership and speaks affectionately to its members. Unlike his correspondence with the churches in Galatia and Corinth, Paul’s letter to the Philippians is full of warmth. The mutuality between the Philippians and Paul is a dominant characteristic of this letter, contributing to Philippians being

---

¹ Aquinas, Commentary on Saint Paul’s First Letter to the Thessalonians and the Letter to the Philippians (trans. Fabian R. Larcher and Michael J. Duffy; AqS 3; Albany, N.Y.: Magi, 1969), 1.

deemed “the joyful epistle.” In his oft-cited summary, Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687–1752) describes the epistle thus: *summa epistolae: gaudeo, gaudete.*

However, whereas there is broad agreement on the tone of the epistle, there is little consensus on the reason(s) Paul wrote Philippians. The difficulty lies in the apparent multiplicity of topics. These include the acknowledgement of the arrival of the church’s gift with Epaphroditus; a report on Paul’s current incarceration; Paul’s announcement of his future travel plans (as well as those of Timothy and Epaphroditus); warnings about the danger that comes from the enemies of the gospel; specific advice for reconciling Euodia and Syntyche; and exhortations that the church mend any divisions. Gerald F. Hawthorne’s assessment is representative of most estimations of the epistle:

Philippians bears all the characteristics of a very personal letter . . . where the reasons for writing are various and numerous. It is like a chat, the subject matter changing without notice, as in an informal conversation between friends. For this reason an outline of the letter is not easy to make. The letter

---

3 This is a sentiment that continues today regarding the distinctiveness of Philippians within the NT canon; Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC 11; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1998), vii; G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians* (PiNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 1.


5 The Pauline authorship of Philippians has not been disputed since F. C. Baur (*Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and His Teachings* [orig. German ed. 1845; 2 vols. in 1; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003], 45–79). Baur questions Pauline authorship partly because he sees no indication of purpose given in the epistle. Consensus on authorship does not mean that there is no debate regarding the possible presence of non-Pauline material in the epistle, especially 2:6–11.
follows no logical progression. Swift changes of topic and even of tone come as no surprise. Philippians is the antithesis of Romans.⁶

Nevertheless, there are a few studies that advocate a single purpose. Ernst Lohmeyer is the first modern scholar to propose this.⁷ He argues that it is “the unique situation of martyrdom through which apostle and community are likewise connected and separated” that drives the epistle.⁸ The two main counters to Lohmeyer’s interpretation are that he appears to damage the meaning of the text at times, finding martyrdom where there is none, and that he reads second-century views of martyrdom


⁷ Lohmeyer, Der Brief an die Philipper (KEK 9; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 5.

⁸ Ibid.
into the text. Additionally, his thesis does not account for all of the epistle, as he excludes 4:10–20 from his interpretation. Although Lohmeyer’s reading has not been widely accepted, it has demonstrated the continuity of the theme of suffering in the letter.

Since Lohmeyer, there have been other studies suggesting that there is a single purpose or subject in Philippians. Each has contributed to the interpretation of the epistle, but none seems to have had success in moving the consensus as more than “the spontaneous utterance of Christian love and gratitude . . . hardly consistent with any systematic treatment.” These previous studies have generally faced the same challenges issued to Lohmeyer: unable to adequately account for the entire letter, and straining of the text to fit the hypothesis.

---


11 Studies proposing that Philippians has a single purpose include Heinrich Schlier, Der Philipperbrief (Kriterien 54; Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1980); J. A. Motyer, The Message of Philippians: Jesus our Joy (Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1984); Davorin Peterlin, Paul’s Letter to the Philippians in the Light of Disunity in the Church (NovTSup 79; Leiden: Brill, 1995); Paul A. Holloway, Consolation in Philippians: Philosophical Sources and Rhetorical Strategy (SNTSMS 112; Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2001); John Paul Heil, Philippians: Let us Rejoice in Being Comforted to Christ (ECIL 3; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).

12 Lightfoot, Philippians, 66, 68.
Thesis and Methodology

My study challenges the consensus by offering an interpretation that connects each supposedly distinct subject under a single rhetorical purpose, one that I am persuaded satisfies the charges typically issued against single-purpose proposals. I argue that Paul wrote Philippians with the sole purpose of persuading the church to maintain its exclusive partnership with him and his gospel mission. With the exception of a few ancillary matters, almost every element is directed by this view. He exhorted them to persevere in this by dispelling any doubts as to the legitimacy of his apostleship, pointing to the inauthenticity of competing gospel missions, drawing on their reciprocal mutuality, and giving prominence to the eschatological promise of their continued fidelity.

Whereas others argue that Paul calls the Philippians to be steadfast in their commitment to the gospel of Christ, I propose that he urges them to be steadfast in their commitment to his gospel of Christ. The difference between their studies and mine may seem small, just one word, “his.” But once this distinction is recognized and fully considered, the gap between their interpretations and mine becomes more pronounced. In sum, Paul writes to urge the church at Philippi to partake in his gospel mission from the first day until the last.

13 Pheme Perkins (“Philippians: Theology for the Heavenly Politeuma,” in Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon [ed. Jouette M. Bassler; vol. 1 of Pauline Theology, eds. Jouette M. Bassler, David M. Hay, and E. Elizabeth Johnson; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1991], 89) writes that “Philippians poses the problem of the context, underlying structure, and content of Paul’s theology even in the questions about origin, setting, and composition.” I agree with Perkins’s assessment and thus give a reading that I find accounts for each of these.
In support of this thesis I shall seek to establish that Paul’s argument is rooted in three fundamental tenets:

(1) Κοινωνία matters. The Philippians and Paul had entered into an agreement regarding his apostolic mission. References to mutuality and reciprocity are found at several places in the epistle because Paul is certain that it is eschatologically beneficial for both him and the Philippians to preserve their partnership in advancing the gospel mission. Conversely, it is eschatologically perilous for the church to separate from Paul.14

(2) Rivals matter. Paul repeatedly offers “proofs” that simultaneously affirm the ordained superiority of his apostolic mission and repudiate the claims of his antagonists. While most of the studies of Paul’s opponents in Philippians address only the passages where they are explicitly mentioned (1:15–17, 27–28; 2:14–16; 3:2, 12–16, 18–19), I hope to show that the threat of rivals plays a critical role elsewhere as well. The risk of disunity that Paul addresses is not that the church will become divided, but that it will divide against him in favor of another gospel.15 A fully contextual reading envisions a contest not between Christ and Caesar but between Paul’s Christ and that of his rivals.

---

14 Jason A. Whitlark (Enabling Fidelity to God: Perseverance in Hebrews in Light of the Reciprocity Systems of the Ancient Mediterranean World [PBM; Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, England: Paternoster, 2008], 171–81) pursues a similar line of reasoning regarding the intertwining of reciprocity and perseverance in the rhetoric of the epistle to the Hebrews.

I will also argue that the opponents in Philippians are those who reject Paul and offer (and sometimes benefit from) a proclamation of a different gospel. Therefore Philippians has a strong polemical flavor and presupposes individual persuasive acts.” Rather, Acts and the letters of Paul depict a plan designed to create self-identification, to make that identity valuable and worth working for, and to keep converts.

16 Few matters have occasioned more debate among commentators than the identity of Paul’s opponents in Philippians. Though the question is hardly settled, scholarship is coalescing around the proposal that Paul has multiple opponents in view, each with his or her own theological and political designs. For example, Hansen (Philippians, 28–32) identifies four distinct groups of opponents: (1) preachers of Christ who suppose that they can stir up trouble for Paul (Phil 1:15–17); (2) Roman opponents to the gospel who are intimidating Christians at Philippi (Phil 1:28); (3) Jewish Christians who lead Gentile Christians to follow Jewish rituals (Phil 3:2); and (4) Gentile Christians who “live as enemies of the cross” as a result of the pressures of the pagan culture in Roman Philippi (3:18–19). O’Brien (Philippians, 34–35), Hawthorne (Philippians, iv), and Moisés Silva (Philippians [2d ed.; BECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005], 8–9) argue similarly. Other hypothesized opponents include ethnic Jews, gnostic Christians, Christian missionaries promoting a divine-man theology, libertines, antinomians, and pneumatics. These various theories will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

In anticipation of what follows: I will show that the “various opponents” view needs reconsideration. Even if the opponents are unconnected parties and not a common group, Paul considers them to be of the same species: rivals to his gospel mission. Demetrius K. Williams (Enemies of the Cross of Christ: The Terminology of the Cross and Conflict in Philippians [JSNTSup 223; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002], 249) suggests that Paul’s “enemies of the cross” (Phil 3:18) is “a rhetorical means of defending his understanding of these issues against a perceived or actual threat.” In other words, Williams maintains that when Paul refers to the “cross,” in Philippians it is for polemical means. My study will follow Williams’s lead by looking more broadly at how Paul characterizes his enemies relative to himself on the basis of his particular proclamation of the salvific event of Christ.

that there is a real threat of competitors. As is consistent with deliberative rhetoric, Paul encourages the Philippians to choose the better path, namely, his gospel.\textsuperscript{17}

(3) Finances matter. Not only does the existence of rivals inform much of Paul’s rhetoric, it also transforms the Philippians’ financial support into a salient indicator of whom they esteem authentic. Paul repeatedly refers, both directly and indirectly, to the Philippians’ support. In making his appeal, Paul presents their support as a creaturely reality sanctified to a holy purpose. The Philippians’ spiritual commitment to him and the advance of the gospel is not to be separated from their obligations to aid him in his ministry. Further, I will argue that Paul considers their faithfulness in giving to him a tangible expression of their place in the eschatological Israel of God, whereas ceasing in this would signal a break in the fellowship and be akin to disobedient Israel breaking with Moses (and God) in the wilderness.

I examine each section of Philippians using standard historical-critical methods, including lexical, grammatical, discourse, and historical analysis (Jewish and Greco-Roman background). I give special attention to those passages in which the majority of scholars have argued that Paul has changed subjects. The grammatical imperatives

\textsuperscript{17}Aristotle (\textit{Rhet}. 1.3.5): “The end of the deliberative speaker is the expedient or harmful; for he who exhorts recommends a course of action as better and he who dissuades advises against it as worse; all other considerations, such as justice and injustice, honor and disgrace, are included as accessory in reference to this.”
(especially 1:27; 2:2, 12, 14, 29; 3:17) factor significantly in this study. Indeed, I would stand by the proposition that to understand Philippians is to understand its imperatives. I use social-scientific methods to discuss the dynamics of first-century gift-giving and reciprocity. I employ rhetorical criticism to demonstrate the unity of the letter and account for the prominence Paul gives to the subject of perseverance.\footnote{Though I address much of Philippians, this study is not a commentary and therefore does not seek to address the full range of interpretive questions one expects from such a work. For instance, Phil 2:5–11 has a long history of interpretation, especially regarding its contribution to the construction of a Pauline Christology. But the discussion of this passage will be limited to its persuasive and polemical value within the purpose of the letter as I have discerned it.}

In Chapter One, I survey the research on the integrity of Philippians, the rhetoric of the epistle, its dating and provenance, and the subjects of gospel mission, perseverance, and unity. I argue in Chapter Two that Phil 1:1–11, as the exordium, prefaces what is to follow regarding Paul’s view of the Philippians’ fellowship with him in his mission. In Chapter Three, I propose that Phil 1:12–26, as the narratio, provides the hermeneutical key for understanding the division that Paul establishes between himself / his partners and his rivals. Contrary to most interpretations, I contend that Paul is not affirming the theological position of his rivals in 1:18a. Rather, he finds that their disposition towards him suggests that they are at odds with the gospel itself.

In Chapters Four and Five, I consider the propositio (1:27–30) and the heart of the letter, the probatio (2:1–2:18). I maintain that Paul’s attention to unity in 1:27–2:4 does not address potential fractures within the Philippian church, but is directed towards their corporate unity with him. He continues by presenting three pieces of evidence in support of the propositio: the pattern of Christ (2:5–11); the dichotomy between faithful and apostate Israel (2:12–16a); and his own posture of sacrificial giving (2:16b–18).
In Chapter Six, I propose that, following Greco-Roman rhetorical convention, Paul introduces Epaphroditus, Timothy, and himself as examples (2:19–4:1). Finally, in Chapter Seven I examine 4:2–20, and argue that Paul delays discussing the Philippians’ gift squarely until he had established the proper context for understanding it. Further, I suggest that Paul considers the Philippians’ support to be a sanctified, righteous fruit that authenticates their faith and demonstrates their fidelity to him and his gospel mission. In the Conclusions, I briefly summarize the study.

In putting forward this reading, it may seem that I have reduced the epistle to a fundraising appeal: that in Philippians we have an ancient example of an itinerant preacher seeking monetary support. In fact, my understanding of the epistle is diametrically opposed to this. In Philippians, Paul has elevated something as mundane as money and support into a sacred act, an obedient response to God’s revelation. It is a religious act, wherein the body of Christ (the church) is in partnership to proclaim the lordship of Christ.

By way of method I acknowledge that in proposing a reading that is comprehensive I open myself up to the possibility of “finding what I am looking for” in every word, phrase, and clause. Further, though I am satisfied that “the parts and the sum” of the epistle are better understood by what I am suggesting, this does not mean that Paul could not (or does not) address any secondary concerns. The strategy of my argumentation throughout will be to examine Paul’s call to the Philippians to remain steadfast. Admittedly, certain passages seem to offer more convincing evidence than others. But I hope to show that even the “less convincing passages” have their logical and rhetorical place in the whole as I propose reading it.
1.1. Overview

In this Chapter, I will survey the research on the integrity of the epistle, the rhetoric of the epistle, its dating and provenance, and the subjects of gospel mission, perseverance, and unity.

1.2. Integrity of the Epistle

Since the various purposes advanced by scholars are located within distinct sections, accompanied by seemingly abrupt transitions between them, the integrity of Philippians has been questioned.\(^\text{19}\) The predominance of partition theories began during the twentieth century.\(^\text{20}\) Though scholarship in the past twenty-five years has been trending back towards affirming the integrity of the epistle, there is no scholarly consensus.\(^\text{21}\)

\(^{19}\) Veronica Koperski (“The Early History of the Dissection of Philippians,” *JTS* n.s. 44 [1993]: 599–603) notes that the earliest suggestion that Philippians was a composite letter came in the seventeenth century.

\(^{20}\) For example, in 1919, Alfred R. Scott Plummer (*A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians* [London: Scott, 1919], xiii) stated that there is no reason to doubt the integrity of the epistle. But by 1985 David E. Garland (“The Composition and Unity of Philippians: Some Neglected Literary Factors,” *NovT* 27 [1985]: 141) could state that “a crescendo of voices now maintains that there is no reasonable doubt that all four chapters were not written as part of the same letter, nor in the order in which we have them.”

Several arguments have been offered against the authenticity of the order of the sections in canonical Philippians. First, the final form of Romans and 2 Corinthians may be composite, indicating that a later (re)ordering of an epistle was not uncommon.\(^{22}\) Second, there are ancient references to Paul writing more than one letter to the church at Philippi.\(^{23}\) Third, the apparent delay of a clear acknowledgement by Paul of the Philippians’ gift till the end of the letter (4:10–20) is unexpected. If this was its own separate letter, however, the allusions to the Philippians’ support elsewhere in the epistle are reminders. Fourth, an abrupt change in tone and subject seems to occur at 3:2. Paul’s depiction of “the dogs, evil workers, and mutilators,” as well as the briskness of the section, is at odds with the sense of the rest of the epistle. This entire section apparently stresses the danger of the Judaizers, something (if this interpretation is accepted) he does not mention elsewhere in the epistle. Finally, Paul seems to be ending a letter at 3:1.\(^{24}\) Thus 3:2–4:3 is seen as foreign to the rest of the


\(^{24}\) Signals that Paul is possibly ending a letter include τὸ λοιπόν (“finally”); a summary statement on rejoicing; and the presence of a travelogue in the preceding
These are the main arguments typically given for reading Philippians as a composite of multiple letters. It is suggested that a later redactor, then, put the letters together into a singular writing, perhaps to increase the significance of Paul’s correspondence with the Philippians.

Those arguing for the partitioning of Philippians tend to divide it into two or three letters. A commonly proposed two-letter scheme is as follows: Letter A: 1:1–

---


These arguments against the integrity of Philippians have each been challenged, with the counterarguments having varying degrees of perceived success. First, the observation that Romans and 2 Corinthians are themselves compilations is not settled scholarship.\(^\text{29}\) Even if these epistles are compilations, it does not necessarily mean that Philippians is one. Likewise, there are several possible reasons for the references to multiple letters to the Philippians.\(^\text{30}\) Second, some advocates for the unity of the epistle

Proponents of a three-letter composition include Schenk (Philipperbriefe, 336), Lukas Bormann (Philippi: Stadt und Christengemeinde zur Zeit des Paulus [NovTSup 78; Leiden: Brill, 1995], 108–18), Jerome Murphy-O’Connor (Paul: A Critical Life [Oxford: Clarendon, 1996], 215–30), Helmut Koester (“Paul and Philippi: The Evidence from Early Christian Literature,” in Philippi at the Time of Paul and After his Death [ed. Charalambos Bakirtzis and Helmut Koester; Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1998], 52–56), Reumann (Philippians, 3). Today, the three-letter hypothesis receives more support than the two-letter hypothesis. The main difference for those preferring the three-letter partition over the two-letter is that they consider 4:10–20 to be a separate letter, sent first by Paul to the Philippians immediately after Epaphroditus’s arrival, to confirm that the gift had been received. The second letter, therefore, was sent with Epaphroditus to convey the current status of Paul’s incarceration and to encourage the church to be united. The third letter follows with stern warnings regarding his opponents. Peter Wick (Der Philipperbrief: Der formale Aufbau des Briefs als Schlüssel zum Verständnis seines Inhalts [BWANT 7; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994], 39–54) suggests that canonical Philippians is comprised of five separate letters, a proposal that has gained little support.


\(^{30}\) Lightfoot (Philippians, 140–42) suggests that Polycarp’s plural “letters” may signal the epistle’s elevated status. It could also refer to an established collection of
cite the complete lack of external textual evidence of multiple letters as damaging, if not fatal, to partition theories.\textsuperscript{31} This argument is not decisive, however, because it is possible that the reordering occurred prior to the letter’s circulation, and so prior to the start of its transmission history.\textsuperscript{32}

Third, the diversity of opinion regarding the number of possible letters is considered by some to be a weakness to any multiple-letter proposal.\textsuperscript{33} I find this argument to be methodologically problematic. The sheer number of possible “answers” to the problem does not negate the potential that one of them may be correct.\textsuperscript{34} A fourth challenge is that the compilation theories are unable to account for the redactor’s methodology.\textsuperscript{35} For example, Hawthorne questions why a scribe would

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item O’Brien, \textit{Philippians}, 12; Silva, \textit{Philippians}, 12; Hansen, \textit{Philippians}, 17. The textual attestation is consistent and early. P46, a possibly late-second-century papyrus, supports the canonical form. Silva (\textit{Philippians}, 12) maintains that there is no textual evidence in favor of interpolation as well as nothing in the early patristic writings that hints at this.
\item O’Brien (\textit{Philippians}, 13) acknowledges this possibility, but maintains that there is no evidence from the early Fathers of any attempt to merge separate apostolic writings.
\item Hansen, \textit{Philippians}, 18. Garland (“Composition,” 155) charts eighteen different proposals for the “third letter.”
\item For example, there are several suggested authors of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Having more than one candidate, or even many candidates, does not automatically disqualify any of the candidates.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
place Paul’s acknowledgement of the gift at the end of the epistle, or why “an intelligent scribe, bent on unifying the fragments,” would separate 3:1 and 4:4. In other words, the same concerns (style breaks, shifts in tone, the apparent seam between 3:1 and 3:2) also apply to the hypothetical redactor. This refutation assumes, of course, that a redactor desired to have a seamless composition. Alternatively, a redactor might have sought to organize known epistles topically as an aid to the recipients. An “intelligent scribe” does not need to have the same organizational goals as an author, nor be held to the same standards.

The above challenges to the compilation theories do tip the scales slightly in favor of the integrity of the epistle, but not decisively. The foundational premise of these theories is that the final state is unlikely to be in origin an unfragmented composition. If it can be demonstrated that the arrangement is not “unlikely” or “fragmented,” such proposals become unnecessary.

Interpreting Philippians from a Greco-Roman rhetorical perspective gives support to the integrity of the epistle in this question of “likelihood.”

36 Hawthorne, Philippians, xxxiii.

37 Ben Witherington III (Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011], 22–30) defends the use of rhetorical criticism by citing the following: (1) Paul was an orator seeking to persuade the Greco-Roman world about his gospel; (2) rhetorical criticism does not “impose categories” on Paul’s letters, but recognizes features that are consistent with contemporary practices; (3) by 14 C.E., rhetoric was the primary discipline of advanced education in the Roman world; and (4) the rhetorical conventions of public speech shaped ancient discourse. To this he adds that typical epistolary divisions (greetings, thanksgiving, body, and so on) contribute little to interpreting the outline and logic of Paul’s epistles, which are substantially longer than most ancient letters. They are closer in length to ancient speeches. Further, since Paul’s letters were read aloud, it fits that their construction
thirty years, rhetorical-critical studies have presented arguments that the composition of Philippians fits within ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions. The fount of this approach to Philippians is Duane F. Watson’s 1988 examination. Watson identifies Philippians as deliberative rhetoric designed to persuade the Philippians on the proper accords with the art of oratory. Quintilian (Inst. 12.10.53–55) argues for this very point when he addresses the rhetoric of letters.


conduct of a life worthy of the Gospel (Phil 1:27–30). He outlines the epistle on the basis of ancient rhetoric as follows:

1:3–26  \textit{Exordium}

1:27–30  \textit{Narratio}

2:1–3:21  \textit{Probatio}

\begin{itemize}
\item 2:1–11  First Development
\item 2:12–18  Second Development
\item 2:19–30  \textit{Digressio}
\item 3:1–21  Third Development
\end{itemize}

4:1–20  \textit{Peroratio}

\begin{itemize}
\item 4:1–9  \textit{Repetitio}
\item 4:10–20  \textit{Adfectus}\footnote{Ibid., 59–79.}
\end{itemize}

Watson argues that rhetorical considerations show that 3:2–4:3 and 4:10–20 are “integral to the finished product.”\footnote{Ibid., 88.}

Watson reckons that if Philippians is a compilation, it is a product of “extensive redaction” so that the final product creates a unified whole that conforms to rhetorical conventions. The implication is that since the canonical form is rhetorically plausible, the arguments against the letter’s integrity are unfounded and the previous arguments for it (manuscript history, no evidence for an early church practice of integrating letters, and so on) are confirmatory. Since Watson’s study, the consensus has shifted

\footnote{Watson, “Analysis,” 59–60.}
towards the integrity of the epistle, with many commentators relying, at least in part, on rhetorical criticism.\(^{43}\)

My study will use rhetorical criticism in its analysis of the epistle. I concur with Watson and subsequent rhetorical critics that the epistle bears all the markings of a carefully crafted, singular rhetorical argument. As deliberative rhetoric with epideictic elements, the letter’s intent is to persuade the Philippians to take a specific course of action.\(^{44}\) My study gives additional support to the arguments for the integrity of the letter by demonstrating its development of a main subject. Though I differ with him on some matters of interpretation, I accept Ben Witherington’s rhetorical outline:


Reumann (*Philippians, 9*) suggests that the recent appeal to rhetorical analysis, especially in the Anglo–Saxon world, stems from an already present resistance to the “considerable consensus” in Germany for its partitioning. He judges that rhetorical criticism is not definitive because there is little agreement regarding the rhetorical structure. See further Jaakko Linko, “Paul’s Two Letters to the Philippians? Some Critical Observations on the Unity Question of Philippians,” in *The Nordic Paul: Finnish Approaches to Pauline Theology* (ed. Lars Aeijmelaeus and Antti Mustakallio; LNTS 374; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 156–71. But it seems to me that Reumann’s criticism commits the same logical fallacy (noted above) as those who dispute partitioning theories because of lack of agreement on where the divisions lie.

1. Epistolary Prescript (1:1–2)
2. Exordium (1:3–11)
3. Narratio (1:12–26)
4. Propositio (1:27–30)
5. Probatio (2:1–4:3)
6. Peroratio (4:4–9)
7. Concluding Arguments / Dénouement (4:10–20)
8. Epistolary Greetings and Closing (4:21–23)  

1.3. Friendship-Letter vs. Family-Letter

Gordon D. Fee writes, “Philippians reflects all the characteristics of a ‘letter of friendship.’” Many interpreters agree. Pseudo-Demetrius’s epistolary handbook is


frequently cited in support of this.\textsuperscript{48} G. Walter Hansen cites nine similarities between Philippians and other Hellenistic friendship-letters: (1) repeated expressions of affection; (2) the term κοινωνία; (3) reference to unity of soul and spirit; (4) promotion of like-mindedness; (5) honoring of a yokefellow; (6) encouragement of giving and receiving; (7) depiction of common struggles and joys; (8) extolling of the virtue of friendship; and (9) depiction of a moral paradigm.\textsuperscript{49} Recent studies differ as to how indebted Paul is to the rhetoric of friendship, but scholarly consensus is trending towards affirming that the friendship \textit{topos} is apt.

The classification “friendship-letter” is not without its challenges, however. Markus Bockmuehl notes that φίλος (friend) and φιλία (friendship) are absent.\textsuperscript{50} Paul does not call the Philippians his friends. Instead, his kinship terms (especially ἀδελφός)

\footnotesize{“Philippians in the Light of Some Ancient Discussions on Friendship,” in Fitzgerald, \textit{Friendship}, 141–60.}

\textsuperscript{48} Stanley K. Stowers, \textit{Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity} (LEC 5; Philadelphia, Penn.: Westminster, 1986), 50–70. Pseudo-Demetrius’s handbook is dated from 2 B.C.E. to 2 C.E.; see Malherbe, \textit{Theorists}, 30–41. Pseudo-Demetrius lists the “friendly type” of letter first among his list of twenty-one types. Hansen (\textit{Philippians}, 7) lists four “essential elements” that Pseudo-Demetrius maintains are necessary parts of ancient letters of friendship: (1) two people are separated; (2) one person is attempting to converse with another; (3) a relationship of friendship exists between the two; and (4) the writer is attempting to maintain that relationship with the recipient.

\textsuperscript{49} Hansen, \textit{Philippians}, 8–10. Hansen states that there are ten parallels, but he numbers them incorrectly (skipping #8), leaving only nine. Hansen’s listing relies heavily on ancient philosophical depictions of friendship. He draws connections between Paul’s κοινωνία and Aristotle’s (\textit{Eth. nic.} 8.12.1) statement that “all friendship involves κοινωνία”; between Paul’s emphasis on thinking the same and Cicero’s (\textit{Amic.} 4:15) remark that the “whole essence of friendship . . . is agreement in policy, in pursuits, and in opinion”; and between Paul’s teaching on sharing in joys and struggles and similar sentiments on friends from Plutarch (\textit{Amic. mult.} 96) and Dio Chrysostom (\textit{Orations} 3.103).

\textsuperscript{50} Bockmuehl, \textit{Philippians}, 35; Witherington, \textit{Philippians}, 18.
depict their relationship, remarks of affection that are more indicative of a family-letter.  

Indeed, Loveday Alexander classifies Philippians as an ancient family-letter. She holds that “we may be in a better position to understand what is going on here if we accept that Philippians, like the family-letters . . . , is [for the] purpose of strengthening the ‘family’ links between apostle and the Christian congregation.”

Additionally, κοινωνία in Philippians is not a circumlocution for friendship, but refers to an arrangement or partnership between two parties. Further, Paul makes several references to the Philippians as part of the eschatological people of God. He incorporates the church into a fictive kinship, not a societal friendship.

---

51 Witherington, Philippians, 18.

52 Alexander, “Hellenistic Letter-Forms and the Structure of Philippians,” JSNT 37 (1989): 87–101. Alexander examines the “family-letters” in John L. White, Light from Ancient Letters (FF; Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress, 1986), 197. She observes the following characteristic pattern of family-letters dated from the Ptolemaic period to the third century c.e.: (1) address and greeting; (2) prayer for recipients; (3) reassurance about the sender (my affairs); (4) request for reassurance about the recipients (your affairs); (5) information about movements or intermediaries; (6) exchange of greetings with third parties; and (7) closing wish for health. See further Heikki Koskenniemi, Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n. Chr. (AASF Ser. B, 102, 2; Helsinki & Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1956), 104–14.

53 Alexander, “Letter-Forms,” 95. Fee (Philippians, 3–4) conflates the family-letter and friendly-letter types. He cites Alexander’s study as supporting his own designation of Philippians as a letter of friendship. But his depiction of Philippians as a “letter of friendship, of the ‘friendly, familial type,’” blurs two different types of letters. See Witherington’s (Philippians, 20) critique of this blending of family and friendship-letters. Reumann (Philippians, 679), partially convinced by Alexander, takes a middle position, suggesting that “elements in the friendship topos appear, but not all is explained by philia. Paul seems to wish to extricate himself from aspects of its culture.”

54 See further Chapter Two.

55 Bockmuehl (Philippians, 35) and Witherington (Philippians, 18) argue that Paul avoids the language of reciprocity in Philippians. They view this as another challenge to “friendship,” since reciprocity was “at the heart of ancient friendship conventions.”
show that it is the Philippians’ security within the family of God that motivates Paul’s exhortations.\(^{56}\)

1.4. Paul’s Incarceration and the Dating of the Epistle

The provenance and date of Philippians are likely important for its interpretation. Paul writes to the church at Philippi while incarcerated (1:12–25), guarded by a palace or imperial guard (πραιτώριον, 1:13) and in the company of those who are a part of Caesar’s household (ο ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας, 4:22). Rome is the traditional location of Paul’s incarceration.\(^{57}\) In favor of a Roman provenance is the

---

This critique is incorrect. I will contend that Paul refers to reciprocity at various points. This social dynamic was not restricted to friendship but informed every enduring relationship in the Greco-Roman world, including family ties. See further Gerald W. Peterman, Paul’s Gift from Philippi: Conventions of Gift Exchange and Christian Giving (SNTSMS 92; Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 193–94. Paul avoids certain types of reciprocal exchange, especially patronage. But reciprocity is a key part of his argumentation.

\(^{56}\) Reidar Aasgaard (My Beloved Brothers and Sisters! Christian Siblingship in Paul [JSNTSup 265; London: T&T Clark, 2004], 309–11) suggests that Paul prefers familial language across his letters as a means to strengthen the quality of the relationship between him and his churches, handle conflicts, and affirm mutuality. Richard B. Hays (The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005], 1–24) goes further in his discussion of Paul’s use of the Scriptures in his writings to the church at Corinth. He writes (21): “We gain far more insight into the issues driving 1 Corinthians when we recognize that Paul is seeking to redefine their identity — which has been shaped by noneschatological ideas indigenous to their culture — within an apocalyptic narrative that locates present existence in the interval between cross and parousia (cf. 1 Cor 11:26). Within that interval he calls the Gentile Christians to shape their behavior in accordance with Scripture’s admonitions, to act like the eschatological Israel he believes them to be.” Hays’s words regarding Paul’s view of the church at Corinth are appropriately applied to the apostle’s view of the Philippians as well.

\(^{57}\) Marcion, in his mid-second-century C.E. “Prologue to the Philippians,” declares that Philippians was written while Paul was in prison in Rome (see F. F Bruce, The Canon of Scripture [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1988], 142). Scholars that argue

The references to the household of Caesar and to the Praetorian Guard also seem to support it. A Roman imprisonment places the date of the epistle around 61–62 C.E.

Nonetheless, there are difficulties with a Roman provenance. First, the distance from Philippi to Rome (700 miles overland; 900 miles by sea) is problematic given the number of journeys between the two cities mentioned in Philippians. Philippians implies a brief lapse of time between these visits, which would be challenging to accomplish if Paul is writing from Rome. Finally, Paul notifies the church in Rome that he plans to go to Spain and not return to the east (Rom 15:24, 28) because his ministry for the Roman provenance include Bo I. Reicke (“Caesarea, Rome, and the Captivity Epistles,” in *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce on his 60th Birthday* [ed. W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1970], 285–86), F. F. Bruce (*Philippians* [NIBCNT 11; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989], 14), I. Howard Marshall (*The Epistle to the Philippians* [EC; London: Epworth, 1992], xix–xx), John T. Fitzgerald (“Epistle to the Philippians, The,” *ABD* 5:323), Fee (*Philippians*, 1), Morna D. Hooker (“The Letter to the Philippians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *NIB*, 11:473–75), Silva (*Philippians*, 5–7), Witherington (*Philippians*, 9–11). Betz (*Apostel*, 13) argues that Philippians gives the best insight to the unstable situation facing Paul during Nero’s persecution of Christians.

---

58 Hansen (*Philippians*, 21) notes that there are four trips recorded in the epistle and four additional trips expected: a messenger brought news of Paul’s imprisonment to the Philippians; the church has dispatched Epaphroditus; the church has heard news of Epaphroditus’s illness; Epaphroditus has received news of the church’s distress over his illness; Paul plans to send Epaphroditus to the Philippians; Paul plans to send Timothy to the Philippians; and Paul expects Timothy to return to him from Philippi with news of the church’s circumstances; and Paul plans to come soon himself.

Those favoring a Roman provenance suggest that this difficulty (the number of journeys over a long distance) is not insurmountable if the Philippians knew of Paul’s imprisonment before his arrival in Rome, if word was sent to Philippi about Epaphroditus’s illness before his arrival in Rome, and if Epaphroditus’s anxiety was from his own expectation of how he thinks the church will respond to news of his illness (see Fee, *Philippians*, 36–37). This solution requires each of these elements to be true. Additionally, it does not account for Paul’s decision to send a recently recovered Epaphroditus on a long journey from Rome, nor his expectation to both send and receive Timothy within an imprisonment anticipated to be brief (2:24).
there has concluded. If Philippians has a Roman provenance, this statement contradicts what he says to the Philippians regarding his plans to see them upon gaining his freedom (1:26; 2:24).

Ephesus, therefore, is argued by others to be a more plausible place of origin. First, the distance between Ephesus and Philippi (about 100 miles) would accommodate the number of trips mentioned in the epistle. Second, though there is no direct reference to Paul’s incarceration in Ephesus, Acts and Paul’s letters do report his troubles in that city (Acts 19:23–20:1; 1 Cor 16:8; 2 Cor 1:8–10). Paul himself confirms that he was imprisoned numerous times (2 Cor 11:23), more times than Acts recounts. Third, Ephesus was the third largest city in the Roman Empire. It contained a Roman military headquarters, a proconsul presence, a judicial court for all of Asia, and the housing of a palace guard and members of Caesar’s household. An origin in Ephesus dates Philippians in mid-50s C.E.

---


60 1 Clement 5:5–6 has Paul jailed seven times.

I agree with Hansen’s arguments for an Ephesian provenance. But I disagree with his assessment that “a decision [regarding the place of composition] one way or the other does not significantly affect our interpretation of the letter.” An Ephesian provenance means that Paul is writing Philippians at about the same time (and possibly from the same location) that he is writing Galatians and 1 Corinthians. Thielman, in support of an Ephesian origin, writes: “The battles that Paul fights in Philippians 3 are the battles of Galatians and 1 Corinthians, not those he undertook in Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians during his Roman imprisonment.” These points of agreement and disagreement between Philippians and Galatians and 1 Corinthians are important for interpreting Philippians. For example, I will argue in Chapter Three that scholarship has generally misinterpreted Phil 1:15–18 by not sufficiently considering Galatians in its interpretation. Further, those who argue that Paul is deeply concerned with disunity in Philippi need to account better for the difference between Philippians and his words to the church at Corinth, a church full of factions (1 Cor 1:11). Finally, the joy that Paul exudes reflects in part his gratitude that his relationship with the church at Philippi remains strong while those with the churches in Galatia and Corinth

---


62 Hansen, Philippians, 25.


64 Thielman, “Ephesus,” 223.
are faltering. My reading is consistent with and, I believe, strengthened by an Ephesian origin.

1.5. Disunity or Unity

Lightfoot writes, “Yet even at Philippi there was one drawback to his general satisfaction. A spirit of strife had sprung up in the church; if there were not open feuds and parties, there were at least disputes and rivalries.” Lightfoot’s statement bespeaks a widely held and long-standing interpretation, that Paul writes to the church at Philippi to address disunity. Proponents of this view argue that dissension within the church accounts for several of Paul’s comments in the epistle: his appeals to the church to be united in their thinking (1:9, 27; 2:2, 5; 3:15; 4:8), spirit, and love (1:9, 27; 2:2); his focus on the whole church (1:1, 3, 7, 8, 25; 2:17, 26; 4:21); and his contrast of humbly serving with the ills of envy, vanity, and self-seeking behavior (1:16–17; 2:3–4, 6–8, 12, 21; 3:3; 4:5). Key among this line of evidence is the apparent dispute between Euodia and Syntyche (4:2–3). On the basis of Paul’s addressing the two women by name and calling others to intercede, some scholars argue that their quarrel is the cause of disunity in the church.

---


Because Paul refers to unity or disunity several times in Philippians, many commentators argue that the church’s unity must be a concern for him. Peterlin, for instance, suggests that disunity is “the element which thematically binds the whole letter together.” His thesis is that “disunity, tension and strife in the church, and between a part of the church and himself, strained the κοινωνία among themselves and between themselves and Paul.” Peterlin considers the entire epistle through the lens of disunity, arguing that it reflects Paul’s assessment that the church is fracturing over the question of supporting him, with some in the church offering harsh accusations against him.

disagreement between the two women was escalating and endangering the church’s credibility and witness in the public sphere. He hypothesizes that Paul’s reference to citizenship reflects his desire for the Philippians to be in harmony with each other (82–104). Peterlin (Letter, 221) views the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche as “crucial” to understanding the division in the church. He holds that the church “was polarized around Euodia and Syntyche, who were the focus of disunity.”

68 This type of mirror-reading (assuming that Paul’s words reflect the opposite of the situation) is necessary for any reconstruction of the background of Pauline epistles. But note John M. G. Barclay’s caution (“Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case,” JSNT 31 [1987]: 73–93) regarding the dangers of unfettered mirror-reading. Nijay K. Gupta (“Mirror-Reading Moral Issues in Paul’s Letters,” JSNT 34 [2012]: 361–81) suggests that mirror-reading Paul’s moral statements is especially problematic because it presumes that his purpose is to reverse or counteract some moral failure, and does not allow for a moral exhortation to be a preemptive measure.

69 Peterlin, Letter, 217.

70 Ibid., 228.

71 Ibid., 225. Peterlin interprets Philippians as follows: Phil 1:1–11 indicates some sort of division is present because the combinations of πάντες with ὑμεῖς or ἡμεῖς, and πᾶς together with a second person plural verb are constructions that Paul uses when division is the issue; 1:12–16 suggests that parties are divided in Philippi regarding Paul’s teaching on suffering and his imprisonment; 1:27–2:18 shows that Paul is the cause of the division in the church; 3:1–21 illustrates the incipient threats of divisive
In his final comments, Peterlin holds that this reading accomplishes the following: (1) it does justice to the abundance of references and allusions to disunity; (2) it avoids the common danger of our being misled by frequent expressions of endearment; (3) it puts the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche into the right perspective as one of the causes of disunity; (4) it explains Paul’s affections as the product of Paul’s reflection on the church’s past relationship with him, and his desire to return to that state; (5) it offers a thematic framework which supports arguments for the literary unity of the letter; and (6) it provides the reason that Paul is concerned with κοινωνία.\textsuperscript{72}

Peterlin’s argument has received a mixed response.\textsuperscript{73} Generally, critics have argued that although his interpretation “goes beyond the evidence of the text,” it nevertheless provides a “valuable answer to the question of the occasion and purpose of the letter.”\textsuperscript{74} Peterlin’s analysis is seen as further evidence that Paul writes to the Philippians to resolve conflict (potential or actual) in the church.

My study will challenge this argument. I will attempt to establish the following regarding unity and disunity: (1) that Paul’s positive statements about the church are accurate depictions; (2) that the difference in terms and tone between 1 Corinthians 4:2–3 is the specific “focus of conflict”; 4:10–20 indicates that the division is caused by the question of the church’s support of him.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 227–28. My numbering consolidates some of Peterlin’s points.


\textsuperscript{74} Hansen, Philippians, 26.
and Philippians affirms the unity of the Philippian church; (3) that Paul’s call for unity is directed towards encouraging the church’s continued corporate fellowship with him; (4) that Paul does not consider the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche to be a significant threat to unity; and (5) that Paul mentions the dispute between the two women to demonstrate the strength of the shared fellowship between himself and the church.75

I agree with Peterlin that throughout Philippians Paul addresses the church’s fellowship with him. We differ on the reasons for it. Whereas Peterlin contends that Paul is attempting to mend divisions both within the church and between the church and himself, I will take the position that Paul is encouraged by the church’s renewed expression of fellowship and writes to persuade the church to continue its commitment to him. My reading challenges any interpretation that agrees (even in part) with Peterlin’s central argument, that Paul wrote to the Philippians to quell divisions within the church.

1.6. Gospel / Gospel Mission

James P. Ware has observed that “a feature of the letter which has been largely overlooked is the remarkable concentration in Philippians of language relating to the

---

75 Similarly Hooker (“Philippians,” 475) maintains that this mild rebuke directed towards the two women in 4:2 is the only rebuke in the letter and that there is no censuring of the whole church at all. Witherington (Philippians, 25–26) argues that the differences in terminology and tone between 1 Corinthians and Philippians mean that Paul’s emphasis on unity in Philippians is “not for damage control but because unity is necessary if the Philippians are to continue to make progress living lives worthy of their calling.”
gospel, mission, and preaching.” He notes that εὐαγγέλιον occurs as many or more times in Philippians than in any of the other Pauline epistles. In his analysis of Phil 1:12–2:18, Ware argues that “this focus on an active mission of the church, although, in light of Paul’s other letters, striking and unexpected, pervades the epistle to the Philippians.” Ware’s analysis contests both the argument of Paul Bowers, that churches sending missionaries was not part of Paul’s plan for evangelizing new places, and the argument of John P. Dickson, that Paul considered mission activity to be the sole prerogative of designated individuals.

---


77 Ware, Paul, 166. Εὐαγγέλιον occurs nine times in Philippians’ four chapters (1:5, 7, 12, 16, 27 [twice]; 2:22; 4:3, 15); nine times in Romans (16 chs.); eight times in 1 Corinthians (16 chs.); and eight times in 2 Corinthians (13 chs.). As for Galatians, where the main subject is the Galatian churches having abandoned Paul’s gospel for a competitor’s (Gal 1:6–9), εὐαγγέλιον occurs only five times in its six chapters.

78 Ibid., 287.

Ware locates Philippians within the milieu of Second Temple Jewish considerations of the conversion of Gentiles. He argues that the Jewish scriptures, especially the Servant Songs of Isaiah, influenced Paul’s view of the conversion of Gentiles, as they did the majority of Second Temple Jewish understandings of the subject.\(^80\) But Ware describes Paul’s desire to go to the nations as in “bold relief” because of its uniqueness in comparison to the ambitions of his contemporaries. Ware hypothesizes that underlying Paul’s attention to mission is his conviction that the eschatological age had dawned with the coming of Jesus Christ and that the time of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God had come.\(^81\)

Ware argues that the frequency of εὐαγγέλιον, when combined with Paul’s commendation for their partnership (1:3–7; 4:10–20), means that Paul expects the Philippians to be active in carrying out the evangelism to the nations by their own sharing of the good news of Christ with others. Consequently, the references to suffering and perseverance are part of Paul’s exhortation to the church to remain committed to their own proclaiming of the gospel, despite Roman persecution.\(^82\)

Philippians 1:12–18a, then, offers paradigms for remaining fearless in this spread of the

---

\(^80\) Ware, *Paul*, 286.

\(^81\) Ibid., 291.

\(^82\) Ibid., 287.
gospel. Further, the exhortation in 1:18b–2:11, that the Philippians be actively proselytizing (1:27–2:4), is followed by an elucidation of the relationship between mission and the eschatological reign of God in Christ (2:5–11). The climax of Ware’s argument is his discussion of ἐπέχω in 2:16a (λόγον ζωής ἐπέχωντες). Ware concludes that “hold forth” is the “only possible meaning” of ἐπέχω. In sum, Ware finds that Philippians gives the most explicit teaching in the Pauline corpus that congregations are to preach the gospel to outsiders as an extension of Paul’s mission.

My study supports Ware’s proposal that the Philippian church’s role in the Pauline gospel mission is at the forefront of Philippians and that Paul’s understanding is rooted in his interpretation of the Jewish scriptures, including his conviction that the eschatological age was inaugurated in the advent of Christ. Nevertheless, I will argue that Ware mistakenly interprets Philippians as Paul’s summons to the church actively to promote the gospel in their environs. I am not suggesting that Paul was disinterested in this activity or did not expect churches he instituted to multiply in numbers and locations. But it seems to me that Ware errs because Paul does not

---

83 Ibid., 163–200.
84 Ibid., 201–33.
85 Ibid., 256–71.
86 Ibid., 269.
87 Ibid., 270, 292.
address this issue in Philippians. Rather, he is focused on the Philippian church
sustaining its commitment to his “active proclamation of the gospel to outsiders.”

Robert C. Swift also proposes that the Philippians’ partnership in the gospel is
the “central theme of the epistle” and is “broad enough to explain the details of the
epistle.”89 He finds that the entire letter is committed to the Philippians being united in
a manner that will “further the work of the gospel.”90 Further, Swift holds that each
section points to fellowship in the gospel.91 Indeed, he was the first to suggest that the
entire letter’s primary subject was exhorting the church to continue in the work of the
gospel. And although he does not provide a detailed examination of the letter, his
study anticipates my thesis by drawing attention to both fellowship and mission in
Philippians. I consider my reading as one that follows Swift’s lead and gives fuller
expression to his proposal.

But Swift’s argument, like Ware’s, presents Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians
as a call to contribute to the broad work of evangelism. When Swift refers to the
Philippians’ partnership in the gospel, it is left undefined what “partnership” entails

90 Ibid., 250.
91 Swift (240) proposes that 1:3–11 both introduces fellowship in the gospel as
the main subject and presents a “table of contents” for the rest of the epistle.
Philippians 1:12–26 provides a “biographical prologue” that demonstrates Paul’s
commitment to living for the gospel (241–42). Swift (243–44) describes 1:27–30 as
introducing the “topic of walking worthily of the gospel” as a means of becoming more
effective partners in the gospel. Philippians 2 is dedicated to “preventing disunity from
extinguishing the testimony of the church” (245). The subject of the Philippians’
resistance to false teaching is the main idea of Phil 3 (247). Finally, after what he judges
a conclusion (4:2–9), Swift (250–51) presents 4:10–20 as an epilogue that has elements in
common with the introduction regarding fellowship.
and even what is meant by “gospel.” I will argue that Paul does not exhort the Philippians to be partners in the advance of the gospel so generally conceived, but rather that they be his partners in his gospel mission. The Pauline letters from this period indicate that he was concerned about rival gospel missions persuading churches to break with him (2 Cor 11:3–5; 12–15; Gal 1:6–9; 2:3–5, 11–14; 6:12–13).92 Neither Ware nor Swift adequately deals with the competitive arena of proselytizing the Gentiles that existed within the nascent Christian faith. The attention Paul gives to his fellowship with the Philippians is to be understood within his opposition to other gospel missions and their potential influence on his churches.

1.7. Perseverance

Moisés Silva writes:

The Philippians were facing great adversity, had lost their sense of Christian joy, and were tempted to abandon their struggle. Accordingly, this letter places great weight on the need to stand fast and persevere. It is remarkable that this

92 So already P. W. Barnett, “Opponents of Paul,” DPL 644–53; Everett Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity (3d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 612–13. Terence L. Donaldson (“‘The Field God Has Assigned’: Geography and Mission in Paul,” in Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity [Studies in Christianity and Judaism 18; ed. Lief E. Vaage; Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2006], 109–37) suggests that Paul’s territorial decisions were driven both by his conviction that he was the unique apostle to the Gentiles and by his desire to work where others had not evangelized. These two factors contribute to Paul’s measured introduction to the church at Rome. As the apostle to the nations, they are under his jurisdiction, yet it is a church that he did not inaugurate. Ultimately, his apostolic commission trumps his hesitancy to work there. Donaldson (135) also observes that Paul’s conflict with Peter and with Barnabas coincides with the beginnings of his “push to the west.” The implication of this is that Paul does not seek or tolerate a diversity of opinion regarding his apostolic mission. He does not welcome other missions into his area. Donaldson (134) therefore plausibly speculates that “the need to defend his [Paul’s] turf against various interlopers absorbed a great deal of time and energy.”
note of perseverance has not played a more significant role in the interpretation of Philippians.  

My study seeks to fill this gap. But while I agree with Silva regarding the significance of perseverance in Philippians, I disagree with his assessment of the situation, that many of the Philippians “had lost confidence in their ability to maintain their Christian confession.” Silva suggests that the call to perseverance indicates that the church was experiencing “severe spiritual problems.” But I will argue instead that the references to perseverance are best understood in light of the competitive character of the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles and Paul’s desire to exhort the Philippians to remain loyal exclusively to the Pauline mission.

Silva’s “mirror-reading” of the text is similar to the approach of those who argue that disunity within the church is threatening its well-being. Both approaches diminish the positive statements that Paul makes about the Philippians. A call to perseverance does not require that there is a deficit in this area. It also can be an appeal to persist in, or even improve upon, an already healthy resolve.

One scholar who has explored Philippians through the lens of perseverance is Timothy C. Geoffrion. Geoffrion’s thesis is that Paul wrote Philippians to encourage the

---

93 Silva, Philippians, 21–22.

94 Ibid., 22.

95 Ibid.

96 Philippians, perhaps more than any Pauline epistle, sounds the twin notes of human activity and divine sovereignty. At several places in this letter Paul exhorts the Philippians to actions that have eschatological implications, but he does so within an unwavering commitment to God’s control over all matters, including the church’s perseverance.
Christians to remain steadfast in their commitment to God, Christ, and the gospel ministry. The bulk of Geoffrion’s study concerns Paul’s use of political and military *topoi* at “important points in the argument . . . in ways which would have portrayed and reinforced the Philippians’ sense of their corporate Christian identity.” Geoffrion upholds that this heavenly citizenship is the hermeneutical key. The thrust of his argument is that Paul primarily draws on the philosophical idea of a citizenship to make his case, supplementing this with other rhetorical conventions (such as imitation) to complete his call to the Philippians to remain steadfast.

The particular similarities and differences between Geoffrion’s interpretation and mine will be addressed at their relevant points in this study. A few introductory comments, however, are necessary. Generally speaking, my interpretation is similar, that steadfastness is the primary topic of the epistle. Like Geoffrion, I will argue that Paul’s variety of rhetorical devices are to persuade the Philippians toward this end. In many ways, Geoffrion’s analysis is the only other reading of Philippians that proposes that Paul sustains a call to steadfastness in the letter.

---


98 Ibid., 23.

99 Ibid., 25.


101 Geoffrion (*Purpose*, 223) writes: “Thus whereas Paul clearly had in mind a number of specific reasons or ‘purposes’ for writing the letter (e.g., to urge unity
Nevertheless, I depart from Geoffrion in a few significant ways. First, Geoffrion conceives of the Philippians’ steadfastness more broadly. Although he does note that Philippians contains some references to the church remaining loyal to Paul, he underestimates the threat of rival missions and Paul’s demand for the church’s continued fellowship with him in his work. Second, Geoffrion maintains that the theme of citizenship is behind Paul’s exhortation and instruction. While corporate identity is a strong plank in Paul’s argument, it is subsumed within Paul’s overall appeal regarding the eschatological necessity of remaining committed to his mission. Geoffrion’s proposal that the proper hermeneutical solution is heavenly citizenship results in his stretching of certain terms to carry political overtones. But this approach is unnecessary if “heavenly citizenship” is seen as part, but not the whole, of the argument.

1.8. The Philippians’ Gift

The arrival of Epaphroditus with the Philippians’ gift to Paul was arguably one of the foundational events in early Christian history. It is widely regarded as the event that occasioned the writing of Philippians. Few studies, however, consider the gift as more than this. G. W. Peterman pointed out in his 1997 study that scholarship in

between Euodia and Syntyche, to acknowledge the gift, to explain Timothy’s upcoming visit and Epaphroditus’s return, etc., he subordinates them all to the one rhetorical ‘purpose’ of the letter: urging steadfastness.”

102 For example, Hooker (“Philippians,” 475) judges that Paul “took advantage” of Epaphroditus’s return by using it as an opening to give his advice to the Philippian church on a wide range of matters.
general has “neglected” Paul’s financial dealings with the Philippians. Peterman’s work, most scholars considered Paul himself to be downplaying the church’s gift, showing a reticence to give direct thanks. Peterman argues that each of these studies mistakenly reads Paul’s words through twentieth-century conventions of gratitude. His analysis of Greco-Roman social dynamics and Second Temple Jewish considerations regarding gift exchange shows that Paul’s response to the Philippians’ gift is appropriate.

My own study expands on Peterman’s conclusions. Not only does Paul not sidestep the support that Epaphroditus has brought, its arrival saturates the letter. The giving of aid is part of the mutuality that exists between the church at Philippi and its apostle. The aid serves as a symbol of the Philippians’ commitment to him. Further, I will expand and solidify Peterman’s speculation that “it may well be that the Philippians’ financial sharing was allowed because of the concern they apparently had for the gospel’s advance . . . thus the letter to the Philippians demonstrates for us a clear relationship between mission and money.”

---

103 Peterman, Gift, 10.

104 Ibid., 10–15. Beare (Philippians, 11) hypothesizes that Paul was embarrassed to receive support. C. H. Dodd (“The Mind of Paul: I,” in idem, New Testament Studies [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1953], 71), suggests that Paul is uncomfortable accepting money since it strips him of his boast (1 Cor 9:12). Martin (Philippians, 176) holds that Paul’s discomfort is because he considers himself above mundane matters like money.

105 Peterman, Gift, 15.

106 See Chapter Seven below for a detailed analysis of Phil 4:10–20.

2.1. Overview

I offer here a brief study of Phil 1:1–11 with the intent of showing that the Philippians’ partnership with Paul will encapsulate what his letter (and my study) is about.

Structurally, 1:1–2 is the epistolary greeting and 1:3–11 is the exordium. Philippians 1:3–8 records Paul’s thanksgiving over the Philippians’ relationship with him, while 1:9–11 is his prayer for its continuation. Witherington notes that one of the purposes of an exordium is “to introduce the topic or topics to be discussed in what follows.”

---

108 Kittredge (Community, 66–70) extends the exordium to 1:26.

propose that in 1:3–11 Paul introduces five topics that he will return to in the epistle.

First, Paul’s gospel has a community-forming power. Second, there is a reciprocal quality to the partnership between Paul and the Philippians. Third, Paul, his mission, and the Philippians’ participation are divinely appointed. Fourth, Paul’s gospel has a sacrificial ethic. And fifth, the success of this fellowship has eschatological implications. My exegesis of the rest of the epistle will explore the hermeneutical potential of these initial observations.

E. Randolph Richards (“Pauline Prescripts and Greco-Roman Epistolary Conventions,” in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament* [TENT 9; ed. Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts; vol. 1 of *Early Christianity in its Hellenistic Context*; Leiden: Brill, 2013], 546), finds that “the Pauline letters consistently open by reviewing the Pauline worldview, typically composed of six components: (1) Christ’s death and resurrection as the foundation of the whole; (2) the recipients’ positive response to God’s call; (3) God’s divine gifts and presence to the recipients; (4) the present status of their faith and witness; (5) the next step needed for the readers’ spiritual growth or moral progress; and (6) history’s culmination at Christ’s return.” Using Richards’s observation, I propose that components 2–5 are coterminous in Philippians, each with a view towards (6).

As the epistolary prescript, 1:1–2 is not expected to have much value in determining the subject of the epistle. Nevertheless, a few elements in these first two verses portend what is to come. First, unlike in Rom 1:1, 1 Cor 1:1, 2 Cor 1:1, and Gal 1:1, Paul does not classify himself as an apostle, but identifies both himself and Timothy as slaves of Christ Jesus (δουλοί Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ). It is not the absence of ἀπόστολος but the presence of δοῦλος that is important. It anticipates Paul’s subsequent references to his imprisonment, service to God, and the subject matter of humility. The inclusion of Timothy looks forward to Paul’s depiction of Timothy in 2:19–24. Second, the reference to “all the saints who are in Christ Jesus” alludes to the community-forming power of the gospel to establish the true, eschatological Israel. Finally, the atypical addition of “with the overseers and deacons” suggests that Paul refers to the leadership because of the role they play in the administration of the support the church sends to Paul.
Philippians 1:3–8

Philippians 1:3–7 is a single sentence in the Greek. Its rhetorical weight is on Paul’s perpetual offering of thanksgiving to God because of the Philippians’ support of him.\(^{111}\) The phrase ἐπὶ πᾶσῃ τῇ μνείᾳ ύμῶν could be temporal, indicating that Paul gives thanks every time he prays for them (μνεία here denoting his prayer for them, ύμῶν as an objective genitive).\(^{112}\) But ἐπί with the dative can also give the reason or cause for an action, meaning that Paul is giving thanks because of the Philippians’ remembering of him, i.e., the sending of Epaphroditus to him with their aid.\(^{113}\) A temporal meaning makes ἐπὶ πᾶσῃ τῇ μνείᾳ ύμῶν parallel with v. 4 and his other prayers of thanksgiving that have μνεία. But if the phrase indicates cause or reason, this places Paul’s gratitude for the Philippians’ gift at the forefront of the epistle. In support of reading the first ἐπὶ clause this way is its counterpart in the sentence’s

---

\(^{111}\) Silva (Philippians, 42) suggests that this repetition of terms and concepts is “not thoughtlessly repetitive but deliberately emphatic.”

\(^{112}\) See also Rom 1:9; 1 Thess 1:12; Phlm 4; so already Martin Dibelius, An die Thessalonicher I, II, An die Philipp (3rd ed.; HNT 11; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1937), 62; GnIlka, Philippbrief, 43; I-Jin Loh and Eugene A. Nida, A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Philippians (Helps for Translators; London: United Bible Societies, 1983), 10; Collange, Epistle, 43; Fee, Philippians, 78; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 58; Jerry L. Sumney, Philippians: A Greek Student’s Intermediate Reader (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 8; Hansen, Philippians, 46.

second ἐπί clause (ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ύμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας ἕχει τοῦ νῦν, v. 5).\(^{114}\)

The sense of ἡ κοινωνίᾳ ύμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον is that Paul is referring to the partnership the Philippians have in his mission to the Gentiles.\(^{115}\) When κοινωνία is followed by εἰς (as in Phil 1:5), the prepositional phrase often connotes the goal to which the partnership is directed.\(^{116}\) As noted above, εὐαγγέλιον (the object of εἰς in 1:5) in Philippians refers more to the gospel work or mission than to the actual content of the gospel.\(^{117}\)

Likely, this “partnership in the Pauline mission” is a contractual arrangement. G. Walter Hansen suggests that Paul’s κοινωνία parallels the Roman concept of a

---

\(^{114}\) Heinz Giesen (‘Eschatology in Philippians,” in Paul and His Theology [ed. Stanley E. Porter; vol. 3 of Pauline Studies; Leiden: Brill, 2006], 218) observes that if ἐπὶ πάση τῇ μνείᾳ ύμῶν were to be understood temporally, it would be the only time Paul diverts from an established structure of thanksgiving; so already Schubert, Form, 74.

\(^{115}\) Loh and Nida, Handbook, 12.

\(^{116}\) Ware, Philippians, 167. Sumney (Philippians, 9) describes the prepositional phrase as “taking on the meaning of dative of advantage.” Paul has a similar structure in Gal 2:9 when referring to the particular agreement made between the Jerusalem apostles and himself; contra Heinrich Seesemann (Der Begriff KOINONIA im Neun Testament [ZNW 14; Giessen: Töpelmann, 1933], 75), Dibelius (Thessalonicher, 63), Lohmeyer (Philipper, 17), who identify this construction as a periphrasis for the genitive.

\(^{117}\) So already Charles J. Ellicott, A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistles to the Philippians, the Colossians, and Philemon: With a Revised Translation (Andover, Mass.: Draper, 1865), 21; Lightfoot, Philippians, 83; Swift, “Theme,” 237–38; Hawthorne, Philippians, 19–20; O’Brien, “Gospel,” 217–18. Ware (Paul, 166–67) notes that in most instances εὐαγγέλιον is a nomen actionis. This judgment is reinforced by the number of references to preaching (1:14, 15, 17, 18, 22; 2:25, 30; 3:2; 4:3, 17). Ἡ ύμῶν κοινωνίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου is the construction expected if Paul intends to affirm the Philippians’ belief in the content of the gospel.
consensual *societas*.\(^{118}\) Hansen’s work is an extension of J. Paul Sampley’s argument that the κοινωνία that Paul and the Philippians had was the same as depicted by a *societas*, which he says is a Roman legal contract for partnership in business.\(^{119}\) Although Hansen doubts Sampley’s hypothesis that κοινωνία in Philippians constitutes legally binding business collaboration, he argues that there is a correspondence between κοινωνία and *societas*.\(^{120}\) Hansen cites four parallels: (1) the partnership between Paul and the Philippians is voluntary; (2) the partnership is for a specific goal; (3) the partnership is comprised of persons from different strata who could thereby become equal partners; and (4) unresolved conflict between the parties could terminate the partnership.\(^{121}\)

---


\(^{119}\) Sampley, *Pauline Partnership in Christ: Christian Community and Commitment in Light of Roman Law* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress, 1980), 51. Sampley (53–65) supports his thesis by arguing the following: (1) Paul uses commercial terms to describe the gift he receives from the Philippians; (2) the Roman institution of *societas* would have been familiar to the Roman citizens of Philippi; and (3) φρονεῖν in Philippians is similar to the contractual *societas* in which both parties are to be “of the same mind” regarding the contract details. But G. H. R. Horsley (A *Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1978* [vol. 3 of *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*; eds. G. H. R. Horsley and S. Llewelyn; North Ryde, N.S.W.: Ancient History Documentary Research Center, Marquarie University Press, 1983], 19) and Peterman (*Gift*, 125) challenge Sampley’s conclusions, arguing that there is no evidence that κοινωνία was used by Greek speakers to represent *societas*.

\(^{120}\) The Vulgate has *societas* for κοινωνία in 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 6:14; Gal 2:4; Phil 2:1; 3:10, but not at Phil 1:5 (*communicatio*).

\(^{121}\) Hansen, “Transformation,” 184–86. He cites an example from sixth-century C.E. Roman law (Justinian, *Digest*, 17.2.52.7): “Victor and Asianus had agreed that monuments should be erected with the exertion and skill of Asianus on land purchased with Victor’s money. They would then be sold. Victor would recover his money with
In Philippians, κοινωνία should not be restricted to financial arrangements, however.\textsuperscript{122} The church also contributed in other ways. Nevertheless, Paul does regularly connect κοινωνία (and cognates) with financial initiatives (Rom 12:13; 15:26; 2 Cor 8:3–4; 9:13; Gal 2:6–10; 6:6; Phlm 6). Indeed, Gal 2:6–10 is especially relevant for interpreting Phil 1:5–7 because the κοινωνία Paul shares with James, Cephas, and John regarding his gospel mission (Gal 2:5, 7–8) includes their financial mutuality, or rather their lack thereof.

Paul’s words in Gal 2:6–10 are in stark contrast to those in Phil 1:5–7. He does not honor the Jerusalem church leaders as he does the Philippian church. He twice refers to James, Cephas, and John as “those seeming to be something” (οἱ δοκοῦντες), and declares that their perceived status matters little to God or to him (ὁ ποίοι ποτέ ἦσαν οὐδέν μοι διαφέρει πρόσωπον ὁ θεὸς ἀνθρώπου οὐ λαμβάνει, 2:6). This is hardly high praise for his now official associates in gospel missions.\textsuperscript{123} This muted honoring is the opposite of his open praise of the Philippians (1:3–7; 4:10–20).

---

the addition of an agreed sum, and Asianus would get the rest in recognition of the hard work he had put into the business partnership (κοινωνία).”

\textsuperscript{122} Stephen E. Fowl (Philippians [THNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006], 22–23) suggests that Paul “incorporates all aspects of his relations with the Philippians under the rubric of κοινωνία.” But this robs the term of any definitive meaning.

\textsuperscript{123} Doug J. Moo (Galatians [BECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2013], 131–32): “[Paul] chooses language that focuses on the reputation of the Jerusalem leaders without clearly agreeing or disagreeing with that evaluation. . . . The point is clear enough: Paul distances himself from the high repute accorded the Jerusalem leaders.” Betz (Galatians, 92) goes further, proposing that “Paul begins this section (2:6–10) with a characterization of the Jerusalem authorities analogous to the characterization of the opponents (2:4).”; similarly James D. G. Dunn, The Epistle to the Galatians (BNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 1993), 102; Thomas R. Schreiner, Galatians (ZECNT 9; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan; 2010), 127.
I submit that the reason Paul refrains from embracing James, John, and Cephas in Galatians is not doctrinal but financial (2:7–8): he considers the Jerusalem church leaders’ material support of his mission to be lukewarm. In 2:6, Paul states that these men of high reputation contributed nothing to him (ἐμοὶ γὰρ οἱ δοκοῦντες οὐδὲν προσανέθεντο). The traditional interpretation of this statement is that it reiterates the main point from 2:1–5, that the Jerusalem leaders did not require circumcision and therefore ratified Paul’s law-free gospel. To arrive at this reading, most scholars either see προσανατίθημι as an ad hoc compound that carries the same sense as ἀνατίθημι, or read it as a middle form with an active sense. Ernest DeWitt Burton considers both suggestions to be conjectural because “there is an absence of any actual occurrence of them elsewhere.” But if προσανατίθημι is taken here as a middle in its usual sense (an attested use of the verb), ἐμοὶ γὰρ οἱ δοκοῦντες οὐδὲν προσανέθεντο

---


125 Betz (Galatians, 95): “The verb προσανατίθημι (‘add something to someone’) has a different meaning than in 1:16. Paul uses it here in the active voice, not the middle, so that its meaning is not different from ἀνατίθημι.” Joseph B. Lightfoot (Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations [orig. 1865; 10th ed.; London: MacMillan, 1890], 109) suggests that the verb means “to communicate, to impart,” and thus implies that the Jerusalem apostles saw nothing deficient in Paul’s teaching.

126 Burton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Epistle to the Galatians (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921), 89–91. Betz (Galatians, 95) also notes that “the term [προσανατίθημι] used with this meaning is a NT hapax legomenon.”
likely refers to the fact that the Jerusalem leaders did not contribute any of their own resources to Paul’s agreed upon mission to the Gentiles.127

In this manner, although the Jerusalem apostles did not dispute the divine origin of Paul’s apostolic call, they did not commit resources to it. This depiction of the Jerusalem leaders’ refusal to invest in his mission is all the more conspicuous because of Paul’s willingness to give aid to the poor in Jerusalem (2:10), their assigned territory.128 Paul sees a healthy fellowship in Christ to be one in which material aid is

---

127 See LSJ, s.v. προσανατίθημι (p. 1501b): “Med [middle], , take an additional burden on oneself, X. Mem. 2.1.8; but π. τινι τι contribute of oneself to another, Ep. Gal. 2.6.” Similarly BDAG, s.v. (p. 885): “2. to add as a benefit, provide, give, grant, do (X., Cyr. 2, 2, 18 τας τιμας έκασης; PRyl 153, 27) τινι τι someth. to someone.” Galatians 2:6 meets exactly the conditions necessary (προσανατίθημι [middle] with an accusative direct object [here ουδέν] and a dative indirect object [here έμοι]) to convey “contributing or providing something from oneself to another.” The likelihood that ουδέν in 2:6 refers to the Jerusalem church’s financial resources is increased by Paul’s statement in Gal 2:10 that he will remember their poor. Thus the burden of proof is on those who interpret έμοι γαρ οι δοκουντες ουδεν προσανεθεντο to mean that the Jerusalem leaders did not put on Paul any additional requests similar to those requirements being demanded in 2:3.

English translations of έμοι . . . ουδέν προσανέθεντο can be divided into the following groups: (1) “added / imparted nothing to me”: ASV, CJB, ESV, HCSB, JUB, KJV, LEB, NKJV, RV, WEB; (2) “added nothing”: DRA, OJB, RSV, YLT; (3) “added nothing to my message / preaching”: CEB, ERV, EXB, GW, ISV, MSG, NOG, NCV, NET, NIV; (4) “imposed no new requirements upon me”: AMP, similarly “made me add nothing: NABRE; (5) “communicated / suggested nothing”: DARBY, DLNT; (6) “contributed nothing to me”: NASB, NRSV; and (7) “gave me nothing”: WYC, similarly “did not help me” NLV (though adding “they did not teach me anything new”). Groups (1) and (2) leave the referent open, possibly allowing for my reading. Groups (3), (4), (5) and NLV reflect the traditional interpretation. Group (6) and WYC also leave their referent open, but my reading is a more reasonable extrapolation from these translations than it is from the first two groups. The Vulgate has nihil contulerunt.

128 Moo (Galatians, 139) argues that this is probably a reference not to the “famous collection” but to the poor in Jerusalem; so already F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text (NICTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 126; Martyn, Galatians, 207; Martinus C. de Boer, Galatians: A Commentary (NTL; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 127.
shared. This is in keeping with the mutuality that Paul promotes elsewhere in Galatians (4:12, 14–15; 5:13–14; 6:1–2, 6). The initial lack of full support by the Jerusalem leaders also sets the scene for Paul’s rebuke of Peter in Antioch in the next section (2:11–21). 129 So the whole sequence implies that Paul considers failure to share in material aid as a harbinger of future reservations regarding his gospel.

The Philippians, on the other hand, have subsidized at least part of Paul’s mission. In 2:25–30, Paul commends them for sending aid to him via Epaphroditus. In 4:10–20, Paul discusses this gift more expansively. As has often been noted, there are several points of contact between 1:3–7 and 4:10–20. 130 These resemblances indicate that when Paul speaks of the Philippians’ partnership in the gospel, this includes their willingness to send material aid as part of their commitment to his mission. Ware writes:

This concentrated repetition of vocabulary and motifs from 1:5–7 in Paul’s elaboration upon the gift in 4:10–20 leave [sic] little doubt that Paul understood the financial contributions of the Philippians to his ministry in terms of their partnership with him for the gospel which forms the subject of the epistolary thanksgiving. 131

129 Philip F. Esler (Galatians [NTR; London: Routledge, 1998], 133) argues that the expression “give right hands” is not a gesture made between equals. Instead, citing examples from 1 and 2 Maccabees, Esler suggests that one who is in a superior position “gives the right hand to people who are virtually suppliants, who ‘take it’ as a way of bringing peace to a conflict.” So Esler concludes that in Gal 2:6–9 Paul is expressly dissenting from the condescension of James, Cephas, and John. If Esler is correct, this condescension may account for the Jerusalem leaders’ refusal in 2:6.

130 Peterman, Gift, 93; Garland, “Composition,” 162; William J. Dalton, “The Integrity of Philippians,” Bib 60 (1979): 101; Silva, Philippians, 47. This similarity includes references to the Philippians supporting Paul during his imprisonment (1:7; 4:17); their role in supporting him from the beginning (1:5; 4:15); and the language of thanksgiving, joy, rejoicing, fellowship, fruit, God’s glory, and being “in Christ.”

131 Ware, Paul, 169–70.
Thus, in this second ἐπί clause, like the first, Paul justifies his thanksgiving on the grounds that the Philippians are pledged partners with him, committed to the same goal that he has, namely, the spread of his gospel to the nations. And they have been so dedicated from the outset of Paul's mission (ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν, 1:5).132 ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν anticipates Paul's remark in 4:10 that he rejoices over the church's recommencing of support. But unlike 4:10, in 1:5 there is no hint of this interruption in service, suggesting that in the exordium Paul is withholding any intimation of displeasure because he means for the church to receive Philippians as an affectionate, encouraging letter, not as a rebuke.133

Keeping with this sentiment, in 1:6, Paul affirms the Philippians by crystallizing the perspective by which he wants them to understand this partnership: he is convinced that it reveals God’s salvific / eschatological work in the church at Philippi.134 In v. 6, Paul locates the persistence of the Philippians’ commitment to the

---

132 As frequently noted, this parallels Paul’s commendation in 4:15 that the Philippians supported the Pauline mission in the beginning (ἐν ἁρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου). In 4:15, this “beginning” is his missionary work outside of Macedonia (though it does include his work in Thessalonica). Most interpreters therefore take 1:5 to be a time stamp of when their partnership in the mission began, not their reception of Paul’s gospel; contra Mary Ann Getty-Sullivan, *Philippians and Philemon* (NTM 14; Dublin, Ireland: Veritas, 1980), 13; Vincent, *Epistles*, 8. Getty-Sullivan and Vincent argue that the “first day” is the moment of salvation. Marchal (*Hierarchy*, 121) states that this “temporal emphasis” suggests that Paul is more interested in what the Philippians will do in the near future regarding their relationship and if he has wasted time with this church.

133 Quintilian (*Inst.* 4.1.33) advises that an exordium should seek to gain the goodwill of the hearers.

134 Πεποιθώς is probably best taken as a causal participle, dependent on εὐχαριστῶ. O’Brien (*Philippians*, 63) observes that “the first two grounds (vv. 3, 5) stress the ‘achievements’ of the Philippians; the third emphasizes the activity of God.” Fee
Pauline mission within the framework of God’s steadfast commitment to the same.\(^\text{135}\) Ο ἐναρξάμενος recalls ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας (v. 5), indicating that Paul considers the Philippians’ original support of his mission as proof of God’s initiative among them.\(^\text{136}\) Since Phil 1 suggests that the ἔργον ἀγαθόν (v. 6) that God started is the Philippians’ partnership in the Pauline mission, the ἄχρι τοῦ νυν (v. 5) - ἄχρι ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (v. 6) pairing implies that ultimately God is also the one who will sustain the fellowship.\(^\text{137}\)

\(\text{Philippians, 85}\) has πεποιθώς as dependent on the preceding participle ποιοῦμενος because of the temporal elements in vv. 5 and 6. But this is less likely if v. 4 is a parenthetical comment. Τὴν δεῖπνον ποιοῦμενος (v. 4) is parallel with εὐχαριστῶ (v. 3). Αὐτὸ τοῦτο here is likely an accusative of content.

\(^{135}\) J. Gerald Janzen (“Creation and New Creation in Philippians 1:6,” *HBT* 18 [1996]: 31–32) argues similarly: “In the first statement [the first day until now, v. 5] Paul celebrates his readers’ activity in behalf of the gospel; in the second statement he celebrates God’s activity in them. These two activities, human and divine, are two dimensions of one joint activity whose ground is God. As such they display the same vector character, having a beginning, a duration, and an end. The beginnings may be described as ‘the first day,’ the end is identifiable as the ‘day of Jesus Christ,’ and the duration is marked by the ever-moving ‘now.’”

\(^{136}\) Though ὁ ἐναρξάμενος lacks a clear antecedent, context virtually requires that it is God. Paul argues similarly in Gal 4:13–15.

\(^{137}\) This is not to say that Paul considers this the only “work” that God is doing in the Philippian church, but only that this is the specific work that Paul has in view in this letter. Many commentators argue that the “good work” is salvation, however. For example, Stephen Westerholm (*Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004], 401) holds that the “good work” is God’s granting them the privilege to believe in Christ. Similarly, O’Brien (*Philippians*, 63) suggests that ἔργον ἀγαθόν refers to the work of grace that occurs at conversion, denoting God’s act of new creation. While the union of creation and eschatology is common in Paul, O’Brien’s does not account for the fact that the term used in Gen 1 to affirm God’s creation is not ἀγαθός but καλός. I find Paul’s statement about the “good work” God is doing in the Philippians’ union with him to be an example of divine orchestration. In Philippians, the point of emphasis is on the particular example, not the doctrinal principle.
Further, Paul’s ἄχρι ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ shows that he views this work, i.e., his partnership with the Philippians, as eschatological. Most scholars argue that ἐπιτελέσει ἄχρι ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ means that God will finish this work at the Day of Jesus Christ. The difficulty with this reading is it requires an atypical understanding of the second ἄχρι as “at” or “on.” But ἄχρι usually connotes “until,” or “as far as.” If the second occurrence of ἄχρι retains its characteristic meaning (as it does in the first), then Paul is not confessing his confidence that God will complete the work on the Day of Christ but that God will remain faithful to accomplishing the goal of this work that he has started in the Philippians. With ἄχρι, ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ constitutes the temporal extent of God’s activity: there will be no slacking in his work until the end of history. Therefore a defensible interpretive paraphrase of 1:6 is as follows: “I also give thanks to God because I am convinced that he originated this good work (your

---

138 Sumney, Philippians, 11.

139 Smyth, Grammar, §1700 (p. 388); BDAG, s.v. (p. 160); Harris, Prepositions, 243–44.

140 BDAG, s.v. ἐπιτελέω (p. 383) gives this as the second meaning. The future indicative in 1:6 has a continuative aspect more like the present tense. Vincent (Epistles, 8) suggests a middle position: “the sense is pregnant: will carry it on toward completion, and finally complete.” Similarly Loh and Nida, Handbook, 13.

141 “The Day of Christ,” like “The Day of the Lord,” refers to the final day when all will face judgment; see Isa 13:6, 9; Jer 46:10; Ezek 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:14; Amos 5:20; Obad 1:15; Zeph 1:7, 14. Paul holds that this eschatological Day is the parousia of Christ; see Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 1:8; 3:13; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; 1 Thess 5:2, 4; 2 Thess 1:10; 2:2.
joining with me in my mission to the Gentiles), and that he will continue to keep the
work going until the end of history when Christ returns.”

Paul supplements this statement with his own affirmation of its sincere
mutuality in vv. 7–8. The construction διὰ τὸ ἔχειν με ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ (v. 7) is difficult
because either με or ὑμᾶς could be the subject or the object of the infinitive ἔχειν. Fee and others argue that word order is determinative, rendering Paul’s statement
“because I have you in the (my) heart.” It is not evident, however, that word order is
on its own decisive. Context tips the scales towards ὑμᾶς as the subject and με as the
object (“because you have me in the [your] heart”). This is because the next phrase
depicts the Philippians’ solidarity with him. Likewise, Paul’s oath in 1:8 regarding his

---

142 This does not require that Paul foresees the imminent return of Christ, only
that he holds that the work of proclaiming the gospel to the nations will only end at the
coming of Christ. Their fellowship, in other words, is God’s doing, and he determines
its start and its finish.

143 With καθὼς ἐστιν δίκαιον ἐμοὶ τοῦτο φρονεῖν ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν (v. 7), Paul
provides the first of his calls for imitation. He is instructing the Philippians regarding
the proper response to their fellowship; so already Marchal, Hierarchy, 120; Bockmuehl,
Philippians, 254. See further Brian J. Dodd (Paul’s Paradigmatic “I”: Personal Example as
Literary Strategy [JSNTSup 177; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999]), Elizabeth A.
Castelli (Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power [LCBI; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox,
1991]), Benjamin Fiore (“Paul, Exemplification, and Imitation,” in Paul in the Greco-
International, 2003], 228–57) for Paul’s giving of himself as one to be imitated.

144 The singular καρδία could refer either to the heart of Paul or to the collective
heart of the Philippian church. See also 2 Cor 3:15.

145 Fee, Philippians, 90; O’Brien, Philippians, 68; see also RSV, NIV.

146 Hawthorne, Philippians, 22–23; Sumney, Philippians, 12; see also NRSV.

147 Ὑπέρ governs the entire phrase, beginning with ἔν τε τοῖς δεσμοῖς.
feeling towards them is a more natural counterpoint if 1:7 is a statement about their affection for him.

Paul cites his gospel mission three times in v. 7 to depict the Philippians’ union with him. The initial reference is to his imprisonment (ἔν τε τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου). Paul will discuss his incarceration in detail beginning in 1:12. It is possible that he refers to their joining with him in his chains because his jailing had caused them to slacken in giving support (4:10). Further, he likely gives the phrase ἔν τε τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου first position since their aid came during his imprisonment (1:19; 2:25, 30; 4:18). Regardless, Paul considers his imprisonment to be divinely orchestrated to advance the gospel (1:12, 16).148

Καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀπολογίᾳ καὶ βεβαιώσει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου constitutes the second reference. Commentators typically take this to be referring to Paul’s impending trial before a magistrate. But I will argue in Chapter Three that this pertains to his strength to withstand the attacks of rival gospel missions. For now it is sufficient to note that Paul commends the Philippians for sharing with him in the task of persevering and suffering, a topic he frequently returns to in the letter.

The final reference is χάρις. Paul refers elsewhere to his apostolic mission as God’s gracious act (Rom 1:5; 12:3; 15:15; 1 Cor 3:10; 15:10; Gal 1:15; 2:9; also Eph 3:7–8; 4:7). It has this sense in this passage as well.149 Because his commendation is directed

148 See Chapter Three for detailed discussion of this, and other matters, pertaining to Paul’s prison report.

149 Contra Vincent (Epistles, 10), who argues that χάρις refers to the absolute grace of God. Vincent adds that whenever Paul speaks of his own particular grace, it is presented as something given to him (Rom 12:3, 15:15; 1 Cor 3:10; Gal 2:9). Loh and Nida
to the entire church for joining with him (συγκοινωνούς μου τῆς χάριτος πάντας ὑμᾶς ὑμᾶς ὑμᾶς ὑμᾶς ὑπέρ), there is no intimation of disunity within the church on this matter.

In 1:8, Paul sounds a note of mutuality by swearing that his desire to come to them is consistent with the affections of Christ Jesus (ἐπιθυμῶ πάντας ὑμᾶς ἐν σπλάγχνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ). Σπλάγχνα Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ is not stock phraseology for Paul. Its appearance anticipates several points in his letter. First, it indicates that there is no dilution in Paul’s affections for the Philippians. The recent cessation of their fellowship has left no ill will. Second, Paul’s love for them is sacrificial in quality, concerned with their growth in faith. Third, Paul is committed to come and see them. Finally, Paul’s affection for them is rooted not in friendship but in the kinship that is experienced among those who demonstrate authentic faith in Christ.

2.3. Philippians 1:9–11

Paul now informs the Philippians of his current intercession. This prayer does not address a new subject; rather it reiterates the substance of the thanksgiving, except now in petitionary form. The content of Paul’s prayer is his desire that the church’s

---

(Handbook, 14) translate χάρις “privilege” (see also TEV), referring both to Paul’s imprisonment and to his gospel proclamation.

150 The only similar occurrence is Phlm 20, where Paul beseeches Philemon to refresh his heart in Christ Jesus (ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐν Χριστῷ).

151 Bockmuehl (Philippians, 66) argues that Paul alludes to this prayer in v. 4, thus making it the climax of the section.

152 Casey W. Davis (Oral Biblical Criticism: The Influence of the Principles of Orality on the Literary Structure of Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians [JSNTSup 172; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 107) identifies repetitions that unite the entire passage. These are Ἰησοῦς; ὑπέρ with the genitive; κοινωνία or συγκοινωνία; τοῦτο in reference to
love abound more and more.\textsuperscript{153} No object of this love is given, nor is one necessary. Paul announces in 1:3–8 that the great work of God is in the formation and sustaining of the church’s fellowship with him and in Paul’s reciprocating affection. Therefore Paul prays here that God will continue to do what he praises God for in v. 6, namely, continue to increase the church’s love for God’s work in his gospel mission.\textsuperscript{154} He has given thanks for this κοινωνία; now he prays for it.

Paul also gives the means by which love of their partnership will develop — by knowledge and deep insight (ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει).\textsuperscript{155} This prepositional phrase intimates that Paul’s words are part of this instruction. At several points in his letter Paul presents knowing and understanding as a diagnostic for authentic faith

---

\textsuperscript{153} I take the ἵνα clause as appositional; so already Vincent, Epistles, 11; Hansen, Philippians, 56. Contra Sumney, Philippians, 14; Witherington, Philippians, 55.

\textsuperscript{154} Two other objects are frequently suggested: love for Christ; and the Philippians’ love for one another. Hansen (Philippians, 58) suggests that Paul’s own estimation of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ (3:7) means that he would never speak of the reciprocal love of believers without rooting it in the love for Christ. I do not dispute this, except to say that this is not “another object.” In Philippians, love for Paul and love for his mission are part of the warp and woof of an authentic love for Christ.

It is more problematic to argue that Paul has the Philippians’ love for each other in view. There is no indication at this point that Paul is address this matter. The various references to “all” do not demonstrate that Paul has any reason to believe that there is disunity within the church. Indeed, in the absence of overt statements regarding division, these confirm the exact opposite. The only relationship that Paul refers to in these introductory comments is the church’s relationship with him. Contra Peterman (Gift, 106), who maintains that Paul’s reference to love here has the dissolution of internal rivalries as its focus.

\textsuperscript{155} I take ἐν as instrumental rather than locative; contra O’Brien (Philippians, 74). Loh and Nida (Handbook, 16–17) suggest that knowledge and judgment are “accompanying features of love.”
This pairing of their love of him with knowledge in his opening prayer subtly introduces his argument that remaining loyal to him is a theological decision.

The purpose of praying for this love that grows through understanding is that the Philippians will be better able to discern the proper course of action so that they will be pure and blameless on the Day of Christ (1:10). This second reference to the Day of Christ means that Paul considers their fellowship with him to be part of the fruit that constitutes being deemed among the eschatological people of God. Further, both δοκιμάζω and καρπὸς δικαιοσύνης have an ethical sense to them. This attention to

---

156 For example, in 1:12–16 Paul recounts that authentic brothers and sisters, unlike his rivals, have proclaimed the gospel even more because of their recognition that Paul is set apart by God to announce Christ (1:14).

157 Holloway (Consolation, 45–78, 94–100) argues that 1:9–10a is the rhetorical goal of Philippians. Paul wants the Philippians to see that what grieves them is not something that matters. While I agree with Holloway that 1:9–10a orients the reader towards a duality in Philippians, namely, that which is preferred and that which is not, Holloway’s thesis that Paul writes to console the church is not persuasive. I will address his study in subsequent chapters.

158 Giesen (“Eschatology,” 227) argues that εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ does not mean “at the Day of Christ” but refers to living “in the face of the Day of Christ.” Here, however, the reference to being pure and blameless favors a temporal reading of εἰς, depicting the moment when there will be a reckoning on the basis of purity and blamelessness. It anticipates 2:15 (Ἰνα γένησθε ἄμηπτοι καὶ ἁκέρατοι, τέκνα θεοῦ ἄμωμα μέσον γενεᾶς σκολίας καὶ διεστραμμένης). In Chapter Five, I will seek to demonstrate that this is an eschatological reference that incorporates LXX Deut 32:5.

159 Todd D. Still (Philippians & Philemon [SHBC; Macon, Ga.: Selwyn & Hyde, 2011], 34) writes: “The aim of Paul’s prayer, then, is decidedly moral. It merits noting, however, that his ethical aspirations for the Philippians are grounded in christological convictions.” Δικαιοσύνη in v. 11 is frequently understood either as source (the fruit that comes from righteousness) or content (righteousness is the content of the fruit). The latter is to be preferred because the context is one of behavior or actions that are produced by this growth in love and knowledge. See further Giesen, “Eschatology,” 226; Bruce, Philippians, 38; Fee, Philippians, 104; O’Brien, Philippians, 80; Hawthorne,
choosing a course of action that has eschatological ramifications supports the identification of Philippians as deliberative rhetoric, since Paul is urging the Philippians to continue to pursue that for which he has given thanks. Their service to Paul is part of this eschatologically worthy fruit. Finally, Paul concludes his exordium in a manner similar to how he began it: the Philippians’ fellowship with Paul gives glory to God (ἐνχάριστῳ τῷ θεῷ μου [v. 3] — εἰς δόξαν καὶ ἐπαινὸν θεοῦ [v. 10]).

2.4. Summary and the Way Forward

In sum, 1:3–11 presents Paul’s view on the Philippians’ keeping of their obligations to the Pauline mission. Paul gives thanks because he sees that the church

*Philippians, 33–34; Silva, Philippians, 61; Hansen, Philippians, 63. Mark A. Seifrid (Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification [NSBT 9; Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 2000], 172) suggests that what is given is not a “fruit of righteousness”, but rather “righteousness as a whole.” Paul’s καρπὸς δικαιοσύνης is likely a phrase borrowed from the LXX, e.g., Ps 15:2; Prov 3:9; 11:30; Amos 6:12.

160 Paul again places this choice within the sovereign work of God. Both πεπληρωμένοι and τὸν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Хριστοῦ make the Philippians’ “fruit that is righteous conduct” a work of God. The passive implies that God is the agent doing the filling by means of his salvific work.

161 P46 reads καὶ ἐπαινὸν θεοῦ καὶ ἐπαινὸν μοι. Bruce M. Metzger (A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament (Fourth Revised Edition) [2d ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994], 544) describes this variant as “astonishing.” But the scribe of P46 (if this variant is indeed not original) is a good reader of Philippians. I will argue that Paul considers the fidelity to this fellowship something that will result in his being honored, too (1:26; 2:15, 16; 4:1). See also the reading of F, G, it, Ambrosiaster: καὶ ἐπαινὸν μοι, where God is not praised at all, only Paul. Brent Nongbri (“Two Neglected Textual Variants in Philippians 1,” JBL 128 [2009]: 808) proposes that καὶ ἐπαινὸν μοι is “clearly the lectio difficilior . . . [and] should be regarded as the oldest recoverable reading.” He understands P46 to be a conflation of two older readings.

162 See also Sean F. Winter, “Worthy of the Gospel of Christ: A Study in the Situation and Strategy of Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians” (DPhil diss., Oxford
has not abandoned him but remains faithful to the cause of God, that is, his apostolic charge. Implicit in this offering of praise and thanksgiving are the matters that will govern much of the epistle — the sending of aid, divine oversight, eschatological blessing, sacrificial mutuality, rivals, and so on. Indeed, my study will make the case that the entire remainder of his epistle (1:12–4:20) is an amplification of Paul’s prayer in 1:9–11.\footnote{Heil (Philippians, 49) suggests that Paul’s prayer is also as an indirect exhortation to the audience to be part of bringing about the prayer’s fulfillment, with God’s help.} Paul writes to the Philippians in the hope that the joy he experiences in the renewal of their fellowship will become an eschatological joy that they each will share.\footnote{John W. Marshall (“Paul’s Ethical Appeal in Philippians,” in Porter and Olbricht, Rhetoric, 363–66) observes that Paul’s primary method of building ethos in Philippians is through “identification.” This identification is in two directions: Paul is with God and he is with the Philippians. In this exordium, Paul sets both of these associations in motion, his mission being the bridge that connects them.} His epistle is directed towards this end.

---

Winter argues that the letter’s opening and closing frames the letter, indicating that the rhetorical situation of Philippians is Paul’s intention to increase the church’s commitment to him.
3.1. Overview

In 1:12–26, Paul apprises the Philippian church of his situation and the status of his mission. The selection of his incarceration as the narratio evinces its significance for Paul’s rhetorical strategy. Along with most commentators, I divide this passage into two parts. The first (1:12–18a) presents the facts of his circumstances and the responses of those around him. The second (1:18b–26) concerns Paul’s own reflections regarding what is to happen next.\(^ {165}\) The two units are joined by an inclusio (προκοπή at 1:12 and 1:25).\(^ {166}\) The transition from the present tense χαίρω at the end of Phil 1:18a to the future χαρῆσομαι at the start of Phil 1:18b marks the seam between the two parts. The repetition of several similar words and topics from 1:12–18a in 1:18b–26 indicates that the latter is a continuation of the former.\(^ {167}\)

There have been several suggestions as to Paul’s intentions with his prison report, most prominently (1) to show the Philippians that the gospel takes precedence over everything else; (2) to encourage the Philippians to persevere through suffering; (3) to give comfort to the Philippians by relieving any anxiety they may have about the difficulties of his incarceration; (4) to demonstrate that God turns misfortune into

\( ^{165} \) Fowl, Philippians, 36.

\( ^{166} \) Peterman, Gift, 109.

\( ^{167} \) Most notably γινώσκω and οἶδα (1:12, 16, 19, 22, 25); πείθω and παρρησία (1:14, 20, 24); and various references to abundance and greater increase (1:12, 14, 17, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26).
blessing; (5) to inspire the Philippians to evangelize their neighbors; and (6) to convince the church at Philippi that their support of him is not in vain.\textsuperscript{168} Though a few recent scholars are addressing the sixth intention, Hawthorne’s comment that this “has to be inferred” and is “not explicitly stated” remains the predominant sentiment.\textsuperscript{169}

I will argue that the purpose of Paul’s prison report is to persuade the Philippians to remain steadfast in their support. Rather than having to be “inferred” from the text, I will contend that point (6) above is evident. It is the subject of 1:12–26 and the entire passage is oriented toward it. I do not deny that (1) through (5) are present (though [3] is doubtful because Paul scarcely mentions his personal well-being). On the contrary, (1) through (5) are subsumed within (6).

Rhetorically, this passage is a narratio.\textsuperscript{170} In deliberative rhetoric, the narratio supports the propositio by presenting facts the speaker (author) considers relevant to


\textsuperscript{169} Hawthorne, \textit{Philippians}, 39. Bloomquist (\textit{Function}, 124), Hansen (\textit{Philippians}, 67), Silva (\textit{Philippians}, 59), and Peterman (\textit{Gift}, 107) refer to the Philippian’s gift as part of Paul’s prison report.

\textsuperscript{170} Witherington, \textit{Philippians}, 71. Witherington (ibid., 75) holds that traditional epistolary analysis mistakenly makes 1:12 the beginning of the body of the letter instead of “preparatory remarks for the proposition and arguments that follow.” Geoffrion (\textit{Purpose}, 179) argues that the narratio begins with 1:27. But 1:27 is best understood as the propositio (see further Chapter Four). Quintilian (\textit{Inst}. 4.2.123) instructs that the narratio should “end where the issue to be determined begins.” The transition from 1:26 to 1:27 fits Quintilian’s description of the move from narratio to propositio.
his or her persuasive purpose. Therefore Paul’s report should not be expected to be exhaustive. He selects these details because he considers them important for preparing the Philippians for 1:27–30. Conversely, that which is omitted Paul deemed irrelevant. This is not to be overlooked in the interpretation of 1:12–26. Paul gives negligible attention to his jailors, but he discusses at some length the difficulties caused by his rivals. His *synkrisis* (a rhetorical method of contrasting positive and negative examples) separates the Philippians and himself from these opponents. Further, Phil 1:12–26, like most *narrationes*, contains statements designed to enhance the speaker’s *ethos*, thereby increasing the likelihood that his argument will be received favorably.

I will attempt to show that Paul continues in the *narratio* the discussion of the topics introduced in the *exordium*, namely, the divine origin of his mission, the eschatological reward for steadfastness, the correspondence between favoring him and authentic faith, and the mutuality between him and the Philippians. In 1:12–26, Paul does more than simply provide a neutral account of his situation, but designs his report to give perspective to his circumstances so as to encourage the Philippian church to remain committed to their fellowship with him.

---


172 This is consistent with classical instruction on the *narratio*; see Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.8.11.


175 Ibid., 72.
Paul’s imprisonment likely caused the temporary cessation of support from the Philippians (2:30; 4:10). Hansen writes:

His [Paul’s] partnership with the Philippians for the purpose of propagating the Gospel (1:5) depended upon solid progress in his work. If the Philippians concluded that Paul’s imprisonment hindered or terminated his work in proclaiming the Gospel . . . then they would think that the purpose of their partnership had ended. They would surmise that their support of Paul’s work was no longer needed since Paul, now in chains, could no longer work.¹⁷⁶

In keeping with this is the fact that Paul hardly refers here to his personal needs, but instead discusses the status of their shared gospel mission.¹⁷⁷ The arrival of Epaphroditus provided Paul with the opportunity to address the church leadership’s doubts regarding the future of his apostolic mission.¹⁷⁸

---

¹⁷⁶ Hansen, Philippians, 67. Brian J. Capper (“Paul’s Dispute with Philippi: Understanding Paul’s Argument in Phil 1–2 from His Thanks in 4:10–20,” TZ 49 [1993]: 193–214) holds that the Philippians saw Paul’s imprisonment as a breach of contract. My reading of the κοινωνία between Paul and the Philippians agrees with Capper’s assessment of this relationship. But Capper does not account for the church’s decision to send aid prior to the receipt of the letter. In other words, he does not address what motivates the Philippians to support Paul if they saw him in such a light. Further, the references to mutuality presuppose that Paul considers the gift indicative of the fellowship’s continuance. Indeed, the inclusion of the mission report suggests that Paul is concerned that the Philippians will deem that he can no longer meet his obligations, not that they have already come to this conclusion.

¹⁷⁷ Peterlin (Letter, 34) suggests that Paul gives such little attention to personal matters because he knows that the Philippians are not as interested in his well-being as they are in the status of his work. This is not to say that the Philippians are heartless. After all, the church does send aid. But, as Peterlin argues, his avoidance of the matter demonstrates the weight that the church placed on their investment.

¹⁷⁸ As discussed above in Chapter Two, Paul’s inclusion of “overseers and deacons” (σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις) in his greeting (1:1) possibly means that this group’s response to his letter was of special interest to him.
Philippians is generally seen as lacking an apostolic defense by Paul. For example, Fee suggests that Paul does not identify himself as an apostle because “a letter primarily of friendship and exhortation, not of persuasion, does not need a reminder of Paul’s apostleship; indeed, the summons to obedience in this letter is predicated altogether on the secure nature of their mutual friendship.”¹⁷⁹ But this representative view undervalues the weight of 1:12–18a in securing Paul’s position with the Philippian church. The success of his mission in Ephesus validates his apostolic position and enhances his ethos. Philippians therefore follows Paul’s typical pattern of presenting his apostolic right to be heard at the outset (Rom 1:11–14; 1 Cor 1:17; 2:1–5; 2 Cor 1:8–17; Gal 1:1, 11–21; 2:1–10).¹⁸⁰

Specifically, I will argue that 1:12–18a forms a line of reasoning designed to show that Paul’s mission is advancing precisely because of, not in spite of, his current imprisonment.¹⁸¹ The crucial element is one of boldness: boldness on Paul’s account to

¹⁷⁹ Fee, Philippians, 62.

¹⁸⁰ In his other epistles, his apostolic claim anticipates the main thrust of the epistles. For example, in Galatians Paul declares that his apostleship was not from human effort or decision (Gal 1:1–24). This heralds his subsequent claim that the Galatians’ justification is also a spiritual reality (Gal 3:1–6).

¹⁸¹ Holloway (Consolation, 103–7) suggest that there are five topoi from consolation rhetoric in 1:12–18a: (1) that there is a distinction between things that matter and things that do not; (2) that conventional misfortunes often advance the cause of things that matter; (3) that hardship enhances one’s reputation; (4) that misfortune makes one an example to others; and (5) that the one who has been instructed in the things that do and do not matter is able to experience joy in the midst of crisis. Though there is no need to restrict these rhetorical devices to ancient consolation letters as Holloway does, his observation does indicate the attention that Paul gives to persuading the Philippians to share his view on his incarceration; so already Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Paul and the Stoics (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 96–98.
continue to proclaim, and a boldness that is contagious, encouraging the true brothers and sisters of Christ in Ephesus to stand with him. This is contrasted with the response of Paul’s rivals, who seek to gain advantage from Paul’s circumstances. Additionally, contrary to the majority understanding (especially of 1:15–18a), I will propose that Paul suggests that his rivals, not the Roman Empire, are the more dangerous threat to his mission. Further, the fact that they are against him reveals in them a deep theological flaw that invalidates their mission. In sum, I will hope to show that in 1:12–18a Paul urges the Philippians to remain bold in their alliance with him, to take comfort in the success of their partnership, and to perceive the error committed by those who do not align with him, the Apostle to the Gentiles.

3.2.1. Philippians 1:12–14

Paul begins his narratio with a “disclosure formula” (γινώσκειν ἡμᾶς βούλομαι) to introduce a matter that is unknown to his readers. Those preferring to structure a letter according to epistolary conventions identify disclosure formulas as beginning the

---

182 See also Rom 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor 10:1; 11:3; 12:1; 2 Cor 1:8; Gal 1:11; 1 Thess 2:1; 4:13. Romans 1:13 and 2 Cor 1:8 are especially similar to Phil 1:12 in that they disclose Paul’s circumstances to his readers. See also selections 111, 120, 125, 126, 134 in Arthur S. Hunt and Campbell C. Edgar, trans., Select Papyri (LCL; 5 vols.) for comparable formulas in 2d- and 3d-century C.E. documents.

Hans Dieter Betz (“The Literary Composition and Function of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians,” in The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretations [ed. Mark D. Nanos; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002], 14) argues that a disclosure formula was a standard introduction to a narratio. If Betz is correct, a disclosure formula in 1:12 lends support to the argument that Paul begins his narratio in 1:12 and that Philippians is properly interpreted according to rhetorical structures.
“body” of the letter. This “unknown that Paul is making known” is the prolific success his imprisonment has brought to the cause. He credits his incarceration (τὰ κατ’ ἐμὲ) with promoting his mission (εἰς προκοπήν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐλήλυθεν). Thus Paul defines his circumstances in terms of the mission; he does not separate them from his apostolic work.

---


Collange (Epistle, 53) speculates that τὰ κατ’ ἐμὲ refers to his recent decision to use his citizenship to secure his freedom. Similarly, Reumann (Philippians, 204–6) suggests that Paul’s appeal to citizenship was the catalyst of the resentment felt by those who deemed that his avoidance of suffering and martyrdom was inexcusable. Therefore, to justify his decision, Paul spells out that though he desires martyrdom he knows that it is necessary to exercise his right as a citizen so that he can return to Philippi (1:21–26). But this reading of τὰ κατ’ ἐμὲ does not fit the context of 1:12–18a. Τὰ κατ’ ἐμὲ more likely refers to οἱ δεσμοί μου (1:13, 14). It is Paul’s chains, not his release, that validate his mission. Collange’s and Reumann’s suggestion does imply that the difficult choice of 1:23 might not be theoretical if Paul deems he can determine events either to force his own demise or prevent it.

185 Εἰς designates purpose here. Sumney (Philippians, 19) argues that εἰς renders ἐλήλυθεν “have turned out.” Cf. BDAG, s.v. ἔρχομαι 5 (p. 395): “results in furthering.”

186 Τὰ κατ’ ἐμὲ parallels τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν in 1:27, where Paul desires to know the status of the Philippians’ circumstances as they pertain to their commitment to the mission. See further Chapter Four. Schenk (Philipperbriefe, 129) suggests that ἐμὲ (1:12) forms an inclusio with ἐμὴς (1:26).
How one understands μᾶλλον will influence the interpretation of 1:12. Is it an alternative comparative or a simple comparative? The former sounds a note of unexpectedness, contrasting the gospel mission as stalling or retreating and as advancing.\textsuperscript{187} The latter expresses instead the degree of advance: the gospel is going forward now more than ever because of his present condition.\textsuperscript{188} Context favors the simple comparative because of the prominence Paul’s gives to growth. Earlier he prays that the Philippians’ love for God’s work, i.e., their fellowship in the gospel mission, will grow more and more (ἐτι μᾶλλον καὶ μᾶλλον περισσεύῃ, 1:9). In 1:14, Paul presents an increase of confidence and boldness among the faithful to profess the word (καὶ τοὺς πλείονας τῶν ἁδελφῶν . . . περισσοτέρως τολμᾶν ἀφόβως τὸν λόγον λαλεῖν) as evidence.\textsuperscript{189} This reading is also consistent with his confidence that God determines each step of his mission (Rom 1:13; 1 Cor 15:9–10; Gal 1:11–16).\textsuperscript{190}


\textsuperscript{188} So already Swift, “Theme,” 241. Hawthorne (Philippians, 43) suggests that μᾶλλον indicates that the gospel has spread more than it otherwise would have without this hindrance (Paul’s imprisonment). Silva (Philippians, 62) argues similarly to Hawthorne: “The apostle, however, did not merely say that the gospel had continued to make progress in spite of adversity; rather, the adversity itself had turned out for the advancement of the gospel. . . . One should note, moreover, that implicit in this statement is a recognition of God’s sovereign workings in human affairs.” Lightfoot (Philippians, 39) holds that both senses of μᾶλλον are present. Nonetheless, the distinction between “rather” and “more” is no small one. The former has God accomplishing good, even in bad situations. The latter has these bad situations as part of the divine plan to accomplish good.

\textsuperscript{189} See also Phil 2:12 (πολλῷ μᾶλλον); 4:17 (ἐπιζητῶ τὸν καρπὸν τῶν πλεονάζοντα εἰς λόγον ύμῶν).
Philippians 1:13 provides the first of two confirmations of Paul’s claim in 1:12: the whole Praetorian Guard and all the rest see his imprisonment to be the result of his following Christ (ὡστε τούς δεσμούς μου φανεροὺς ἐν Χριστῷ γενέσθαι ἐν ὀλῳ τῷ πραιτωρίῳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς πάσιν).\textsuperscript{191} Lohmeyer hypothesizes that φανερός and its cognates connote a religious revelation.\textsuperscript{192} But this does not mean that Paul considers this “religious revelation” to be salvific knowledge (“that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve,” 1 Cor 15:3–5) because he does not call the Praetorian Guard / all the rest ἀδελφοί, a label he applies to the Philippians (v. 12) and those around him in Ephesus who are boldly speaking the word (v. 14).\textsuperscript{193} In this passage, Paul makes a distinction by his

\textsuperscript{190} O’Brien (Philippians, 90) points out that in Paul ἔρχομαι “denotes the occurrence of significant events in salvation history, including Christ’s first and second comings (1 Cor 4:5; 11:26; 16:22; Eph 2:17; 1 Thess 5:2; 1 Tim 1:15), as well as his own arrival to his churches (Rom 15:29, 32; 1 Cor 2:1; 4:21).” Ware (Paul, 174) argues that “εἰς προκοπήν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐλήλυθεν is doubtless a reference to God’s activity and providential ordering of events. . . . The divinely-wrought advancement of his gospel proclamation through Paul’s imprisonment is thus the topic of the letter-opening.”

\textsuperscript{191} Hansen (Philippians, 68) argues that since καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς πάσιν (1:13) refers to people, πραιτώριον likely does as well: it is the guard itself, not the palace.

\textsuperscript{192} Lohmeyer, Philipper, 39–40. See also Rom 1:19; 3:21; 1 Cor 3:13; 4:15; 11:19; 14:25; 2 Cor 2:14; 3:3; 4:2, 10–11. David Lincicum (Paul and the Early Jewish Encounter with Deuteronomy [WUNT 2 / 284; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 2010], 152) notes that φανερός in the NT can, in certain contexts, refer to the coming of an eschatological perception, the ability to see what was hidden in God, especially as it pertains to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God (Mark 3:12 and par.; 4:22 and par.; 6:14; Luke 8:17a; Acts 7:13; 1 Cor 3:13; 11:19; 14:25).

\textsuperscript{193} I hold that οἱ ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας (4:22) does not refer back to this group in 1:13. Those from the household of Caesar are clearly defined there as a subgroup of “all the saints,” unlike this group mentioned in 1:13. Philippians 4:22 suggests that Paul
application or omission of kinship labels. He denotes that there is a difference between the apperception of divine orchestration and the reception of saving grace. Paul is not offering the conversion of his jailors as evidence of the success of his mission. Instead, he presents them as evidence of how far his imprisonment, and implicitly his proclamation, is now known. He states that the reason for the reach of this knowledge is Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ). His imprisonment, consequently, is part of Christ’s strategy to have his proclamation reach a group (the Praetorian Guard) that was considered inaccessible. The significance is in the extent of the mission, not in its success for

specifies when a group (or individual) is a follower of Christ. Further, there is no indication in 1:13 that “all the rest” extends beyond the military.

Contra Keown (Evangelism, 73), who suggests that “[Philippians 1:13] may indicate a large enough number for him [Paul] to feel as if the whole city has been impacted. . . . In other words, some kind of evangelism has occurred. . . . This probably indicates that at least some converts have been made in this group.” But Keown’s supposition that knowledge of Paul’s arrest = evangelism = conversions is not supported by the text. If conversions had occurred, Paul does not tell the Philippians this in his report.

I am taking ἐν Χριστῷ to be a phrase that shows agency; also Ware, Paul, 175–77. Contra Constantine R. Campbell (Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2012], 125), who argues that “it appears most likely that ‘manifest-in-Christ’ means that Paul’s chains are revealed to be for Christ, or because of him [faith in him] . . . thus it is not inappropriate to regard his chains as ‘Christian’ in the sense that this identifies the nature of his offence.” Ware (Paul, 176), however, finds that “the construction [τοὺς δεσμούς μου φανεροὺς ἐν Χριστῷ γενέσθαι] can hardly bear such a sense, which would require τοὺς δεσμούς μου φανεροὺς γενέσθαι ὅτι ἐν Χριστῷ . . . ορ τοὺς δεσμούς μου φανεροὺς γενέσθαι ὅταν ἐν Χριστῷ.” Further, ἐν Χριστῷ is a clumsy way of saying “for Christ” or “because of him” or “because my faith in him.” One expects ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ. In 1:29, Paul’s ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ conveys precisely this.

Bruce (Philippians, 41), Fee (Philippians, 113), Silva (Philippians, 62), and Witherington (Philippians, 79) hypothesize that ἐν Χριστῷ is Paul’s way of relating his imprisonment to participating in Christ’s suffering. But Bockmuehl (Philippians, 75) rejects this, countering that “it is not clear how this could be ‘evident’ to anyone other than himself.” Bockmuehl sees ἐν Χριστῷ as an “ironic reference to the fact that Paul is indeed ‘in Christ,’ not just as a slave (1:1) but plain to see also as his prisoner.”
adding to the church. My reading of ἐν Χριστῷ means that what is being revealed is not Paul’s action, but Christ’s.

Despite this impressive feat, Paul gives prominence to the second outcome of his incarceration: [ὕστε] καὶ τούς πλείονας τῶν ἁδελφῶν ἐν κυρίῳ πεποιθότας τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου περισσοτέρως τολμᾶν ἀφόβως τὸν λόγον λαλεῖν (1:14). In 1:14, Paul shifts from discussing outsiders (1:13) to addressing the influence his imprisonment has had on those who follow Christ. Paul will not again mention the Praetorian Guard, but his discussion of the brothers and sisters continues through v. 18a. The effect that his

---

Plummer (Philippians, 18–19), Fritz Neugebauer (In Christus = En Christōi: Eine Untersuchung zum Paulinischen Glaubensverständnis [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961], 121), and Jewett (“Thanksgiving,” 366–67) argue that ἐν Χριστῷ is adverbial, but refers instead to the entire salvific activity of God, especially the death and resurrection of Christ. Therefore it modifies the entire clause, both the chains and their significance determined by the coming of Christ. But O’Brien (Philippians, 92) questions if ἐν Χριστῷ “can really bear the weight Neugebauer has put on it.”

Ellicott (Philippians, 31), Eadie (Philippians, 26), Lightfoot (Philippians, 88), O’Brien (Philippians, 91–92), Garland (“Defense,” 331–32), Hawthorne (Philippians, 43), Reumann (Philippians, 195), and Hansen (Philippians, 68) argue that ἐν Χριστῷ in 1:13 refers to the content of what is known, namely, that Paul is imprisoned because of his confession. This is the most common reading; see also NIV, NASB, HCSB, ESV.

Against this, Witherington (Philippians, 113) maintains that “[being a Christian] was not itself yet a crime. Even in the second century Pliny was in some doubt about the matter.” Initially Christianity was afforded the same right to free exercise of religion because the Roman authorities considered it to be a sect of Judaism. The first “fixed point” regarding the debate over the legal status of Christianity was not until the reign of Trajan. See further W. H. C. Frend, “The Persecutions: Some Links Between Judaism and the Early Church,” JEH 9 (1958): 141–58; G. E. M. De St. Croix, “The Persecutions,” in The Crucible of Christianity: Judaism, Hellenism, and the Historical Background to the Early Christian Faith (ed. Arnold J. Tonybee and Abraham Schalit; New York, N.Y.: World, 1969), 345–47; Henry Chadwick, The Early Church: The Story of Emergent Christianity from the Apostolic Age to the Dividing of the Ways between the Greek East and the Latin West (Penguin History of the Church 1; rev. ed.; London: Penguin, 1993), 9–31; Ferguson, Backgrounds, 601–4. Thus it is unlikely that Paul was arrested for being an adherent of an illegal religion.
imprisonment has had on the majority of followers of Christ in Ephesus has been to increase their commitment to evangelization.\textsuperscript{196}

Therefore Philippians 1:14 corresponds to 1:13 in that ἐν κυρίῳ, like ἐν Χριστῷ, shows agency.\textsuperscript{197} Paul holds that Christ used his imprisonment to establish conviction among the believers.\textsuperscript{198} Further, by conveying that the majority of brothers and sisters have responded in this manner, Paul makes their reaction to his circumstances normative for all believers, including the Philippians. Indeed, this growth in commitment recalls the \textit{exordium} in that these particular brothers and sisters are an example of believers who have chosen the proper course of action on the basis of what they discerned about the Pauline mission (1:9–10).

\subsection*{3.2.2. Philippians 1:15–18a}

Most scholars see a tension in 1:15–18a between Paul’s apparent affirmation of those around him who are proclaiming Christ and their desire (motivated by envy) to

\textsuperscript{196} In 1:14, ὁ λόγος refers to Paul’s gospel proclamation; so also λόγος (1 Thess 1:6 and possibly Gal 6:6); λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ (1 Cor 14:36; 2 Cor 2:17; 4:2; 1 Thess 2:13); λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ (1 Thess 1:8). \textit{TNIV} translates ὁ λόγος “the gospel” in 1:14.

\textsuperscript{197} So Schenk, \textit{Philipperbriefe}, 135; Bockmuehl, \textit{Philippians}, 76; Sumney, \textit{Philippians}, 20. This construction (ἐν κυρίῳ πεποιθότας) is unique in Paul. Some suggest that ἐν κυρίῳ modifies ἀδελφοί just as ἐν Χριστῷ ἤσοῦ modifies ἂγιοι in 1:1 (see also NIV, KJV, NASB). But its pairing with ἐν Χριστῷ in 1:13, the redundancy it creates because ἀδελφοί already conveys this sentiment, and the fact that Paul often combines πέποιθα with ἐν κυρίῳ or ἐν σαρκί (Rom 14:14; 2 Cor 1:9; Gal 5:10; Phil 2:24; 3:3, 4) together work against this proposal.

\textsuperscript{198} I take τοῖς δεσμοῖς as an instrumental dative of cause.
harm him and to create division.\textsuperscript{199} The consensus “solution” to this problem is that the enmity between Paul and these envious proclaimers stems from personal rivalry and not from theological differences.\textsuperscript{200} Paul apparently includes it here because of its similarity to the situation at Philippi. Peterlin argues that “the excursus in 15–17 has a double reference. Paul recognized the overlapping between the circumstances of the two situations . . . envy and selfish ambition are at the heart of both situations.”\textsuperscript{201} Hansen describes it as a “valuable clue for understanding the cause of the problem of disunity in the Philippian church.”\textsuperscript{202}

But it bears repeating that 1:15–18a is part of the narratio (events chosen by the author to support the propositio). Seen within the rhetorical purpose of the epistle, I hope to show that it serves the narratio in drawing the Philippians closer to Paul by advocating allegiance to his mission and condemning disloyalty. The interpretive question, therefore, is how it supports the propositio. I will argue against the consensus

\textsuperscript{199} Reumann (\textit{Philippians}, 203–7) lists the following proposals regarding the identity of these “other preachers” in 1:14–18b: they are (1) pagan agitators who preached Christ under pretense to stir up the authorities against Paul; (2) Jews; (3) Judaizing Christians; (4) Zealot Christians; (5) Christians jealous of Paul; (6) itinerant Christian missionaries with a divine-man theology; (7) Gnostic Christians; and (8) Christians upset that Paul used his Roman citizenship to garner his release.

\textsuperscript{200} Hansen, \textit{Philippians}, 71.

\textsuperscript{201} Peterlin, \textit{Letter}, 40. See further Fee, \textit{Philippians}, 123; Fowl, \textit{Philippians}, 43. Fowl asks, “If one follows this account [the opponents stem from factions in the Roman church], it does, however, raise the question of why Paul spends so much time conveying information about Christians in Rome to Christians in Philippi.” Fowl rightly perceives the problem. While Paul does on occasion discuss the merits of another church (2 Cor 8–9), he does not demean other \textit{legitimate} followers of Christ in his letters. But he does decry false proclaimers. The reading proposed here acknowledges Fowl’s concern with the traditional interpretation and offers a way past it.

\textsuperscript{202} Hansen, \textit{Philippians}, 75.
opinion, which holds that there is a tension in 1:15–18a requiring an interpretation that parses Paul’s words so that he somehow affirms the doctrine of those conspiring against him. In other words, in 1:15–18a Paul is not confirming the message of his rivals, but repudiating it (and them).

In 1:15–18a, the two groups represent two responses to his mission. True brothers and sisters embrace Paul and affirm his work. His rivals demonstrate their falseness by doing the opposite. Whereas 1:12–14 compares how the Praetorian Guard and followers of Christ were affected by Paul’s imprisonment, 1:15–18a contrasts how two separate groups, both declaring Christ, differ in their relationship with Paul. Thus I will argue that these two groups are not two subgroups of the “majority of brothers” introduced in 1:14. Further, Paul’s words in 1:17–18a are not a tolerant acceptance of his opposition, but rather a rebuke of them and their attempts to marginalize him. He presents the true brothers and sisters and his rivals as examples of the two paths

---

203 Contra Christfried Böttrich (“Verkündigung aus ‘Neid und Rivalität’? Beobachtungen zu Phil 1,12,” ZNW 95 [2004]: 84–101), who argues that Paul details his ordeal with his rivals to model for the Philippians how they ought to act to reduce conflict when envy occurs within the church. See further Morna D. Hooker, “Philippians: Phantom Opponents and the Real Source of Conflict,” in Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity: Essays in Honour of Heikki Räisänen (ed. Ismo Dunderberg and Christopher M. Tuckett; NovTSup 103; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 381. Peterlin (Letter, 41) suggests that Paul’s tolerance of his rivals is intended to comfort those against him in Philippi by showing that he still accepts them. Hansen (Philippians, 76) contests Peterlin’s proposal, maintaining that there is little evidence that the church was divided over supporting Paul or not. But Hansen’s criticism of Peterlin is misplaced because, as I will argue, the decision to support Paul is at the forefront of the epistle. Peterlin’s position collapses, however, because of the lack of evidence that there is still any division within the church or that envy is threatening its fellowship with Paul; so already Geoffrion (Purpose, 107), who writes: “Paul offers no remedy to unite those who preach out of envy or selfish ambition with himself or with those who preach out of good will and love (1:15–16). That is not the purpose of this passage. Clearly, Paul has written about his opponents to say something about himself and his priorities, not about the issue of unity among Christians.”
the Philippians can follow: one that affirms his divinely appointed work, and one that denies it. Philippians 1:15–18a, therefore, directly supports arguments that Paul’s purpose in writing Philippians was to call the Philippians to remain faithful to his mission.

Frank Thielman’s presentation of these two groups shows the contrast:

**The Rivals**
- preach Christ (vv. 15, 17)
- out of envy and rivalry (v. 15)
- and selfish ambition and pretense (v. 17)
- supposing (v. 17)
- that they thus cause trouble for Paul in chains (v. 17)

**The Colleagues**
- preach Christ (v. 15)
- out of goodwill (v. 15)
- and love (v. 16)
- knowing (v. 16)
- that Paul is where he is to defend the gospel (v. 16)

Philippians 1:15 introduces each group as well as their governing characteristic. One group proclaims through envy and rivalry (διὰ φθόνον καὶ έριν), the other through goodwill (δι’ εὐδοκίαν). Philippians 1:16–17 gives the evidence for this classification. Paul then offers his evaluation of the situation in 1:18a: Τί γάρ; πλὴν ὃτι παντὶ τρόπῳ, εἴτε προφάσει εἴτε ἄληθείᾳ, Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ χαίρω.

---

204 Thielman, *Philippians: The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1995), 61. Ware (Paul, 186) observes that the passage’s concentric structure (A: τινές μὲν καὶ, B: τινές δὲ καὶ, B’: οἱ μὲν, A’: οἱ δὲ) is “disturbed” by οὕχ ἄγνως, thus placing an emphasis on those who have impure motives.

205 Ware (Paul, 187–88) notes that the twofold καὶ that follows μὲν and δὲ respectively “heightens the antithesis between the different motivations for preaching.”
Each group’s response to his imprisonment is the basis on which Paul makes his judgment.\textsuperscript{206} The true colleagues’ awareness that Paul was divinely appointed to be in prison is why he associates their preaching activity with εὐδοκία and ἀγάπη, both terms referring to their disposition towards him.\textsuperscript{207} Metaphorically κεῖμαι means “to be appointed or destined for something.”\textsuperscript{208} An appropriate paraphrase of 1:15b–16 is thus: “But another group is proclaiming Christ with goodwill towards me. This group loves me because they know that I was appointed to be here to give a defense of my gospel mission.” Again Paul recalls the exordium by correlating the true colleagues’ love of Paul with their knowledge of his mission (1:9–10a).

The similarity between Paul’s words in 1:15b–16 and in 1:14 (τὸν λόγον λαλεῖν with τὸν Χριστόν κηρύσσοντι; ἐν κυρίῳ πεποιθότας with εἰδότες ὅτι εἰς ἀπολογίαν τοῦ)

\textsuperscript{206} Contra Dibelius (\textit{Thessalonicher}, 63), who holds that 1:15–18a is an excursus not connected with Paul’s imprisonment.

\textsuperscript{207} So Eadie, \textit{Philippians}, 30; Heinrich A. W. Meyer, \textit{Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians} (4th ed.; trans. John C. Moore and William P. Dickson; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1875), 37; Lohmeyer, \textit{Philippet}, 44–45; Collange, \textit{Epistle}, 57; Schenk, \textit{Philippierbriefe}, 140; Reumann, \textit{Philippians}, 180. Contra O’Brien (\textit{Philippians}, 99–100), Bockmuehl (\textit{Philippians}, 78–79), Ware (Paul, 189–91), who argue that εὐδοκία refers to God’s benevolence. They maintain that in most of its \textit{NT} and \textit{LXX} occurrences, εὐδοκία refers to divine good pleasure. Even though God is not directly referenced and εὐδοκία itself does not necessarily suggest it, the Hebrew רָצוֹן, which is rendered εὐδοκία in the \textit{LXX}, does imply God’s activity without expressly stating it (similarly Gottlob Schrenk, “εὐδοκία,” \textit{TDNT} 2:745). Further, in 1:14 Paul describes the boldness of these brothers and sisters in similar terms (ἐν κυρίῳ πεποιθότας) and refers to God’s activity in the \textit{exordium}. Ware maintains that εὐδοκέω contrasts the “divine impulse” of the colleagues with the fleshly motivations of his rivals. But this interpretation of εὐδοκία is to be rejected because the expression δι’ εὐδοκίαν does not automatically indicate divine goodwill and 1:15–18a gives prominence to the relationship between the groups and Paul, not between them and God. See also Rom 10:1, where Paul comments on his own goodwill (εὐδοκία) towards the Romans, a clear example of a human disposition toward another.

\textsuperscript{208} BDAG, s.v. εὐδοκία (p. 537).
εὐαγγελίου) indicates that he is referring again to the same group of brothers and sisters. In 1:14, the brothers and sisters were motivated to speak the word boldly because of their confidence in Paul. In 1:15b–16, this same knowledge spurs them to preach Christ out of love for Paul. Therefore when Paul states that the brothers and sisters are bold enough (τολμάω) and fearless (ἀφόβως), he is including their courage to declare their regard for him.

Most scholars surmise that this boldness refers to a reaction to the civic or state-sponsored persecution that often occurred when these believers proclaimed Christ.209 This reading is not without problems, however. First, as mentioned above, being a Christian was not yet considered a criminal act and therefore daring to speak was not ipso facto a stance against civil authorities. Second, Ware notes that ἀπολογία (1:16) does not always designate a formal legal defense.210 Ἀπολογία does bear this

---

209 Fee (Philippians, 116) suggests that this “probably reflects the historical situation in Rome in the early 60s, when Nero’s madness was peaking and the church there had begun to fall under suspicion.” Brian M. Rapske (The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody [The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting 3; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994], 293–34) lists definite “social dangers” that also existed for these brothers and sisters when they identified with a prisoner like Paul.

210 Ware, Paul, 191–93. Contra Dibelius, Thessalonicher, 63; Lohmeyer, Philiper, 24; Collange, Epistle, 47–48; Martin, Philippians, 67; Fee, Philippians, 93; Hawthorne, Philippians, 24. Ware also argues that βεβαιωσίς (1:7) is often misread as carrying a technical legal sense. He maintains that there is “no evidence whatsoever for a forensic usage of this term applicable to cases such as Paul’s.” Ware holds that this misinterpretation stems from reliance on Adolf Deissmann (Bible Studies: Contributions, Chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions, to the History of the Language, the Literature, and the Religion of Hellenistic Judaism and Primitive Christianity [trans. A. J. Grieve; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1901], 104–8) and MM, s.v. βεβαιωσίς (pp. 107–8). For example, MM has, “The forensic flavor of the word is noted as still discernable in Phil 1”. . . . The papyri discovered since Deissmann’s pioneering work was published support with numerous examples his thesis that the word must always be read with the technical sense in mind.” Ware (192) counters that the examples “collected by Deissmann and Moulton and Milligan instance only a quasi-legal, commercial usage of the word, to refer to the
sense in Acts 22:1; 24:10; 26:2; 2 Tim 4:16; Mart. Pol. 10.2. But it also can refer to an informal defense or reply to accusations.\textsuperscript{211} Ware proposes that this is Paul’s intent in 1:16 because it is “evident that the expressed object of Paul’s defense is not the charges brought against him (cf. Acts 26:2 περὶ πάντων ὅν ἐγκαλοῦμαι), but the gospel (τοῦ εὐαγγελίου; cf. 1 Pet 3:15, περὶ τῆς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐλπίδος).”\textsuperscript{212} Further, he argues that Paul’s apologetic has a “protreptic aspect” and is not a defense of his faith in general, but specifically of the message that he is proclaiming.\textsuperscript{213} So he commends his colleagues because they love him, which also means they are preaching the very message that he is defending. The expression of their love of Paul is their affirmation of his mission.

This affects the interpretation of Paul’s description of his rivals in 1:15–17 and his summary statement in 1:18a. The crux interpretum of 1:15–18a is the identity of these rivals and what Paul thinks of them. On the one hand, he seems to include this group among those he referenced in v. 14.\textsuperscript{214} This means that he considers them to be vendor’s guarantee, a usage hardly ‘forensic’ in the broader sense and with no real pertinence to Paul’s trial.” Βεβαίωσις connotes that which corroborates the truth of Paul’s claims, without requiring a courtroom setting. Ware further cites Mark 16:20; Heb 2:3–4; 2 Pet 1:19; Thucydides, 1.23; Plutarch, Gen. Socr. 582e; Epictetus, Diss. 2.18.32 in support.

\textsuperscript{211} BDAG, s.v. (p. 117); D. Kellermann, “ἀπολογία,” EDNT 1:137.

\textsuperscript{212} Ware, Paul, 192.

\textsuperscript{213} Ibid., 192–93.

\textsuperscript{214} Hawthorne (Philippians, 45) states that “Paul’s language, therefore, indicates that in vv. 15–18a he has in mind some of those “brothers [and sisters]” he mentioned in v. 14. Were it otherwise, surely he would have stated his intent more clearly.” See further J. Hugh Michael, “Two Brief Marginal Notes in the Text of Philippians,” ExpTim 35 (1923–1924): 139–40; Lohmeyer, Philipper, 44; Schenk, Philipperbriefe, 138; Hansen, Philippians, 71; Witherington, Philippians, 80–81.
brothers and sisters who now preach the word boldly because of what the Lord has revealed to them about his imprisonment. Further, he says that they are proclaiming Christ (1:15, 17), at which it seems he rejoices (1:18a). But on the other hand, Paul characterizes them as motivated by envy (φθόνος), rivalry (ἐρίς), selfish ambition (ἐριθεία), impure motives (οὐχ ἁγνῶς), and a desire to cause him harm by taking advantage of his incarceration (οἰόμενοι θλιψιν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου).\textsuperscript{215} As noted above, scholarly consensus holds that Paul’s words affirm that the content of their preaching is correct, but also acknowledge that there is enmity between him and them because they are ambitious. Seeking to give credence to this view, some advocates of a Roman provenance maintain that the difficult situation when Paul comes to Rome, i.e., his trying to minister to a church that he did not found, best accounts for the passage.\textsuperscript{216} Finally, 1:18a supposedly proves that Paul’s main concern is the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{215} Winter (Seek, 95) holds that these rivals are hoping to increase Paul’s physical suffering. O’Brien (Philippians, 102) suggests that they are attempting to cause him emotional anguish by flouting their freedom in contrast to his lack of it. BDAG (s.v. θλιψις [p. 457]) includes 1:17 as an example of θλιψις as “distress of the heart.” Indeed, the context implies that θλιψις is Paul’s internal distress that results from their attempts to turn followers of Christ away from his gospel and to theirs. Ware (Paul, 194) notes that elsewhere Paul also comments on his emotional duress when people break away from him (2 Cor 2:3–4; 11:28–29; Gal 4:19). Therefore Ware concludes: “If so, Paul in 1:17b thus describes, not the confessed aim of these leaders, but rather the effect that their factious behavior has upon the apostle. In seeking to undermine his missionary work in order to promote their own selfish interests, they are in effect seeking to bring emotional duress upon Paul.” Ware does not view these “selfish interests” as an attempt to discredit Paul’s gospel, but takes the traditional view that Paul considers his rivals as still “disseminating the Christian message.”

\textsuperscript{216} So Böttrich, “Verkündigung,” 84–101; Keown, Evangelism, 93; Ware, Paul, 188; Witherington, Philippians, 81. Fee (Philippians, 122): “all of Paul’s strong language against ‘opponents,’ it should be noted, including 3:2 in this letter, is directed toward those who invade his Gentile churches and insist on their conforming to basic Jewish identity markers (circumcision, food laws, observance of days).” Fee proposes that this is not the situation here because those opposing Paul in Rome are not “sheep-stealing.”
dissemination of the gospel, and that he cares little for the means of its proclamation.

217

All the same, there are good reasons to reject this reading. First, the argument that 1:15–18a reflects a strained situation in the church at Rome is problematic because the Roman provenance is itself doubtful.218 Second, the more likely Ephesian provenance works against the consensus because it places the writing of Philippians around the same time as Paul’s letters to the Galatians and the Corinthians. Surprisingly, the majority of advocates of an Ephesian provenance have not fully appreciated how determinative it is for interpreting 1:15–18a. If Paul is writing Philippians at the same time as Galatians, it is unlikely that he would consider acceptable any proclaimer of Christ who is motivated by φθόνος, ἔρις, ἐριθεία, or any

Thus Paul takes a more moderate stance against his rivals because he empathizes with them because they are stirred up by his presence. According to Fee, their behavior “disappoints” Paul, but it does not keep him from acknowledging that the church in Rome understands the gospel. But beyond the difficulty with a Roman provenance, these arguments do not account for Paul’s choice of volatile terms (like “rivalry” and “selfish ambition”) that are inconsistent with a “moderate stance.” Further, this reading requires dissension within the Philippian church to account for why Paul writes 1:15–18a. As I argued in Chapter One (and will in each subsequent chapter), the case for internal division within the Philippian church is not convincing.

217 Witherington (Philippians, 81) surmises that “this certainly implies that a true proclamation of the gospel does not require a perfect messenger. God can write straight even with a crooked stylus; in fact in Paul’s view there are no other sort (see Rom 3:23). God can convert people even when the messenger does it out of envy, spite, hubris, or some other impure motive.” N. T. Wright (“Philippians,” in Theological Interpretation of the New Testament: A Book-by-Book Survey [ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Daniel J. Treier; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008], 136) suggests that these envious proclaimers were pagans who were affronted because Paul declares that a crucified Jew is the Lord of the world. Paul, then, rejoices because even in their public slander of him they are still announcing the true identity of Jesus.

218 See further Chapter One.
other impure intention (including the desire to increase Paul’s distress).\(^{219}\) Such a reading contradicts Paul’s argument in Galatians.

For example, in Gal 5:20–21 Paul lists φθόνος, ἐρις, and ἐριθεία among the works of the flesh that characterize those who will not inherit the kingdom of God (οἱ τὰ τοιαύτα πράσσοντες βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν).\(^{220}\) Further, Paul accuses his opponents in Galatia (typically referred to as Judaizers) of proclaiming Christ and ministering to the Galatians under false pretenses (Gal 6:12–13).\(^{221}\) Because of this, in the course of his interpretation of Phil 3 Lightfoot identified Paul’s opponents in 1:15–18a as Judaizers.\(^{222}\) Modern scholarship has mostly not agreed with Lightfoot’s conclusion.\(^{223}\) But there is some family resemblance between Paul’s rebuke in Galatians and this passage, enough to challenge the argument that he depicts his rivals and his colleagues in 1:15–18a as theologically aligned. Peterlin determines that the opponents in 1:15–18a are not like those depicted in Gal 1:6; 2 Cor 11:4; or even Phil 3:2, because “Paul does not mention or intimate any theological aberration on the part of these


\(^{220}\) See also Rom 1:28–31.

\(^{221}\) Paul’s opposition in 2 Corinthians is also a counter-mission that has terms similar to those found in his letters (2 Cor 11:4, 12–13, 15, 23). There he also acknowledges that this group presents itself as proclaiming a gospel of Christ.

\(^{222}\) Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 88–89.

\(^{223}\) In support of Lightfoot is Nina Pehkonen, “Rejoicing in the Judaizers’ Work? The Question of Paul’s Opponents in Phil. 1.15–18a,” in Aejmelaeus, *Paul*, 132–55. Pehkonen argues that despite the fact that the opponents are Judaizers, Paul takes a neutral stance towards them to demonstrate his nobler attitude and increase his ethos by appearing unthreatened by their missionary activities.
envious teachers.” But what Peterlin seems to overlook is that Paul considers envy, selfish ambition, and rivalry to be theologically disqualifying aberrations.

I use “theologically” instead of “morally” to give prominence to how I understand Paul’s intent in light of his depiction of Christ, as well as his corresponding portrayals of himself, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and the Philippian church. In Chapter Five, I will argue that Christ’s humility and obedience bears witness to his divinity. Similarly, I will make the case that the faithful’s rejection of self-interest and its submission to the salvific plan of God reflect its character as the people of God. And so envy, selfish-ambition, and rivalry are not simply moral failures. Indeed, they demonstrate to Paul that his rivals are truly ignorant of who Christ is. Further, such traits testify that the transformation that occurs when the faithful are “in Christ” is absent. To this end, my statement that these are “theologically disqualifying errors” rests on the persuasiveness of my overall thesis.

Third, the consensus reading presents a Paul who draws a distinction between agreeing with his teaching, on the one hand, and acknowledging his apostolic vocation, on the other. But do Paul’s letters allow for this? He presents his apostolic office as the source of his authority. His letters affirm his apostolic authority and speak against

---

224 Peterlin, Letter, 36.

competing apostles. Nowhere does Paul uphold a group’s doctrine while accepting their personal rejection of him.\(^{226}\)

Finally, the traditional reading puts 1:15–18a at odds with much of the rest of Philippians. If Paul states in 1:15–18a that good relations with him are secondary, this passage opposes Paul’s insistence that unity with him is essential for the church’s progress in the faith (1:25, 30; 2:12, 14–15, 17; 3:17; 4:9, 15–17).\(^{227}\) His instruction on harmony and humility (1:27; 2:1–4, 14, 20–21; 3:13; 4:2) is mitigated if schism, rivalry, and self-interest are not considered damaging. Further, the traditional reading puts Paul at odds with his own depiction of Christ in 2:5–11. The logic of the Christ-hymn is that followers of Christ are to be like him in not using what is available to them to seek advantage (2:6). Reading 1:15–18a as Paul’s acceptance (even if grudging) of the validity of his rivals’ proclamation creates a striking incongruity with the Christ-hymn. In the narratio itself, commendation is given only to those affiliating with Paul (1:14–16, 19,

---

Polaski (Paul and the Discourse of Power [GCT 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999]) argue that Paul stresses his unique divine election to justify his right to interpret scripture and instruct in matters of faith.

\(^{226}\) This reconstruction of Paul’s rivals is knotty. According to the traditional position, the group that troubles Paul agrees with his teaching (including, supposedly, the inclusion of the Gentiles through faith, the atoning sufficiency of Jesus’ death, and church members bearing each other’s burdens), but still is motivated to act against him. But the idea that a group agrees with Paul’s divine appointment yet schemes against him is counterintuitive. More plausibly, this group differs with Paul on substantive matters, including his apostolic office, and acts against him. Paul’s imprisonment is likely perceived by them as a mark against his mission. This contrasts with 1 Corinthians, where Paul curbs any potential for the Corinthians to see division between him and Apollos by affirming that Apollos agrees with his teaching, follows his instruction, and is on good terms with him (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4, 6, 22, 4:6, 16:12).

\(^{227}\) See my discussion of these verses in the following chapters.
25–26). The traditional reading of 1:15–18a reduces 1:12–26 to a part of the narratio that diminishes the propositio and runs counter to the probatio.

However vv. 15 and 18a are interpreted, they must presumably be consistent with Paul’s statements about division, self-interest and envy elsewhere; be in keeping with his own understanding of his apostolic office; and be supportive of the narratio’s rhetorical purpose: to prepare the reader for the propositio. A better approach to 1:15 is to see τινὲς μὲν καὶ διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν, τινὲς δὲ καὶ δι’ εὐδοκίαν τὸν Χριστὸν κηρύσσουσιν as a contrast between two wholly separate groups, and not as two subgroups of πολλοὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν. Philippians 1:18a is more difficult. Paul seems to say that it does not matter if people proclaim Christ from false motives or from true; he will rejoice nonetheless. There are two alternatives to the problematic consensus interpretation. First, re-punctuating 1:18a as a question relieves the tension. This reading renders the statement as follows: “But what does it matter? Am I to rejoice that in every way Christ

---

228 Ware (Paul, 187) notes that “the conjunctions in light of their position cannot possibly connect v. 14 to v. 15.” Further, in 1:14 Paul describes the brothers and sisters as being made confident (πείθω). In Philippians, this term has the sense of divinely given certainty, especially in connection to Paul’s mission. But in 1:17, Paul’s rivals “suppose” (οἶμαι) to diminish Paul’s influence and cause him distress. The traditional reading depicts a group that simultaneously has divine certainty about Paul’s obedience to God and yet considers it prudent to work against him.
is proclaimed, regardless of the designs of anyone else, false or otherwise?” Paul is, then, asking if it is appropriate to rejoice over false proclaimers of Christ as one does over authentic brothers and sisters. Philippians 1:15–17 leads the audience to answer no to Paul’s question. Rhetorically, Paul brings his reader into agreement with his stance against those pitted against him. Second, 1:18a could be an awkwardly stated summary of 1:15–18a. Τί γάρ; πλήν οτι παντὶ τρόπω has a summarizing quality to it. Paul’s statement that he rejoices is similar to his χαίρω in 2:17–18 and 3:1. In Philippians, χαίρω and χαρά characterize the life of those who are in fellowship with the Pauline mission (1:4, 25; 2:2, 9, 17–18, 28; 3:1; 4:1, 4, 10). In light of this, an alternative reading of 1:18a is as follows: “But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way Christ is proclaimed, regardless of the designs of anyone else, false or otherwise.” Admittedly, both readings are less than ideal (the second suggestion especially so). Nevertheless, each is preferable to the traditional reading that renders 1:15–18a antithetical to Paul’s purpose in Philippians.

In sum, Paul’s argument in 1:12–18a, especially his attention to good relations with him, indicates that the church’s fellowship with him is the main subject of the

---

229 This is similar to Rom 6:1. There Paul asks if ill means (continuing to sin) justify praiseworthy results (grace abounding).

230 Fowl (Philippians, 42) comes close to this: “It appears that Paul pragmatically prefers to see the gospel preached than to wait until everybody’s motives are pure. [But] I do not think Paul sees the choice in quite this way. . . . God is advancing the gospel. Rather than expressing a preference for preaching from selfish motives over no preaching at all, this phrase is an expression of faith in God’s providential oversight of the gospel’s progress.”
narratio. Philippians 1:12–18a supports Paul’s purpose by (1) presenting his imprisonment as evidence of the success of the mission; (2) establishing a group’s willingness to stand alongside him as the criterion for distinguishing between colleagues/brothers and sisters and rivals; (3) suggesting that division against him reveals false faith; and (4) indicating that the machinations of his rivals are unable to thwart his mission.

3.3. Philippians 1:18b–26

In the first half of the narratio, Paul states that his imprisonment has affected three groups: the Praetorian Guard; colleagues in Ephesus (brothers and sisters); and rivals in Ephesus. In 1:18b–26, he reports on what he expects to happen next, namely, his release from prison and return to Philippi. Most commentators understand 1:18b–26 to be a statement disclosing Paul’s uncertainty about the outcome of his pending court trial. I hope to show, however, that it is his certainty about his future release, not doubt about it, that is the subject of 1:18b–26. The source of this confidence is the mutuality of his fellowship with the Philippians. Structurally, 1:18b–19a is the section’s main proposition followed by two supporting ideas (1:19b–20 and 1:21–26). Paul affirms in 1:19b–20 that he has benefited from the Philippians’ assistance while in 1:21–26 he holds that his return will be in service to the Philippians.

Kittredge (Community, 69) observes that these verses are the first time in the letter that Paul sets up a negative example in contrast with a positive. She adds that “this contrast has the effect of increasing the good will of the audience toward Paul because the audience clearly is meant to identify themselves with those who preach from good will and out of love.”
3.3.1. Philippians 1:18b–20

Ἀλλὰ καὶ introduces the final section of the narratio in an emphatic manner. Hence Paul signals that he is giving prominence to what he is about to say. In 1:18b–19a, Paul pronounces that he will rejoice (χαρῆσομαι) because he knows that his present circumstances will ultimately result in his salvation (οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν).232

Σωτηρία is to be understood here in one of three ways: as the eschatological pardon on the Day of Judgment; as release from prison; or as vindication for faithfulness.233 Those reading it as ultimate salvation observe that in Paul σωτηρία regularly conveys this meaning (Rom 1:16; 10:1, 10; 2 Cor 6:2; 7:10; Phil 1:28; 1 Thess 5:8, 9).234 Additionally, it seems to suit both the immediate context in light of Paul's

232 I take the antecedent of τοῦτο as the entire situation Paul describes in 1:12–18a, including the preaching of his rivals. Contra Sumney (Philippians, 25), who restricts τοῦτο to Paul’s trial. Εἰς σωτηρίαν gives the goal of ἀποβήσεται. Χαρῆσομαι could be an example of the future tense being used to show present time, indicating that Paul is rejoicing over his circumstances because of what follows 1:18b. But since Paul refers to two specific events (or two parts of a single event) in 1:18b–26, namely, his release from prison (1:19) and his return to the Philippians (1:25), χαρῆσομαι more likely points forward to when these will occur. Paul is confident that he will have occasion to rejoice when he sees the church again.

233 Salvation as eschatological judgment: Vincent, Epistles, 23; O’Brien, Philippians, 110; Fee, Philippians, 131; G. K. Beale, A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2011), 281–82; as release from prison: Hawthorne, Philippians, 50. Ware (Paul, 206–9) takes a middle position, proposing that σωτηρία in 1:19 is first a reference to eschatological salvation, but that it is also “enriched and further explained” to include release from prison. Witherington (Philippians, 84) argues as I do that Paul’s release from prison is what the Philippians are praying for, hence that this “deliverance” is what Paul refers to here, but that it is also a foretaste of his vindication.

references to dying and being with Christ (1:21–24) and the letter’s broader treatment of persevering until the Day of the Lord (1:5, 6, 10; 2:16). Nevertheless, a combination of “release from prison” and “vindication” better fits the context because Paul expects that he will see the Philippians again (1:25–26) and that his rivals’ efforts will prove futile.235

Further, Paul’s verbatim quotation of τοῦτό μοι ἀποβάηται εἰς σωτηρίαν from LXX Job 13:16 suggests that he considers his plight to be like Job’s.236 Ware goes further, adding that “the wider Septuagintal context” of Job 13:16 indicates that Paul sees Job’s circumstances in his own approaching trial in front of Nero. He argues that in the LXX

---

235 Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch (Social Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul [Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2006], 301) postulate that Paul’s confidence in his eventual release means that he was held for peacekeeping purpose, likely because his gospel aggrieved some of his fellow Jews. Those arrested to keep the peace were released once the disturbance died down.


Contra Reumann (Philippians, 233): “To see Paul as a Job-figure is more a matter of biblical theology or reader-response than verifiable from Paul’s own writings.” But it is virtually certain that Job is in fact being quoted because ἀποβαίνω is a hapax legomenon in the Pauline corpus. This and the contextual correspondences between Job and Philippians imply the opposite: that Paul intentionally made this connection. Nijay Gupta (“‘I Will Not be Put to Shame’: Paul, the Philippians, and the Honorable Wish for Death,” Neot 42 [2008]: 265) hypothesizes that Paul presents himself in this passage as one among those righteous men, such as Job, Moses, Elijah, Jonah, Tobit, who have suffered for God’s glory. Gupta’s argument is hard to prove (or disprove), however, because Job is the only figure suspected of being alluded to in 1:18b–26.
the reference is to Job’s “fearless speech and reproof before the ruler who seeks to put him to death.” Job’s assurance comes from standing before a human ruler (ὁ δυνάστης, Job 13:15), whereas in the MT Job’s confidence stems from his boldness to argue his case before God.

Ware’s argument is unconvincing, however. First, ὁ δυνάστης need not be restricted to human rulers. In the Greco-Roman period, it commonly referred to divine rulers. Second, Ware’s interpretation does not account for why Paul does not extend his reference to include ὁ δυνάστης. If Paul is doing as Ware maintains, in that case the omission of ὁ δυνάστης is puzzling. But a more plausible scenario is that Paul does not continue the quotation precisely because he wants to avoid any hint that he is unsettled by human rulers. This is consistent with the first part of the narratio, in which he presents his rivals, not his jailors, as his chief difficulty. Ware’s argument thus elevates the very element of Paul’s circumstances that he himself is minimizing.

It turns out that Ware does not expand the “wider Septuagintal context” far enough. Job 13:16 is part of Job’s speech that begins in 12:1, in response to Sophar,

---

237 Ware, Paul, 202–4.

238 See BDAG, s.v. δυνάστης (p. 263).

239 This is similar to Paul’s quotation of Deut 21:23 in Gal 3:13. The LXX has ὁτι κεκατηραμένος ὑπὸ θεοῦ πᾶς κρεμάμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου, but Paul writes ῥπικατάρατος πᾶς ὁ κρεμάμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου, thus omitting ὑπὸ θεοῦ. (The MT also has “by God.”) Scholars have attached varying degrees of significance to Paul leaving out ὑπὸ θεοῦ. Silva (“Galatians,” in Beale and Carson, CNTUOT, 797) rightly notes that “it seems difficult to believe that there is no significance in the omission of the phrase ‘by God’ . . . perhaps he omitted [the words] simply because they would have unnecessarily introduced a complication, and he could not afford to be distracted from the major issue at hand.” This parallels my suggestion above, that Paul does not have ὁ δυνάστης because it might also “complicate” and “distract.”
third friend to counsel him to repent of his evil ways so that God will stop punishing him. In 13:4, he calls his three friends (Eliphaz, Baldad, Sophar) “unjust physicians and harmful healers.” It is reasonable to posit that Job’s opposing his supposed friends corresponds to Paul’s resistance to the so-called proclaimers of Christ. When Paul speaks of the circumstances resulting in his σωτηρία, he means that the abuse he now receives from his “false friends” will ultimately contribute to his public vindication.

Unlike Job, Paul is not left without any friends to lend a hand as he faces his trials. With διὰ τῆς ύμων δεήσεως καὶ ἐπιχορηγίας τοῦ πνεύματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1:19) Paul credits the Philippians with helping him gain his release / vindication. Most scholars understand this phrase to indicate two distinct instruments stemming from separate sources: the prayers of the Philippians and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ from God. But the syntax also supports an alternative reading: “through your

---

240 So already Hays (Echoes, 23), who submits that “if, however, Paul tacitly likens himself to Job, the echo whispers a suggestion that the rival preachers have assumed the mantle of Job’s hollow comforters; the falsehood of both will be exposed ultimately in the final judgment.”

241 Contra Silva (Philippians, 69–70), who holds that “it makes little sense to say that what Paul has suffered (whether the imprisonment itself or the work of his opponents) will lead to his release.” But the idea of God using the actions of the wicked to advance the cause of the righteous is not foreign to the OT and the NT.

242 Schenk (Philipperbriefe, 146) follows Erich Haupt (Die Gefangenschaftsbriebe [7th ed.; KEK 8; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1897], 29–30) in arguing that there is a chiasm in v. 19:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B′</th>
<th>A′</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>τῆς ύμων</td>
<td>δεήσεως</td>
<td>καὶ</td>
<td>ἐπιχορηγίας</td>
<td>τοῦ πνεύματος</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those seeing a chiasm judge that Paul separates A and A′ to differentiate the two sources. I concur that this phrase is likely chastic. But this does not necessarily prove
prayer and your provision, both which come from the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” First, δέησις and ἐπιχορηγία are the objects of a singular διά. The singular διά could mean that δέησις and ἐπιχορηγία are not from separate origins, since it is quite regular in the Greek of the period for a singular prepositional phrase to have two antecedent or following nominal referents. For instance, in 1:15 Paul’s single διά links two complementary concepts (διά φθόνον καὶ ἔριν). Second, a single article (in this case, τῆς) followed by two substantives (here, δέησις and ἐπιχορηγία) joined by καί could also suggest that the two are corresponding entities. Third, the ύμων does not need to be restricted to δέησις, but could modify ἐπιχορηγία as well. Since Paul unites δέησις that there are two unmistakable sources. I think the chiasm is designed to give prominence to what has been supplied. Further, Paul structures it this way in anticipation of 1:27 and 2:1 in which he depicts the Philippians’ partnership with him as an act of the Spirit. Finally, in 4:10–20 Paul organizes his discussion of the church’s assistance in the same way: first he presents the church’s actions (4:10–18a), next he locates their deeds within their devotion to God (4:18b–20).

243 Commentators often remark that this construction of a single preposition with two objects (here, διά with δέησις and ἐπιχορηγία) shows the close relationship between the prayer of the Philippians and the special measure of the Spirit given to Paul. For example, H. C. G. Moule (Epistle, 23) writes that “St. Paul expects, in answer to his converts’ prayers, a new effusion of the power of the Spirit, developing in him the presence of Jesus Christ.”

244 In contrast, see the repeated διά in Rom 5:21; 15:4, 30. In these passages, the second διά differentiates the two referents.


246 The placement of ύμων before the first substantive is not restricted to modifying it alone if subsequent substantives are united to it by καί, as it is in this case. In Phil 2:25 (Ἀναγκαῖον δὲ ἢγησάμην Ἐπαφρόδιτον τὸν ἀδελφὸν καὶ συνεργὸν καὶ
and ἐπιχορηγία with a singular δία, a singular article, and ὑμῶν, then τοῦ πνεῦματος Ἐσοῦ Χριστοῦ likely indicates it is the source of both the Philippians’ prayer and their provision. Thus a possible translation of δία τῆς ὑμῶν δεήσεως καὶ ἐπιχορηγίας τοῦ

Those who argue that πνεῦματος is an objective genitive see the Spirit itself as the provision that is supplied. So Michael, Epistle, 49; Gordon P. Wiles, Paul’s Intercessory Prayers: The Significance of the Intercessory Prayer Passages in the Letters of St. Paul (SNTSMS 24; Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 280; Schenk, Philippierbriefe, 147; Fee, Philippians, 134; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 84; Hansen, Philippians, 80; Ware, Paul, 205–6. These commentators often cite Gal 3:5 (ὁ σοῦ ἐπιχορηγῶν ὑμῖν τὸ πνεῦμα) because Paul depicts God as the one who gives the Spirit to the Galatians. In light of this, Fee (Philippians, 133) claims that the “oft-debated question as to whether the genitive is ‘objective’ or ‘subjective’ is nearly irrelevant” because ἐπιχορηγία “requires an object in terms of what is supplied.” TNIV translates ἐπιχορηγίας τοῦ πνεῦματος Ἐσοῦ Χριστοῦ “God’s provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”

Others take πνεῦματος as a subjective genitive (the Holy Spirit does the providing). So Meyer, Handbook, 43; Vincent, Epistles, 24; Gnilka, Philippierbrief, 67–69; O’Brien, Philippians, 111–12; Hawthorne, Philippians, 50; Reumann, Philippians, 244; Witherington, Philippians, 85. RSV translates καὶ ἐπιχορηγίας τοῦ πνεῦματος Ἐσοῦ Χριστοῦ “and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” Seyoon Kim (Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul’s Gospel [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002], 203) suggests that 1:19–20 is an echo that combines various Gospel verses. He regards ἐπιχορηγία as the intercessory help that the Holy Spirit gives to Paul in prison.

In my view, the objective genitive reading is not without difficulties. First, Gal 3:5 is not akin to Phil 1:19 because in the former Paul describes God’s supplying of the Spirit at the Galatians’ conversion. It is evidence of their “new creation.” Second, Paul does not mention a unique dispensation of the Spirit elsewhere. For example, 1 Cor 12:13 depicts the continual presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the faithful. Third, Fee’s contention that ἐπιχορηγία requires an object confuses the noun form with its verbal cognate (ἐπιχορηγέω). The noun does not necessarily “expect” an object if it is the object. The content of what is supplied is determined by context in this case. Since Paul mentions the Philippians having sent him aid there is no need to make πνεῦματος bear the weight that an objective genitive demands. The subjective genitive comes closer to the interpretation argued here in that the aid is both the prayer and the provision that come from the Philippians. This aid (prayer and provision) has as its ultimate source the Spirit of Jesus Christ.
πνεύματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is “through your prayer and provision, which are both from the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”

This reading of 1:19–20a agrees with what Paul conveys elsewhere in the epistle. It is consistent with the exordium, where Paul offers thanks for the Philippians’ aid to him (1:3, 5, 7). In both the exordium (1:3) and the narratio, Paul begins his address to the Philippians by first associating them with their support. Their intercessory prayer for him also corresponds to his prayer for them (1:9–11). The Spirit of Jesus Christ as the ultimate source of the Philippians’ support of Paul further recalls 1:6 (his affirmation that their fellowship with him is God’s work) and anticipates both 4:13 (his statement that he trusts God to uphold him during difficult times) and 4:18–19 (his depiction of their gift as part of the church’s relationship with God). Finally, Paul’s confidence in being released / vindicated parallels his certainty that he will see the Philippians again (1:25, 27; 2:24), as well as his trust that God will vindicate the faithful (1:28; 2:15; 3:21).

---

248 This translation attempts to preserve the chiastic structure for the reasons noted above by framing the phrase with the two possessives.

249 Κατὰ τὴν ἀποκαραδοκίαν καὶ ἐλπίδα μου is the second prepositional phrase connected to τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν. I take ἀποκαραδοκία and ἐλπίς as a hendiadys. Paul links the sureness of his eventual vindication with his eager expectation to see the unfolding of God’s providential plan. Bockmuehl (Philippians, 84) writes, “Hope in the Bible . . . is based on the fact that God is God and has underwritten the future. In keeping with this understanding of hope (and contrary to certain alternative interpretations), Paul’s ‘eager expectation’ is therefore a confident rather than an anxious disposition.”

In the Pauline corpus, ἀποκαραδοκία occurs only here and in Rom 8:19, where creation “eagerly awaits” the revealing of the sons of God. I note that Aquila has ἀποκαραδοκία in Ps 36:7 (MT 37:7), where the psalmist exhorts the faithful to patiently wait for God’s vindication. Georg Bertram (“ΑΠΟΚΑΡΑΔΟΚΙΑ [Phil 1,20],” ZNW 49 [1958]: 264–70) and David R. Denton (“ἀποκαραδοκία,” ZNW 73 [1982]: 138–40) hold that Aquila was unconsciously influenced by the Pauline ἀποκαραδοκία. Chang Hae-Kyung
Though I have argued that the syntax favors my alternative reading of 1:19, the traditional view would still support my overall argument. The only difference between the widely-held view and mine is that the former does not view the “gift” as from the church. Both interpretations, however, maintain that Paul credits the Philippians’ actions for giving him confidence.

This reading of 1:19 makes the rest of 1:20 a statement of Paul’s confidence that he will not succumb to his rivals by being ashamed of his gospel, but will continue to proclaim it without alteration. Scholarship is divided between taking the second ὅτι (ὅτι ἐν οὐδενὶ αἰσχυνθῆσομαι) here as introducing the content of his hope (1:20a) and as a second expression of what he knows (οἶδα, 1:19). Hawthorne notes the following: (1) that κατὰ τὴν ἀποκαραδοκίαν καὶ ἑλπίδα μου is grammatically dependent on τὸ τὸ ὅτι ἑλπίς is used regularly to connote Christian hope in an absolute sense (Acts 2:16; Rom 5:5; 8:24; 1 Cor 13:13; 2 Cor 3:12); (3) that when ἑλπίς does take an object, the object is almost always expressed in the genitive case (Acts 16:19; 23:7; 26:6; Rom 5:2; 1 Cor 9:10 [object is in verbal form]; 2 Cor 10:15; Gal 5:5; 1 Thess 5:8); and (4) that ἑλπίς followed by ὅτι to express the object of that hope occurs only once in the NT (Rom 8:20).

In this I agree with Hawthorne, that “the majority notwithstanding, it seems more correct to link this second ὅτι, ‘that,’ with οἶδα, ‘I know,’ and not with ἑλπίς, ‘hope.’” The second ὅτι clause parallels the first. So in writing ἐν οὐδενὶ αἰσχυνθῆσομαι ἀλλ’ ἐν πάσῃ παρρησίᾳ ως πάντοτε καὶ νῦν

(“[Apokaradokia bei Paulus und Aquila,” ZNW 93 [2002]: 268–72), however, goes so far as to estimate that Aquila’s translation reflects a pre-Pauline LXX tradition.

μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστός ἐν τῷ σώματί μου. Paul provides further reason as to how he knows that he will be vindicated: he will persevere in his commitment to his gospel and Christ will be honored by it.

Lastly, in Phil 1:20 ἐν οúdeνι αἰσχυνθῆσομαι is contrasted specifically with ἀλλ’ ἐν πάσῃ παρρησίᾳ ὡς πάντοτε καὶ νῦν μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστός ἐν τῷ σώματί μου.²⁵¹ Christ being magnified ἐν πάσῃ παρρησίᾳ undoubtedly refers to the glory that Christ receives when Paul speaks boldly about him, not in some turn of events.²⁵² Since Paul is sure of his release (1:19) and return to the Philippians (1:25), εἴτε διὰ ζωῆς εἴτε διὰ θανάτου restates the concept ὡς πάντοτε καὶ νῦν from earlier in the verse. It does not reflect his doubt as to whether his trial will end in life or death.²⁵³ Paul presents himself as one who, because of his perseverance in boldly proclaiming God’s plan of salvation, will inevitably receive vindication.

²⁵¹ In the NT, αἰσχύνομαι and ἐπαισχύνομαι both express personal humiliation or disgrace (Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; 16:3; Rom 1:16; 2 Cor 10:8; 2 Tim 1:8; 1 Pet 4:16; 1 John 2:28), often in the context of not being embarrassed of the gospel message or by being identified as a follower of Christ.

²⁵² Παρρησία presumably denotes bold, public speech (see BDAG, s.v. [p. 781]). Elsewhere in the NT παρρησία is attached to the proclamation of the gospel, indicating that it is being proclaimed without hesitation or fear (Acts 4:13, 29, 31; 9:27, 29; 13:46; 18:26; 26:26; 28:31; 1 Thess 2:2; Eph 6:19–20).

²⁵³ Hawthorne (Philippians, 54) suggests that the phrase is “an emphatic, perhaps stock, expression that means ‘total’ or ‘all-encompassing.’” The phrase recurs in Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 3:22, also 2 Sam 15:21; Sir 11:14; 37:18. Hansen (Philippians, 78) disputes Hawthorne’s position, maintaining that he gives “no good reason” why the phrase does not anticipate Paul’s upcoming trial: “Although he clearly indicates his expectation that he will be released (1:24–26), he confidently insists that his deliverance does not depend on the release from prison; it will occur, whether by life or by death.” But Hansen mistakenly draws a distinction between Paul’s “expectation” of his release and his “confident insistence” regarding ultimate deliverance that is not evident in the text. On the contrary, Paul’s confidence in his release from prison is in line with his eschatological convictions.
The conclusion of the narratio begins by Paul contrasting living and dying, dying being more personally beneficial (1:21–23). Philippians 1:24 introduces the church’s need of his physical presence as a test as to how Paul will respond: will he choose what is more beneficial for him or what is more beneficial for the Philippians? He gives his answer in 1:25–26 by declaring that he will remain with them. The underlying logic of the passage is that self-sacrifice in behalf of the faith of others is more honorable. This means that Paul’s ethos is enhanced in vv. 25–26. Additionally, he presents himself as a model to be emulated, one that commits sacrificially to the fellowship and the work of the gospel. In this Paul prepares the Philippians for the propositio.

Recognizing that Paul is not pondering the possibility of his own immediate demise is essential for understanding the rhetorical purpose of 1:22–26. First, Paul has already said that he knows that he will not die in this prison (1:19–20, 25; 2:24).

---

254 Αἱρέω in the middle voice can mean “prefer” (BDAG, s.v. 2 [p. 28]; Heinrich Schlier, “ἀιρέομαι, κτλ.” TDNT 1:180; G. Nordholt, “Elect, Choose,” NIDNTT 1:534). This allows for the choice to be hypothetical. The deliberative subjunctive is seen in Ἡ46; B, 2464, which have αἱρέσωμαι (aorist subjunctive). Therefore to restrict αἱρέω here to “an actual choice made” is unwarranted. Contra James L. Jaquette (“A Not-So-Noble Death: Figured Speech, Friendship and Suicide in Philippians 1:21–26,” Neot 28 [1994]: 177–92) and Craig S. Wansink (Chained in Christ: The Experience and Rhetoric of Paul’s Imprisonments [JSNTSup 130; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996], 96–125), who argue that Paul is considering suicide by refusing to defend himself.

255 Contra Rodney R. Reeves (“To Be or Not to Be? That is Not the Question: Paul’s Choice in Philippians 1:22,” PRSt 19 [1992]: 273–89), who holds that 1:21–24 is Paul’s explanation why he did not use the church’s money to secure his release, as they intended. According to Reeves, Paul tells the Philippians that he is choosing to stay in prison and risk death, even though the Philippians need him to return, because he desires God to vindicate him publicly. But Reeves does not account for why Paul makes no mention of what he does with the money the church gave him. There is no indication that Epaphroditus or Timothy brought the money with them on their return.
Second, in 1:21–22 he is not contemplating the relief from suffering that death brings.\textsuperscript{256} He considers both living and dying to be positives. He definitively judges dying and joining Christ to be the better of the two, but not because living is full of pain.\textsuperscript{257}

Finally, he has already decided before writing the letter that he will remain committed to the Philippians (1:8, 25–26; 2:17, 24). Therefore the decisive interpretive question is why Paul vividly depicts a dilemma that is not an immediate concern.

Clayton N. Croy argues that Paul’s quandary “is chiefly located in his rhetoric, not in his legal predicament nor his psychological state.”\textsuperscript{258} Croy further proposes that Paul uses the rhetorical trope of ἀπορία or διαπόρησις (‘feigned perplexity’), a technique that involves a rhetorical pretense of uncertainty and the posing of a question as a way of strengthening or dramatizing an argument.\textsuperscript{259} He offers the following parallel between Isocrates, On the Peace 38–39, and Phil 1:21–24:

\begin{quote}
So Cousar, Philippians, 40; Witherington (Philippians, 90): “Paul does not view his life as a Greek tragedy and has no death wish or lust for martyrdom, unlike some of his later admirers (e.g., Ignatius of Antioch).”


Croy, “‘To Die is Gain’ (Philippians 1:19–26): Does Paul Contemplate Suicide?” JBL 122 (2003): 529.

Ibid., 529. The Latin term is dubitatio or addubitatio. James L. Jaquette (“Death,” 183) briefly mentions that Paul’s speech here is similar to dubitatio. Croy (“To Die,” 525–28) cites the following examples of its use: Cicero, De or. 3.200–207; Clu. 1.4; Rosc. Amer. 11:29; Inv. 1.25; Rhet. Her. 4.40; Quintilian, Inst. 9.2.19; Aeschines, Fals. leg. 7; Andocides, Alcibiades 10; Antiphon, 2nd Tetralogy 2.1; Demosthenes, 3 Olynth. 3; Pant. 22,
Isocrates | Paul

1. ἀπορῶ | οὐ γνωρίζω
“I am at a loss” | “I do not know”

2. τῆς κοινῆς σωτηρίας | τὴν ὑμῶν προκοπὴν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως
“the common safety” | “your progress and joy in faith”

3. ἔμον . . . ἔργον | τοῦτο μοι καρπὸς ἔργου
“my duty” | “this to me [is] the gain from the labor”

4. προαιρεῖσθαι | τί αἱρήσομαι
“to choose” | “What I am to choose”

5. τοὺς ἡδίστους | πολλῶ . . . μᾶλλον κρείσσον
“most pleasant [words]” | “better by far”

6. ωφελιμωτάτους | ἀναγκαιότερον
“most beneficial [words]” | “more necessary”

Isocrates is debating whether to protect himself or speak out for the public good. By framing his resolution to speak out as the outcome of his own internal deliberation between personal advantage and civic good, he can present himself as deciding for the nobler act. Paul is doing likewise. He wants the Philippians to see that his coming to


260 Croy, “To Die,” 529.

261 Hawthorne (Philippians, 40) considers Croy’s proposal to be “a somewhat strained interpretation” that “flies in the face of Paul’s serious contemplation of his martyrdom in 2:17.” I address 2:17 in more detail in Chapter Five. Nevertheless, in anticipation of my argument: Paul’s words in 2:17 do not indicate that he considers his martyrdom to be impending. Paul is instead presenting how he views martyrdom in the Philippians’ behalf, should it be required. A dubitatio does not contradict “Paul’s serious contemplation of his martyrdom.”
them is the route he prefers, not because it is more advantageous for him but because it is required (by God) in order for the church’s faith in the gospel to increase.\textsuperscript{262} Paul chooses the sacrificial path. When he says in 1:24 that “it is more necessary to remain because of the Philippians,” he is declaring that his apostolic work is not yet complete.\textsuperscript{263}

I find that Phil 1:21–26 fits within my interpretation of the letter’s overall purpose. The passage advances Paul’s ethos as one who is committed to the Philippians.

\textsuperscript{262} Paul’s ἀναγκαίοτέρον (1:24) suggests divine compulsion; see BDAG, s. v. ἀνάγκη 1 (p. 60): “necessity or constraint as inherent in the nature of things, necessity, pressure of any kind, a divine dispensation, some hoped-for advantage, custom, duty, etc.”

\textsuperscript{263} Arthur J. Droge (“Mori Lucrum: Paul and Ancient Theories of Suicide,” NovT 30 [1988]: 263–86) situates 1:21–24 within ancient Greco-Roman philosophical debates on suicide. He observes that one constant, especially within Stoic thought, is that suicide is permissible for the greater good. But this suicide-martyrdom was only permissible if a divine sign of approval has been given. Droge interprets Paul’s announcement that he knows that he must live as his statement that no such signal was given: He desires to end his life, so the argument goes, but is not yet permitted. Droge further suggests that Paul considers death to be “deliverance from life’s miseries” (282). Paul Middleton (“‘Dying We Live’ [2 Cor. 6.9]: Discipleship and Martyrdom in Paul,” in Paul, Grace and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches [ed. Paul Middleton and Angus Paddison; London: T&T Clark, 2009], 90) disagrees, arguing that “it is unlikely, contra Droge, that Paul would have contemplated suicide, for he saw it as his calling to suffer with Christ and for the church.” But Middleton’s position does not account for the possibility of suicide as martyrdom. Is Razis’s suicide in 2 Maccabees not presented as an acceptable martyrdom? Further, the Gospel of Matthew presents Christ as being able to stop his crucifixion if he had desired to do so (26:53). Jesus’ refusal to call down angels can be construed as a choice of suicidal-martyrdom. In other words, I find Middleton’s argument simplistic. In fact, the logic of Phil 1:24 is that Paul would have refused any action that spares his life if his death would have been more necessary for the Philippians’ faith.

It seems that Droge’s proposal is a possible reading of 1:22–26. But rather than argue, as Droge does, that 1:22–26 indicates that Paul is acknowledging that he did not receive a revelation from God that will allow for him to arrange for his own martyrdom, I suggest that 1:22–26 is a statement that affirms that he has been given a sign that he must live. Paul’s attention is on the sign that he must live, not on the absence of the sign that he may die.
This allows for his *propositio* to be better received. Further, because the measure of his fidelity to the Philippians is his denial of personal benefit on behalf of them, Paul distances himself from his rivals, who seek only their own advantage (1:15, 17–18a). His “feigned perplexity” has a polemical quality to it. Paul’s disposition aligns with the Philippians’ own sharing in his suffering (1:7). Consequently, he becomes a model for the Philippians to follow.\(^{264}\) In 1:20, he was in an example of perseverance. Here in 1:21–24 he exemplifies obedience in service to the Philippians and the gospel.

Additionally, just as his prayer from the *exordium* was that the Philippians grow in a discernment that accompanies a love of the gospel (1:9–11), so now he now typifies this perspicacity by deeming that to serve the church is the better way. In the *narratio*, Paul is already working towards 3:17 and 4:9, where he will call the Philippians to follow his example corporately.

Finally, the mutuality between the church and its apostle comes to the forefront as Paul finishes the *narratio*. He affirms in 1:24–26 that he knows that he will be released so that he can strengthen the church’s faith. Indeed, there is a lovely interplay between the reasons that give Paul confidence that he will be released from prison: (1) he states that his certainty is because the Philippians are *serving him* (1:19); and yet (2) he is also convinced of this because his freedom is necessary to *serve the Philippians*

\(^{264}\) James L. Jaquette (“Life and Death, Adiaphora, and Paul’s Rhetorical Strategies,” *NovT* 38 [1996]: 30–54) hypothesizes that Paul, like ancient moralists, views life and death as “indifferent matters” compared with what is more important. His suggestion that Paul “highlights himself as a selfless model of service to Christ worthy of imitation” is similar to my argument. But Jaquette sees Paul directing his words towards challenging the Philippians to rethink their conduct towards each other, whereas my reading suggests that his rhetoric is directed towards the church’s relationship with him.
Paul’s prayer in the *exordium* is that the Philippians be pure and blameless on the Day of Christ. In 1:25–26, he offers himself as part of the answer to this prayer. The “fruitful work” of 1:22 is the advance of the Philippians’ faith. By virtue of his presence among them and his union with them, their joy in the faith will grow so that they can receive greater eschatological honor as followers of Christ. Thus Paul is already framing their fellowship with him as one that is eschatologically beneficial.

---

265 So W. Paul Bowers (“Fulfilling the Gospel: The Scope of the Pauline Mission,” *JETS* 30 [1987]: 197–98): “What lies, in effect, within the compass of Paul’s familiar formula ‘proclaiming the gospel’ is . . . not simply an initial preaching mission but the full sequence of activities resulting in settled churches.” Bowers cites Phil 1:25–26 as evidence that Paul considered “the nurture of emerging churches” as “an integral feature of his own missionary task.”

266 Paul’s reference to boasting (καύχημα) has led to a range of interpretations. Witherington (*Philippians*, 93) suggests that the boasting that the Philippians will enjoy is that God has delivered Paul “from the lion’s mouth and from the shame of chains.” But this contradicts Paul’s subsequent statement that suffering is a gift granted to him and the Philippians (1:29). Robert Jewett (‘Conflicting Movements in the Early Church as Reflected in Philippians 1:21–26,” *Neot* 12 [1994]: 362–90) understands Paul’s words to refer to his pride at having his apostolic legitimacy proved before any Philippians who might have doubted him. Hawthorne (*Philippians*, 63) estimates that the Philippians were tempted to boast in other people, rather than in Christ.

But an eschatological boast is in view here. Paul has already indicated that his presence is necessary to prepare them for the Day of Christ. In Phil 2:16, he refers to his own possible eschatological boast if the Philippians remain true to the gospel (see Chapter Five). In 4:1, Paul calls the Philippians his crown (an eschatological honor, cf. 1 Pet 5:4) in light of their perseverance. Thus the mutuality between church and apostle is eschatologically beneficial. Καύχημα refers to honor received from God on the Day of the Lord. Johan S. Vos (“Philippians 1:12–26 and the Rhetoric of Success,” in *Rhetoric, Ethic, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse: Essays from the 2002 Heidelberg Conference* [Emory Studies in Early Christianity; ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Anders Eriksson; London: T&T Clark, 2005], 283) describes the situation similarly: “The προκοπή, the progress of the Gospel and of the Philippians, results not only in their ‘boasting in Christ’ and in the apostle’s sharing in this boasting, but also enables the apostle himself to boast on the Day of Christ that he did not run in vain or labor in vain (2:16). In this rhetoric of success, it is not only the success of the Gospel and the Philippian congregation which is at stake, but also that of the apostle himself.”
3.4. Summary

In sum, Phil 1:12–26 is more than Paul’s report of his circumstances. As the narratio, it supports the propositio by arguing the following: (1) that the mission is succeeding because God has elected Paul and ordained the means of his success; (2) that the authentic brothers and sisters are emboldened by his actions to unite with him and proclaim the gospel; (3) that rivals are recognizable by their selfishness and their enmity with Paul; and (4) that the Philippians’ fellowship with him is mutually and eschatologically beneficial as well as an expression of the sacrifice that characterizes followers of Christ.
CHAPTER FOUR ~ TO PERSEVERE AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD, 1: PHILIPPIANS 1:27–2:4

4.1. Overview

I argued in Chapter Three that Paul’s prison report (Phil 1:12–24) prepares the Philippians for 1:27–30, the propositio.267 The probatio begins at 2:1. In Chapters Four and Five, I will suggest that Paul expands on the subjects he discussed in his narratio to exhort the Philippians in 1:27–2:18 to persevere in their commitment to him.268 I hope to show that the exhortation μόνον ἅξιως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύσατε (1:27a) directs the Philippians specifically towards a faithful and united response to him. Paul will also use their response to this governing imperative to assess the church’s standing within the eschatological Israel of God.269 Taken together, Chapters


268 Bockmuehl (Philippians, 96) calls Phil 1:27–2:18 the “rhetorical and structural centerpiece” of the epistle. Silva (Philippians, 15) and Fee (Philippians, 158) describe the section as the “heart” of the epistle. Fowl (Philippians, 59) sees it as the “linchpin.” Casey W. Davis (Criticism, 146–50) identifies links between 1:27–2:18 and the rest of the epistle.

Fee (Philippians, 157) and Heil (Philippians, 16–18) view 1:27–2:16 as a chiasm, 2:5–11 being the central term. But as I shall set out in some detail in Chapter Five, the climax of the section is Phil 2:14–16. Further, to make the chiasm work, Phil 2:17–18 is in effect excised and treated as merely transitional. This is unfortunate, for when read correctly, 2:17–18 is much more than this.

269 According to Loh and Nida (Handbook, 38), the opening μόνον signals the imperative’s governing purpose.
Four and Five are intended to demonstrate that every sentence in 1:27–2:18 contributes to promoting the church’s continued partnership with Paul. \(^{270}\)

I will propose in this chapter that in 1:27–2:4 Paul defines the exhortation in 1:27a by establishing three points. He attests (1) that the Philippians’ present circumstances are similar to his circumstances in that both parties struggle against those whose faith is counterfeit; (2) that the Philippians’ past experience bears witness to the legitimacy of the Pauline gospel; and (3) that the conduct of those united to this gospel confirms their standing as citizens of heaven, i.e., the eschatological Israel.

4.2. τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγῶνα ἔχοντες, οἴκον εἰδεῖτε ἐν ἐμοί καὶ νῦν ἂκουεῖτε ἐν ἐμοί (Phil 1:30)

Philippians 1:30 indicates that Paul’s intent is that the Philippians understand their current struggle (1:27a–2:4) through the lens of his prison report (1:12–26). This verse sets the context for interpreting μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε (1:27a). The Philippians are suffering at the hands of opposing forces because (taking ἔχοντες as a causal circumstance) they share with Paul in the same competitive ἀγών. \(^{271}\) The majority of opinions regarding this shared competitive

---

\(^{270}\) It is not uncommon for Paul to spend the entirety of a letter on this subject. J. Louis Martyn (“A Law-Observant Mission to the Gentiles: the Background of Galatians,” SJT 38 [1985]: 307–24) argues similarly regarding Galatians. Martyn judges that every sentence in Galatians is focused on Paul’s competition with his opponents for the Galatians’ allegiance.

\(^{271}\) ἀγών appears in Col 2:1; 1 Thess 2:2; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7; Heb 12:1; ἀγωνίζομαι in 1 Cor 9:25; Col 1:29; 4:12; 1 Tim 4:10; 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7; συναγωνίζομαι in Rom 15:30. Victor C. Pfitzner (Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature [NovTSup 16; Leiden: Brill, 1967], 109–12, 126–29) argues that ἀγών (and its cognates) in Greco-Roman literature refers to the wise man’s internal struggles as well as athletic contests. Ethelbert Stauffer (“ἀγών,” TDNT 1:136) notes that the author of 4 Maccabees compares the Jewish martyr’s death with that of the athlete’s
struggle and the identity of those opposing the Philippians and Paul fall within one of two interpretations: (1) that a direct correspondence between Paul’s suffering and the Philippians’ exists because both are suffering from imperial or civil persecution; or (2) that an analogous correspondence exists between his suffering and that of the Philippians. The latter is the more frequently held. But on the basis of my reading of Paul’s prison report I offer a third approach: that the Philippians and Paul are enduring the exact same suffering (there is a direct correspondence), yet this suffering is not competing against challengers. He concludes that this is the background for ἀγών in Phil 1:30. Philip F. Esler (“Paul and the Agon: Understanding a Pauline Motif in Its Cultural and Visual Context,” in Picturing the New Testament: Studies in Ancient Visual Images [ed. Annette Weissenrieder et al.; WUNT 2 / 193; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 2005], 381) proposes that the visual imagery associated with ἀγών in Phil 1:30 refers to athletic events in which the antagonists were able to do serious injury to each other (boxing, wrestling, pankration). This argument fits the picture given in Philippians of competing groups vying aggressively for the prize (Phil 3:12–14). Stephan Joubert (Paul as Benefactor: Reciprocity, Strategy, and Theological Reflection in Paul’s Collection [WUNT 2 / 124; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 2000], 44–45) suggests that the agonistic ancient Mediterranean culture turns all contests into struggles for honor. Therefore in Philippians ἀγών expresses a struggle that comes from competition, and not simply a general struggle against the odds.


from Roman persecution but from attempts by advocates of rival gospel missions to break the solidarity of the Pauline mission.²⁷³

The opinion that Phil 1:30 refers to a shared Roman persecution is typically constructed on two grounds: first, that οἷον . . . καὶ νῦν ἀκοῦετε ἐν ἐμοί refers to Paul’s incarceration by the Romans because they oppose his declaration of Christ as Lord; second, that οἷον εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοί applies to the events whereby Paul was accused before the magistrates, beaten, placed in stocks, and jailed while in Philippi (2 Cor 11:23–37; 1 Thess 2:2; cf. Acts 16:20–40). The Philippians, thus, are suffering a similar fate since they take the same anti-imperial stance. Those holding this view argue that the wording of Phil 1:30 is straightforward, historically plausible, and does not require any speculation regarding any analogical intent of ἀγών.

There are difficulties with this position, however. First, nowhere in the epistle is there any reference to the Philippians being imprisoned or undergoing civil persecution. If some of the Philippians were incarcerated at this time, the absence of any reference to it in his opening greeting, the exordium, or, especially, in his request for money, is surprising.²⁷⁴ Further, if they were incarcerated and Paul ignores it, then

²⁷³ Hendriksen (Philippians, 91) also maintains that the suffering of the Philippians and Paul comes from the same adversary — though for Hendriksen the adversary is Satan. Hendriksen supports this view by noting that the Philippians saw the exorcism depicted in Acts 16. This requires that Paul saw demonic forces behind his imprisonment. But Paul does not directly cite Satan (or demons) as figures causing him difficulty in prison.

²⁷⁴ The strength of Paul’s rebuke of the Corinthians in 2 Cor 8–9 comes from his honoring of the Macedonians for supporting his collection despite their poverty (2 Cor 8:1–5). Philippians lacks any parallel commendation of the church at Philippi for giving despite their imprisonment.
his words in 1:7 that Philippians share in his chains, his defense, and his confirmation are self-absorbed and undercut their mutuality.

Second, this argument points in the direction that in the Roman east there was either a law against worshiping Christ or a pervasive imperial cult requiring one to proclaim Caesar as “Lord and Savior of the world” or face imprisonment. But if the imperial cult was a preoccupation of his, I would expect Paul to address this inescapable cultic obligation more directly in his letters, especially in his discussion of idolatry in 1 Cor 8–10 and Rom 1:18–32. As it happens, evidence indicates that the imperial cult may not have been widespread during the time of Paul. James S. McLaren has shown from Greek and Roman sources that the first-century Jewish practices of circumcision, dietary restrictions, and Sabbath observance were criticized, but not the practice of abstinence from worshiping the emperor. Further, one cannot presuppose that the Philippians were at odds with imperial rule given Paul’s positive

275 There are numerous works on the possible reference to the Roman imperial cult in the Pauline letters; a foremost proponent that the argument that there is a ubiquitous influence of the Roman imperial cult is chiefly associated with Richard A. Horsley. See the three symposium volumes directed under his editorship and published by Trinity Press International, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society (1997); Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl (2000); and Paul and the Roman Imperial Order (2004).


assessment of government (Rom 13:1–7). In short, it is not a foregone conclusion that 1:30 refers to imperial or civil persecution of the Philippians.

Scholars who hold the second opinion (Phil 1:30 as an analogical statement) maintain that Paul’s ἀγων is his incarceration, but that since the Philippians were not imprisoned their suffering is only indirectly analogous. This reading does not require the awkward historical reconstruction of a civil persecution at Philippi. But it still has as Paul’s hardship his suffering under government rulers. Both τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ and τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ in 1:29 are consequently interpreted as all-encompassing, applicable to any of the Pauline churches.

A different understanding is reached if Paul’s prison account is read as I have argued in Chapter Three. The hardship Paul endures while in prison is from rival gospel missions, and not his jailing. The ἀγων of Paul and of the Philippians need not

---

278 Kim (Christ, 45–46) writes that “it boggles the mind to imagine that Paul was composing an anti-imperial letter in a prison guarded by the praetorian while touting his friendly reception among those guardians of the empire.” But it seems that Kim overstates his position. Betz (Apostel, 25) hypothesizes that Paul wrote Philippians with two audiences in mind: the Philippians and the government officials reading his mail. Thus Betz suggests that Paul wrote coded letters which the letter-carrier would then decode in his reading of them to the church. This, according to Betz, means that Philippians is to be read in a way other than as an “open letter.”

279 Proposals as to the identity of the Philippians’ adversaries have included the following: Jews in Philippi; Jews from Thessalonica; Judaizers; Christian (Gentile) teachers; persecutors (with no specific reference); Gentiles; non-Christian opponents (both Jew and Gentile); Christians from Ephesus; Roman officials; and the general populace. See Reumann, Philippians, 278–89, for a detailed treatment of each of these.

280 O’Brien (Philippians, 162) sums up this analogical view succinctly: “The sufferings and persecutions that believers endure, whether difficult to bear or not, are endured for the sake of Christ, and the apostle desires that his example may encourage them to bear them with equanimity, even joy.”
be exactly analogous, but can directly correspond if their shared suffering is the threat from a rival gospel mission.\textsuperscript{281}

In 1:30, Paul refers to what the Philippians both saw (εἴδετε) in him and now hear (νῦν ἀκούετε) in him.\textsuperscript{282} The trial that vexes Paul is the presence of rivals attempting to gain an advantage over him and increase his suffering (1:17). This group’s motives and actions, and particularly their rejection of him, have proved their confession and mission to be false (1:15–16). Paul’s struggle is with those who seek to thwart his mission and replace it with their own alternative gospel. This struggle against rivals is what the Philippians have “just heard” in his report in 1:12–26.

Now, in this reconstruction I have admittedly placed the weight of my position on what the Philippians have just heard and not what they have seen previously in Paul. I acknowledge that my argument would be strengthened if there were evidence that the Philippians saw him being challenged by a rival apostolic mission (Phil 3 may provide some insight into this very reality). But the lack of information about what the Philippians actually saw warrants emphasizing the new information that the Philippians

\textsuperscript{281} The counter argument, that this reading somehow diminishes the “real suffering” of the Philippian church (as Peter Oakes [Philippians, 85] suggests), misreads Paul’s understanding of suffering. He views this struggle against rival gospels as a deep suffering regardless of the presence or absence of physical or financial hardship.

\textsuperscript{282} Ἐν ἐμοί after καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε likely means that Paul’s report on his personal circumstances is meant to serve as “eye-witness testimony,” showing the truth of what has occurred to him. See further BDAG, s.v. ἔν 8 (p. 329): “marker denoting the object to which someth. happens or in which someth. shows itself, or by which someth. is recognized, to, by, in connection with.”
have just received. In 1:30, Paul gives prominence to *what they now know*, i.e., the *narratio*.

Rightly reading Paul’s prison account cannot be overstated. He wrote his prison account and placed it at the start of his *narratio* to guide the Philippians’ understanding of the rest of the epistle. The prison account directly informs 1:30, which consequently establishes how to understand Paul’s call to unity and perseverance in 1:27–30. Without 1:30 we are left with the tenuous task of mirror-reading his motivation for his directive to the Philippians: ἄξιως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε. A consequence of misreading 1:30 is the unavoidable misunderstanding of 1:27a (and 1:27–2:18) as a generalized call to corporate unity in Christ rather than as a *specific charge* to the Philippians to join him in resisting those attempting to bring the church to apostasy and away from the Pauline gospel.

---

283 The depiction of Paul’s visit to Philippi in Acts 16 does not compromise my reading. The reference to what the Philippians saw requires only that the Philippians saw the results of his ἄγων. Being witness to a “live struggle” is not necessary. Paul remarks in other epistles that he has borne the marks of his efforts (see Gal 4:12–15; “danger from false brothers” in 2 Cor 11:26). This pattern also fits with what occurred in Galatia, where proclaimers of another gospel shadowed Paul and attempted to convince his churches to change allegiance (Gal 6:13). The difference between the churches in Galatia and the one in Philippi is that the former switched loyalties (or were close to doing so) whereas the latter has not (yet).

284 For example, Hooker (“Opponents,” 377) holds that the only connection between 1:27–30 and Phil 1:12–18 is Paul’s fear that rivalries may arise among believers in Philippi, as had happened in Rome (according to this hypothesis). Hooker doubts the existence of any real opponents in Philippi. She concludes that the entire letter is a pastoral warning against various types of groups that could potentially lead them astray.
4.3. πολιτεύεσθε (Phil 1:27a)

Μόνον άξιως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε (1:27) signals that the Philippians’ corporate identity will be central in 1:27b–2:18.285 Philippians 1:27–30 is likely a single sentence governed by πολιτεύεσθε.286 The various verbal forms of the rest of the sentence complement πολιτεύεσθε, drawing on its imperatival force.287 Πολιτεύομαι is rare in Paul’s writings, as well as in the entire NT.288 Typically when Paul instructs his churches regarding living a life consistent with their faith, he pulls from his stock of general commands.289 So why πολιτεύεσθε, a term with connotations of civil duty?290

285 O’Brien (Philippians, 145–46) rightly points out that this one exhortation is comprehensive and stands as a “rubric to the whole section 1:27–2:18, with the subsequent admonitions and statements expanding and explicating what is involved in living worthily of the gospel.” Similarly Fee, Philippians, 159–61; Hansen, Philippians, 93.

286 It is difficult to be certain how to punctuate the end of 1:28.

287 Schenk (Philipperbriefe, 166) describes 1:27–30 as one suprenym (πολιτεύεσθε) with three hyponyms (στήκετε, συναθλοῦντες, μὴ πτυρόμενοι).

288 Acts 23:1 is the only other NT occurrence of πολιτεύομαι. Its cognates are equally scarce: πολίτευμα once (Phil 3:20), πολιτεία twice (Acts 22:28; Eph 2:12), συμπολίτης once (Eph 2:19).

289 For example, in Paul: περιπατέω 18x, including twice in Philippians (Rom 6:4; 8:4; 13:13; 14:15; 1 Cor 3:3; 7:17; 2 Cor 4:2; 5:7; 10:2; 3; 12:18; Gal 5:16; Phil 3:17, 18; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:1, 12); ζάω 16x, including once in Philippians (Rom 8:12, 13; 10:5; 14:7, 8 [three times]; 2 Cor 5:15; Gal 2:14, 19, 20; 3:11, 12; 5:25; Phil 1:21; 1 Thess 3:8); πράσσω 13x, including once in Philippians (Rom 1:32 [twice]; 2:1, 2, 3, 25; 7:15, 19; 2 Cor 5:10; 12:21; Gal 5:21; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 4:11). These numbers soar when the disputed epistles are included. In addition to περιπατέω, ζάω, and πράσσω, Paul frequently writes ποιέω, φρονέω, βλέπω, στήκω, and στοιχέω (each also found in Philippians).

290 Lightfoot (Philippians, 105) noted as early as 1865 this sense of πολιτεύεσθε. Raymond R. Brewer (“The Meaning of Politeuesthe in Philippians 1:27,” JBL 73 [1954]: 76–83) is credited with drawing modern scholarship’s attention to the insufficiencies of the
Most modern scholars reason that Paul was motivated to use this term because of Philippi’s status as a Roman colony. Several commentators expand on this, arguing that in 1:27a Paul exhorts the Philippians to be good stewards of their political citizenship. These arguments divide along two lines. On one side are those who argue that πολιτεύεσθε refers only to the Philippians’ civic obligations. On the other are those who hold that 1:27a is a reference to the “dual citizenship” of Christians, in translations found in most English Bibles. The majority of English translations (ASV, CEB, CJB, CEV, DARBY, DLNT, DRA, ERV, ESV, HCSB, JUB, KJV, LEB, MSG, NASB, NASV, NCV, NET, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV, RSV, TLB, WEB, WYC, YLT) give a neutral translation (live, walk, conduct oneself). A notable exception is the TNIV: “as citizens of heaven live.” The correctness of inserting “of heaven” into the translation is debatable. Nevertheless, it is closer to the original intent of the term than most English translations. But O’Brien (Philippians, 147) argues that πολιτεύεσθε probably only retains “a shade of its original significance.” He questions the extent to which the “citizenship” can be pushed. Similarly MM (s.v. [p. 526]) notes Dibelius’s proposal that πολιτεύεσθε sometimes “almost = περιπατέω.” Dibelius (quoted in MM) cites 1 Clem. 6:1. But even if Dibelius is correct, and πολιτεύεσθε can convey a more general sense, it seems to me that it does not here because of the emphasis on citizenship in Phil 3:20 and its absence from elsewhere in the Pauline corpus.

291 Hansen (Philippians, 94) maintains that Paul was “probably inspired by the pride of Roman citizenship in the Roman colony of Philippi.” See also Lightfoot, Philippians, 105; Plummer, Philippians, 33; Hendriksen, Philippians, 80; Brewer, “Meaning,” 80; Martin, Philippians, 85–87; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 97; Geoffrion, Purpose, 44; Fee, Epistle, 162; Edart, Épître, 103; Silva, Philippians, 80; Reumann, Philippians, 279; Witherington, Philippians, 99–100.

Philippi’s civic status likely dominated the Philippians’ worldview. The early history of the Roman Empire was literally decided on its doorstep with the victory of Mark Antony and Octavian over Brutus and Cassius at the Battle of Philippi in 42 B.C.E. During the time of Paul, Philippi (officially named Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis by Augustus) was “a little Rome,” having been modeled after Rome. See further C. Koukouli-Chrysantaki, “Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis,” in Philippi at the Time of Paul and after his Death (ed. Charalambos Bakirtzis and Helmut Koester; Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1998), 5–36; Bormann, Philippi, 11–29. Peter Oakes (Philippians, 24–49) sets out the social and economic developments that accompanied Philippi’s rise to become a Roman colony.
heaven (Phil 3:20) and on earth. In either case, it is supposed that Paul has the idea of Roman citizenship in view.

Although he does issue a statement about respecting civil authorities in Rom 13:1–7, it is unlikely that Paul’s intent here is to exhort the Philippians to maintain their obligations to the city as its citizens. Two considerations lead me to this judgment. First, the majority (if not all) of the members of the Philippian church will not have been citizens. Attending to these obligations is applicable to only a few, if not all, Philippians. Two considerations lead me to this judgment. First, the majority (if not all) of the members of the Philippian church will not have been citizens.

292 Winter (Seek, 81–104) reads Phil 1:27 as part of Paul’s project to encourage Christians to have a civic responsibility. He proposes that Paul’s primary concern is that rivalries within the Philippian church are spilling into the public sphere and damaging the witness of the church. Winter sees the entire discussion as focusing on the concord and discord in politeia. Brewer (“Meaning,” 82–83) also argues that Paul is addressing the Philippians’ civic behavior, though he adds that his concern is with disruptions caused by Christians neglecting their civic duties because of their new faith. According to Brewer, Paul exhorts the Philippians to be civic-minded in their dealings with society except in matters pertaining to the imperial cult. Similarly N. T. Wright, Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2009), 171.

Hawthorne (Philippians, 69) represents this alleged “dual citizenship” nicely: “Thus to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ means to live as a good citizen of an earthly state, fully discharging one’s duties and responsibilities to the state. But there is more. Through the gospel that proclaims Christ as Savior, the Christian is made a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, a partner in a spiritual fellowship, a member of a new community, the Christian commonwealth, the church.” So also Andrew T. Lincoln, “Philippians and the Heavenly Commonwealth,” in his Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul’s Thought with Special Reference to his Eschatology (SNTSMS 43; Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. 1981), 87–109; O’Brien, Philippians, 147; Fee, Philippians, 161; Hansen, Philippians, 95.

293 So Fowl, Philippians, 61. Justin J. Meggitt (Paul, Poverty, and Survival [SNTW 6; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998], 153) challenges the theory that the members of the Pauline churches enjoyed any economical or political advantage, because 99% of the populace lived near subsistence level. Oakes (Philippians, 48) rejects Meggitt’s proposal because it renders Paul’s talk about “remembering the poor” (Gal 2:10) meaningless. But Oakes counters that though there was not a “strong middle class,” a substantial portion of the population was not in habitual want and lived above subsistence level. Even if Oakes is correct, those enjoying the perks of citizenship were few in number. Bockmuehl (Philippians, 98) agrees that it is unlikely Paul is addressing the “Latin-
any, of the Philippians. Second, Paul does not revisit the matter.\footnote{The overall force of the epistle mitigates against seeing this as anything more than a secondary consideration on Paul’s part; so already Jean-Noël Aletti (Saint Paul, Épître aux Philippiens: introduction, traduction, et commentaire [EBib n.s. 55; Paris: Gabalda, 2005], 103): “The imperative πολιτεύεσθε, therefore, is not shown to aid in describing the actions of the Philippians in local politics — not that Paul denied this; only it does not speak to it.”} Since 1:27–30, as the propositio, introduces the topics that are addressed in the rest of the epistle, the subject of civic duty would be expected to reappear later in the text. It does not.\footnote{In Rom 13:1–6, Paul lists very specific civic obligations the Romans are to observe (see also 1 Cor 6:1–6; 8:10; 10:27–31).}

A more convincing referent for πολιτεύεσθε comes from Paul’s background in Hellenistic Judaism. While affirming Brewer’s argument for a more restrictive, specialized reading of πολιτεύεσθε, Ernest Miller argues that “the meaning [of πολιτεύεσθε] is not to be found only in reference to Roman citizenship or any particularly Greek understanding of the word. There is another nuance which can be discerned, derived from and dominant within the Judeo-Christian idea of the church as the new Israel.”\footnote{Ernest C. Miller, Jr., “Πολιτεύεσθε in Philippians 1.27: Some Philological and Thematic Observations,” JSNT 15 (1982): 86–96.}

Though Miller has been accused of reading too much into a single term, his general point has merit.\footnote{O’Brien, Philippians, 147; Geoffrion, Purpose, 48.} He notes that “πολιτεύεσθαι is always used [in the Maccabean corpus] with specific references to the collective life of Jews as Jews, speaking higher echelons of Philippians society.” He therefore suggests that the rhetorical force of πολιτεύεσθε is to “play on the perceived desirability of citizenship in Roman society at Philippi, and to contrast against this the Christian vision of enfranchisement and belonging.”

294 The overall force of the epistle mitigates against seeing this as anything more than a secondary consideration on Paul’s part; so already Jean-Noël Aletti (Saint Paul, Épître aux Philippiens: introduction, traduction, et commentaire [EBib n.s. 55; Paris: Gabalda, 2005], 103): “The imperative πολιτεύεσθε, therefore, is not shown to aid in describing the actions of the Philippians in local politics — not that Paul denied this; only it does not speak to it.”

295 In Rom 13:1–6, Paul lists very specific civic obligations the Romans are to observe (see also 1 Cor 6:1–6; 8:10; 10:27–31).


297 O’Brien, Philippians, 147; Geoffrion, Purpose, 48.
distinct and set apart as God’s people.”\(^{298}\) He also observes a similar intent is found in Philo and Josephus in passages depicting living in fidelity to God.\(^{299}\) In light of this, Miller concludes that Paul, like other early Christian writers found in πολιτεύομαι a way of signifying the church as God’s faithful Israel.\(^{300}\)

Geoffrion challenges Miller’s assessment.\(^{301}\) Geoffrion argues that outside of Phil 3:2–4 there is a general paucity of references to the church as the “new Israel,” or any juxtaposition of Gospel and Torah in Philippians. But Geoffrion’s argument does not take into account that Paul’s entire biographical section (Phil 3:1–21) is a critique of those holding to a Torah-based faith in Christ. Geoffrion’s criticism is surprising, since he ultimately comes to the same view as Miller, that Paul wants the Philippians to see themselves not as “good Roman citizens” but as part of a heavenly commonwealth because of the gospel. Geoffrion’s separation of “heavenly citizenship” from Miller’s “new (eschatological) Israel” turns out to be a distinction without a difference.

In sum, πολιτεύεσθε in 1:27a is consistent with its sense elsewhere in Hellenistic Judaism as a reference to Israel’s fidelity to God and to the necessity of showing one’s choice to live according to God’s mandates and to reject alternatives. This background

\(^{298}\) Miller, “Πολιτεύεσθε,” 88. Second Maccabees 6:1 depicts an Athenian attempting to persuade the Jews to turn away from the laws of their fathers and cease living (πολιτεύεσθαι) by the laws of God. Πολιτεύομαι similarly in 2 Macc 11:25; 3 Macc. 3:4; πολιτεύομαι in 4 Macc. (2:8, 23; 4:23) refers to Jews living under Torah.

\(^{299}\) Ibid., 78, 88. Bockmuehl (Philippians, 97) points out that πολιτεύομαι in Hellenistic Judaism “is conceived as a deliberate, publicly visible, and (at least in the broad sense) politically relevant act which in the context is distinguished from alternative lifestyles that might have been chosen instead.”

\(^{300}\) Miller, “Πολιτεύεσθε,” 92.

\(^{301}\) Geoffrion, Purpose, 48.
better accounts for πολιτεύεσθε in 1:27a. In Philippians, Paul shows no real interest in the role of the church in the public sphere. But elsewhere he does challenge the legitimacy of any other group that might separate the church from him. Thus πολιτεύεσθε aptly captures his foremost concern: the Philippians’ place in the heavenly commonwealth of God.  

4.4. Philippians 1:27a

Paul calls on the Philippians to conduct themselves in a manner befitting their corporate identity formed by his proclamation of Christ (ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ). Unlike what we find in Philo, Josephus, and the Maccabean writers, it is Paul’s gospel proclamation, not Torah, that defines the body politic of faithful Israel. When Paul commands the Philippians to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel, he is concerned principally with their confession of faith in his gospel and its power to unite them to Christ.

---

302 Markus N. A. Bockmuehl (“Did St. Paul Go to Heaven When He Died?” in Jesus, Paul, and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N. T. Wright [ed. Nicholas Perrin and Richard B. Hays; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2011], 221) suggests that Paul’s political metaphors do not convey colonial terminology or “citizenship,” but are “in some ways analogous in meaning to the term basileia, ‘kingdom’ or ‘empire.’” This is consistent with my determination that Paul is not interested in drawing analogies to the Roman empire but is instead working within the Messiah / Israel model.

303 Several scholars, most notably Horsley (Paul, 3–4, 9–24, 140–47), see Paul deliberately setting his εὐαγγέλιον of Christ against that of Caesar. But Reumann (Philippians, 287) is more likely correct, that “Phil 1:27–30 does not indicate open conflict as yet between Christ and Caesar in Philippi.” Kim (Christ, 51) argues the point more strongly: “nowhere in his epistles does Paul suggest that doing the duties of the citizens of God’s Kingdom involves fighting a human kingdom.”
Paul does not say μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύσατε but rather μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύσατε. The former is expected if Paul desired to draw a distinction between following and renouncing the figure of Christ versus that of Caesar. But by writing the latter, Paul directs the Philippians toward his particular depiction of Christ. It is a question of competing missions and proclamations of Christ, of different Christs. This phrasing makes his subsequent commands a test of their commitment to the standard his gospel sets forth. With this reference to εὐαγγέλιον, Paul reminds the Philippians (as he does the Galatians in Gal 3:1–3) of the prior action of God in their midst at his arrival. 304 His gospel becomes the measure for assessing the faith and obedience of his churches and his rivals. 305

By writing ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύσατε as his grounding imperative, Paul shows that he sees loyalty to his gospel as in keeping with the history of Israel in that the mark of the authentic people of God is their faithfulness to the correct interpretation of God’s oracles. 306 Prior to the coming of Christ, those who rejected Torah and its divinely appointed interpreters were considered outside the

304 O’Brien, Philippians, 148.

305 It is surprising that this aspect has not played a greater role in the discussion of the verse. In his letters Paul frequently stands against different (often Torah-based) conceptions on the meaning of Christ’s death and resurrection. O’Brien (Philippians, 148) is therefore correct to see “gospel” as an all-encompassing term that is both the power and the content of the profession. But O’Brien and others appear to discount the idea that other gospel missions could have reached Philippi (as they have the other churches).

306 This is similar to Rom 1:16–17. When Paul tells the Romans that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ (Rom 1:16), he does not mean any proclamation of Christ. He believes that his gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Cf. “according to my gospel,” Rom 2:16.
people of God. Now in the eschatological age, Paul sees his gospel profession as this oracle, as the new litmus test.

Fidelity is the sign of membership in the people of God.\textsuperscript{307} The Philippians’ recent care for Paul signaled that the church is not making the error that he saw committed by the Galatians, namely, turning to another gospel mission. The Philippians’ continued obedience to the Pauline mission shows their devotion to Paul and their trust in his proclamation of the salvific power of Christ.\textsuperscript{308} Philippians 1:27a, by emphasizing the corporate identity of the Pauline gospel, sets 1:27–2:18 within the arena of competing conceptions of Christ and their corresponding eschatological ramifications.

4.5. Philippians 1:27b–30

This understanding of Phil 1:27a determines the interpretation of the remainder of the sentence (1:27b–30). As the majority of scholars note, the overarching theme of the passage is unity. But the majority mistakenly surmise that Paul’s call for unity bespeaks the apostle’s anxiety about division within the Philippians’ congregation.

\textsuperscript{307} Bockmuehl (Philippians, 98) describes Paul’s command as part of his “eschatological noblesse oblige: live what in Christ you already are.” Bockmuehl’s point needs to be pressed further. Since only one who is “in Christ” can truly persist in this eschatological ethic, the ethic itself testifies to the new character of a person.

\textsuperscript{308} O’Brien (Philippians, 148) gives the following summary: “So this community’s life must have as its rule the gospel of Christ. Paul’s basic preoccupation, then, in these verses remains the same as in the previous section. Just as all of his actions were determined with reference to the gospel, so it should be with his readers.” In many respects, this is the governing subject of the entire epistle. Paul is exhorting the Philippians to take seriously the religious affections of authentic faith. Philippians 1:27–30 is that to which the entire piece has been moving, and from which all the subsequent movements derive their meaning.
Instead, 1:27b–30 exhibits his insistence that the Philippians be *wholly and corporately united with him in support of the Good News of Christ, which he has proclaimed and is still proclaiming*. His concern is not that the Philippians remain as one, but rather that they remain as one with him.

Within the convention of reciprocal exchange, the Philippians’ financial support of Paul places him in their debt. He circumvents this possible claim by surrendering his desire to be with Christ in favor of returning to them (1:24–26). Rhetorically, this allows him to place the burden of the exchange back on the church at Philippi. For Paul to benefit from the force of reciprocity, it befits him to delay this call for unity until after he has established the call’s place within the exchange. The structure of the prison report and its position in the epistle situates 1:27–30 as a test of reciprocity. Paul is telling the Philippians how they can appropriately respond to his gracious commitment to go to them (being confident that he will be kept alive for this reason).

Paul signals his intention to measure the church’s reciprocation by adding ἵνα εἴτε ἔλθων καὶ ἴδων ύμᾶς εἴτε ἀπόων ἀκούω τὰ περὶ υμῶν (1:27b). The force of this phrase has been underestimated too often. Hansen, for example, states that this initial parenthetical phrase is “slipped in” as a means of telling the Philippians that he will be “checking on them to see how they are doing.”\(^{309}\) This probably misses the rhetorical significance of this phrase. It is not merely “slipped in” but is placed in first position so that the Philippians will understand that their place among the people of God is contingent upon their fellowship with Paul. These words remind the Philippians of his

---

\(^{309}\) Hansen, *Philippians*, 95.
apostolic authority and draw on the social pressure of reciprocity. Their failure to respond would shame the apostle, strain the relationship, and jeopardize their eschatological blessing.

Paul strengthens his bond with the church by marrying his opposition to rivals (1:12–26) with his call for the Philippians’ perseverance in 1:27b–30. We see this pairing in three phrases: (1) στήκετε ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι; (2) μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθλοῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου; and (3) μὴ πυρόμενοι ἐν μηδὲν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντικειμένων.

First, Paul wishes to hear that the church is standing unified in the Spirit (ὁτι στήκετε ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι).

Though many commentators read ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι as having an anthropological quality, either as part of the human personality (parallel to μιᾷ ψυχῇ in Phil 1:27d) or as an esprit de corps, I concur with those who propose that ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι refers to the Spirit of God. There are five main arguments for this.

---

310 See also 2 Cor 13:10.

311 There is a nice parallel between τὰ κατ’ ἐμέ in 1:12 and τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν in 1:27b.

312 Contra Lohmeyer (Philipper, 74), Geoffrion (Purpose, 24), Hansen (Philippians, 96), who argue that there are military overtones here. There is little evidence that στήκω had this sense during Paul’s time; so already Schenk, Philippbereifte, 167, Reumann, Philippians, 287. Proponents of this military view constructed much of their argumentation on ἱστημι and not στήκω because στήκω appears rarely prior to the NT period. Since in Paul it typically is a general reference to steadfastness (1 Cor 16:13, Phil 4:1, 1 Thess 3:8), further meaning need not be pressed into the term.

First, μὴ ψυχῆ is not synonymously parallel with ἐν ἐνὶ πνεῦματι. They are separate expressions (note no ἐν in 1:27d), and the similarity is for stylistic reasons only.

Second, there is no parallel elsewhere in Paul’s writing for ἐν ἐνὶ πνεῦματι signifying a common mind or collective disposition. Third, στήκω with ἐν has a locative meaning. This is precisely how the combination in 1 Cor 16:13 (στήκετε ἐν τῇ πίστει), Phil 4:1 (στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ), and 1 Thess 3:8 (στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ) works. Fourth, the phrase ἐν ἐνὶ πνεῦματι in 1 Cor 12:13 (and Eph 2:18) depicts the unity of the church in the Holy Spirit brought about at baptism. And fifth, Paul regularly speaks of the Spirit’s role in strengthening the faithful (Phil 1:19; 2:1). Therefore he is presenting the Spirit of God as the sphere within which the Philippians can muster the resolve to remain steadfast against their persecutors: “Stand firm in the one and the same Spirit.”

Paul’s reference to the Spirit in 1:27 hearkens back to 1:19. There I suggested that the Spirit gives potency to the Philippians’ offering of prayer and provisions, and this assures Paul of his own σωσικία (1:19). Here the Spirit binds the faithful together for mutual encouragement in their struggle or suffering for the gospel. Paul’s

---

314 Compare with those passages where Paul does call for unified disposition: Παρακαλῶ δε ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, διὰ τοῦ όνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες καὶ μη ἐν ὑμῖν σχίσματα, ἵπτε δὲ κατηρτισμένοι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοί καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ γνώμῃ (1 Cor 1:10); τὸ αὐτὸ εἰς ἄλληλους φρονοῦντες, μὴ τὰ ψυφλὰ φρονοῦντες ἄλλα τοῖς ταπεινοῖς συναπαγόμενοι. μὴ γίνεσθε φρόνιμοι παρ' ἑαυτοῖς (Rom 12:16); ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῆς ύπομονῆς καὶ τῆς παρακλήσεως δῷ ὑμῖν τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν ἄλληλοις κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν (Rom 15:5); Λοιπὸν, ἀδελφοί, χαίρετε, καταρτίζοντες, παρακαλεῖσθε, τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖτε, εἰρηνεύετε, καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ εἰρήνης ἔσται μεθ' ὑμῶν (2 Cor 13:11). Note also Phil 2:2, 5; 3:15; and 4:2.

315 See Chapter Three for a more detailed discussion of 1:19.
call for the Philippians to stand fast in the Spirit is simultaneously a call for them to continue their exclusive fellowship with him in gospel.\textsuperscript{316}

The second adverbial clause, μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθλούντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, defines the Philippians’ raison d’être among the people of God. Μία ψυχή carries a collective sense of purpose in the Hellenistic era.\textsuperscript{317} It appears in the LXX (1 Chron 12:39) regarding Israel’s decision to approve of David. Further, συναθλούντες in 1:27 has often been viewed as possessing a military or athletic connotation of teamwork.\textsuperscript{318} In Phil 4:3, Paul writes of Euodia and Syntyche, αἵτινες ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ συνήθθησάν μοι. The term there denotes others working together with him.\textsuperscript{319} So in 1:27, μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθλούντες suggests that the Philippian church is to continue in its joint endeavor — τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου.

J. C. Poirier challenges understanding πίστις in 1:27 as a reference to either the act of believing or the content of belief, arguing instead for “stewardship.”\textsuperscript{320} Poirier’s

\textsuperscript{316} See similar: Rom 5:5; 8:2, 9, 14–16, 27; 15:16, 30; 1 Cor 3:16; 12:13; 2 Cor 11:14; Gal 3:2–5, 14; 4:6.

\textsuperscript{317} Reumann, Philippians, 266–67.

\textsuperscript{318} Three other NT passages have συναθλέω (or cognates), but these have a more general meaning of working together (Phil 4:3, 2 Tim 2:3–5, Heb 10:32). Notably, suffering is the subject-matter in three of these four NT occurrences.

\textsuperscript{319} Hansen, however, sees συναθλούντες in Phil 1:27d as anticipating 4:3, hypothesizing that in 1:27 Paul is attempting to unite a church divided over Euodia and Syntyche. But the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche unnecessarily colors Hansen’s reading of the passage (and indeed the epistle as a whole). If a link between the two passages exists, it is that on both occasions unity with Paul is given prominence.

\textsuperscript{320} Poirier, “The Meaning of Πίστις in Philippians 1,27,” ExpT 123 (2012): 334–37. See Rom 3:2; Rom 12:3 (especially); 1 Cor 9:17; Gal 2:7; 1 Thess 2:4 for similar instances; also Josephus, Ant. 2.57; 7.47; 12.47.
thesis as to the meaning of πίστις in πίστις τοῦ εὐαγγελίου corresponds with my reading of 1:27–30. Paul expects the Philippians to be of sole purpose: they are charged to remain steadfast (συναθλοῦντες) in their obligation (τῇ πίστει) to assist in the Pauline mission (τοῦ εὐαγγελίου). This mirrors his own resolve to stand fast in his commitment to the gospel (1:12, 20).

The third participial clause μὴ πτυρόμενοι ύπὸ τῶν ἀντικειμένων, ἣτις ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἐνδείξεις ἀπωλείας, ύμῶν δὲ σωτηρίας, καὶ τούτῳ ἀπὸ θεοῦ (1:28) completes the pairing of Paul’s experience and the Philippians’. This turn towards eschatology suggests that there are three commonalities between the Philippians and the Pauline mission: (1) the Philippians’ present suffering, like Paul’s imprisonment, is by divine plan to testify to their faithfulness; (2) those who stand against them are outside the people of God and under judgment; and (3) the opposition purports to be followers of God but have shown themselves to be false by their actions against the Pauline mission.

Paul’s description of the Philippians’ current situation (ὅτι ύμῖν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, οὐ μόνον τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύειν ἄλλα καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πᾶσχειν) shows his desire for the church to see their suffering as evidence that they also are exactly where God wants them to be. Conversely, should the Philippians seek to soften their

---

321 Here I take πίστει as a dative of interest or advantage. The genitive of εὐαγγέλιον: (1) as objective (Bultmann, “πίστις, πιστεύω,” TDNT 6:217; Schenk, Philippbriefe, 168); (2) as subjective (Pfitzner, Paul, 116); (3) as appositional / epexegetical (Fee, Philippians, 167; Silva, Philippians, 89); (4) as origin (O’Brien, Philippians, 152); and (5) as attributive / “gospel faith” (Reumann, Philippians, 288). Since ἡ πίστις τοῦ εὐαγγελίου is not found elsewhere it is difficult to ascertain exactly what Paul intended. Nevertheless, given Paul’s emphasis on fidelity to his gospel, (1) and (4) are to be preferred, with a slight nod towards (1).

322 This view of suffering was evidently common during the Maccabean period (see, e.g., Tob 13:16; 2 Macc 7). It is also plausible that Christ’s own teaching on
toil, this will indicate a move away from God’s plan and a possible forfeiture of the salvation and eschatological blessings yet to be enjoyed by those who persevere in the faith (1:28b). To flee suffering is to deny the role that suffering plays in the advance of the gospel. Paul’s own account testifies that perseverance through suffering serves to glorify Christ (1:20). The Philippians’ suffering is a good omen, pointing them towards their eschatological salvation on the Last Day (1:6, 10).

Paul has previously mentioned the eschatological blessings resulting from committing to the Pauline mission (1:11, 23). But with Phil 1:28, the apostle adds annihilation (ἀπώλεια) as the eschatological curse that accompanies the opposite decision. When he speaks in Philippians of a group destined for destruction, he is referring to those who affirm a Christ that differs from the Christ of the Pauline gospel. Philippians 3:19 is the only other place in the epistle where the apostle has ἀπώλεια. The enemies being destroyed in Phil 3 are those who undertake competing gospel

---

suffering informed Paul’s thinking (Matt 5:10, 11–12). Ware (Paul, 118–23, 219) sees the theme of suffering in Philippians as part of Paul’s attempt to connect the Philippian church with the righteous figure of Wisdom — a collective figure that represents the vindicated suffering people of Israel.

323 Eadie (Commentary, 78–79) describes the Philippians’ suffering as the “evident token of salvation.”

324 I take αὐτοῖς here to be a dative of disadvantage. The Philippians are expected to understand their suffering as the harbinger of doom for their oppressors. Contra Hawthorne (Philippians, 74), who argues that Paul is referring to the persecutors of the church, to whom the Philippians’ suffering appears as a sign of the Philippians’ destruction. See further Stephen E. Fowl, “Philippians 1:28b, One More Time,” in Donaldson and Sailors, Greek, 167–79. According to Hawthorne and Fowl, no reference is made to the actual destruction of the captors. This interpretation has been regularly challenged.
missions. Further linking these two passages are πολιτεύεσθε in Phil 1:27 and πολίτευμα in Phil 3:20. Lastly, as noted above in the discussion of 1:30, the Philippians and Paul share a common persecutor — one who denies Paul’s apostolic mission. Paul wants the Philippians to see that they stand together with him against rivals whom God will ultimately judge for their imposture.

In sum, Paul’s exhortation, πολιτεύεσθε casts the Philippians’ response to him as acts of fidelity to the eschatological nation to which they now belong by believing in Christ (accepting the Pauline gospel). He maintains that they both share in the divine appointment to suffer for the gospel mission, the comfort that comes from unity in the Holy Spirit in the midst of suffering, a shared enemy, and an eschatological destiny. The subjects of 1:27–30, especially persevering for the gospel, are threaded through the propositio and the probatio.

4.6. Philippians 2:1–4

The probatio begins in 2:1–4 with Paul pleading with the Philippians to consider the benefits that accompany acceptance of his gospel proclamation. The passage’s position and style make it easy to overlook. Because 2:1–4 directly precedes the much-discussed Christ-hymn (2:5–11), studies of Phil 2 tend to move quickly through the first four verses to get to the riches of the next seven. It follows that 2:1–4 is often viewed

325 See Chapter Six for a more detailed discussion.

326 Witherington (Philippians, 110) notes that “a wise rhetorician” begins his probatio (supporting arguments) with positive appeals before making the case against something. That Paul begins with the benefits that the Philippians enjoy in the faith fits this practice.
simply as background for Paul’s apparent main goal — the mind of Christ. At first blush this appears to be what Paul is doing. The abrupt, almost hasty, style of 2:1–4 makes it seem a highly emotive sentence with little deliberation. Nevertheless, as I will hope to show in this section, 2:1–4 does more than set the scene for 2:5–11. It is an appropriate beginning to Paul’s probatio because it places the rest of the argument within the context of the church’s fellowship with him.

4.6.1. Philippians 2:1

Οὖν (2:1a) indicates that what he is about to say is logically connected to what he has just said.\(^ {327} \) Philippians 2:1–4, then, is epexegetical, accounting for how the Philippians can respond appropriately to Paul’s injunction in 1:27–30. Structurally, the imperative πληρώσατε μου τὴν χαράν (2:2a) is the apodosis to four preceding if-clauses.\(^ {328} \) The logic of 2:1–2a is thus: if the catalogue of conditions truly matter to the Philippians, the church will respond by affirming its fellowship with Paul.\(^ {329} \)

He presents these conditions as if they were objective realities or principles that exist outside of his relationship with the Philippians. But each also typifies what Paul has already said about his gospel. And as has been his pattern, he embeds within his

\(^ {327} \) I take οὖν as resumptive here; so already O’Brien, Philippians, 164; Fee, Philippians, 177; Hawthorne, Philippians, 80; Reumann, Philippians, 298; Hansen, Philippians, 106.

\(^ {328} \) Philippians 2:1–4 is a first-class conditional sentence with the apodosis in the imperative. Smyth (Grammar, §2298a [pp. 516–17]) says of this condition, “The truth of the conclusion depends solely on the truth of the condition, which is not implied in any way.”

\(^ {329} \) So BDF, §137 (2) (p. 76).
rhetoric a continued indictment of his rivals, real and potential. First, παράκλησις ἐν Χριστῷ aptly depicts the type of relationship Paul and the Philippians share (1:7, 19; 2:19; 4:10). It also draws negative attention to Paul’s rivals, those supposed brothers and sisters in Christ who seek to increase his suffering (1:17). Second, παραμύθιον ἀγάπης (2:1b) recalls earlier references to ἀγάπη, where Paul restricts it to matters relating to those who stand with him (1:9, 16).

Interestingly, elsewhere words from the παραμυθ-root are found in the context of financial relief or compensation. If παραμύθιον ἀγάπης refers to material aid here (and given the repeated references to financial support in Philippians, I think that context suggests that it does), its presence in the catalogue indicates that Paul considers the material aid exchanged between followers of Christ to be on a par with the other items. So he envisions a radically different relationship between those who are “in Christ” — one in which schism, rivalry, and opportunism are anathema and

330 Philippians 2:1 has εἴ τις instead of the expected εἴ τι. Hawthorne (Philippians, 80) notes that the ms tradition is “uncertain about whether the text should read εἴ τις or εἴ τι.” Blass (BDF, §137 [2] [p. 76]) suggests that the passage “probably ought to be written εἴ τι throughout . . . or with stereotyped adverbial τι.”

331 See also 2 Cor 1:3–7.

332 In the NT, παραμύθιον only occurs here. Reumann (Philippians, 301) finds that attempts to distinguish between παράκλησις and παραμύθιον as different types of comfort are unconvincing. He further notes that Paul does not use παραμυθέομαι or παραμυθία in contexts where God directly offers comfort (1 Cor 14:3; 1 Thess 2:12; 5:14). The comfort is mediated either through Christian prophets (1 Cor 14:3), Paul (1 Thess 2:12), the local church leaders (1 Thess 5:14), or members reciprocally. But Paul does depict God as one who gives παράκλησις (Rom 15:5; 2 Cor 1:3–5; 7:7).

333 See BDAG, s.v. παραμύθιον (p. 769): “consolation for poverty”; MM, s.v. παραμύθια (p. 488): “technical use in monetary transactions.”
financial relationships are radically redefined. Further, παραμόθιον ἀγάπης becomes an example of παράκλησις ἐν Χριστῷ in that financial support helps relieve suffering. Together, παράκλησις ἐν Χριστῷ with παραμόθιον ἀγάπης hint at the Philippians’ gift.

These first two clauses anticipate nicely the third clause, κοινωνία πνεύματος. I discussed in Chapter Two the fact that κοινωνία is a descriptor of the unique, divinely orchestrated partnership between the Philippians and Paul. Since both παράκλησις and παραμόθιον are actions here, κοινωνία may be understood similarly. It is an active work which is brought about by the Spirit. In Chapter Two, I proposed that κοινωνία includes the Philippians’ financial contribution to the partnership. Κοινωνία πνεύματος, thus, also suggests further that the (financial) sharing exists because of the presence of the Holy Spirit among those who trust the gospel. Rhetorically, Paul increases the likelihood that the Philippians will affirm the entire catalogue by including κοινωνία in this list because he has already stated in his exordium that their κοινωνία with him is divinely orchestrated (1:3–7).

Paul finishes the protasis with σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτίρμοι. The difficulty is determining whose affections and mercies are in view. O’Brien upholds that “it seems

---

334 Paul plants the seed here of the later, fuller discussion regarding the new “sacramental” quality of the gift given to the service of the gospel (Phil 4:10–20). See further Chapter Seven.

335 A polyvalent reading is certainly possible; so Reumann, Philippians, 303. A hard division between “sharing of the Spirit” and the “fellowship brought about by the Spirit” should not be wrought.

336 It is possible that this is a hendiadys (“a heartfelt sympathy”); so Dibelius, Thessalonicher, 70; Hawthorne, Philippians, 85. But Silva (Philippians, 91) notes: “σπλάγχνα was used in 1:8 of the affection itself rather than of the seat of the affections (the heart), and so it would be defensible to render, ‘tenderness and compassion.’” So also O’Brien, Philippians, 175–76; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 107.
best to understand our expression [as the] ‘tender mercy and compassion’ of Christ experienced by the Philippians when they became Christians through the preaching of the gospel.”

He lists four reasons for this interpretation: “(1) the overwhelming LXX use of οἰκτιρμοί for the mercy of God; (2) the other Pauline references to the term for God’s compassion (Rom 12:1; 2 Cor 1:3); (3) the NT tendency to employ σπλάγχνον and its cognate verb σπλαγχνίζομαι of God or Christ; and (4) the opening words for each phrase pointing to objective realities and certainties rather than what is hoped for.”

I do not find these four arguments to be as persuasive as O’Brien does, however. First, both points (1) and (3) assume that these terms in the NT had become anchored to a specific context, referring only to God or to Christ. But previously in Phil 1:8 Paul declared that he longed for the Philippians with the affection of Christ Jesus (ἐν σπλάγχνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ). Christ is the source, but the affection comes through Paul. It is now his affection as well. O’Brien’s fourth point implies that if the affection is anything other than God’s or Christ’s compassion, by default the phrase must refer to something that is “hoped for.” I think that this runs contrary to the direction of Paul’s rhetoric in v. 1, which is to demonstrate the truth of his gospel by presenting how it is lived out by those who accept it. In both the exordium and the narratio, Paul presents the characteristic of “caring for others” as a distinguishing mark of the gospel (1:7, 8, 16, 19).  

337 O’Brien, Philippians, 175–76.

338 Thus σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί is also a rebuke of Paul’s rivals, who sought to harm him (1:17).
In sum, in 2:1 Paul strings together “objective characteristics” that he hopes the Philippians will affirm are part of their faith in Christ. But he does so having already alluded to these traits as part of the Philippians’ own experience in the faith when they accepted his gospel. This means that the persuasive strength of Paul’s protasis rests on the Philippians agreeing that this catalogue accurately represents their life as that of a community of faith.

4.6.2. πληρώσατέ μου τήν χαράν

If the Philippians agree that what Paul says in 2:1 reflects the characteristics of their faith in the gospel, their response to πληρώσατέ μου τήν χαράν will be favorable. But despite this imperative’s prominent position in the sentence, scholars have generally downplayed the significance of πληρώσατέ μου τήν χαράν. Silva speaks for many when he writes: “It is plain here that the primary thought of the whole passage focuses not on Paul’s personal yearnings for joy but on the Philippians’ unanimity of mind, enjoined in the subordinate clauses that follow.” The cessation of internal divisions that are threatening the church, in that case, would be the objective of the sentence, not Paul’s demand to have his joy filled.

---

339 Oakes (Philippians, 180) agrees that 2:1 produces both gratitude and moral obligation from the Philppian church for having received the gifts of 2:1. Nevertheless, he argues that the gratitude and obligation are directed towards God and that 2:2a (πληρώσατέ μου τήν χαράν) represents a secondary motive. But there is no indication that Paul wants them to distinguish two motivations — one towards God and another complementary one towards Paul. Paul seems to be doing the exact opposite, attempting to have the Philippians see that their commitment to him demonstrates their commitment to God.
But this position weakens πληρώσατε μου τὴν χαράν and directs the passage away from Paul’s main argument because this imperative clause fits comfortably within the reciprocal underpinning of Philippians. For example, in 1:27 Paul connects πολιτεύσωθε with his relationship with the church (ἵνα εἴτε ἔλθὼν καὶ ἰδὼν όμᾶς εἴτε ἀπὸν ἀκούσα τὰ περὶ όμῶν). Further, what brings Paul joy is that his fellowship with the Philippians remains unbroken (1:3–11). Lastly, in 1:25–26 Paul tells the Philippians that his sacrificial actions were directed towards their χαρὰ τῆς πίστεως so that their eschatological boast in Christ might be because of his presence with them.

Πληρώσατε μου τὴν χαράν invites the Philippians to return in-kind. Whereas Paul seeks to strengthen their joy and faith by returning to them, the Philippians can give him joy by showing their willingness to persevere in their commitment. Since the apodosis is comprised of references to the Pauline gospel, πληρώσατε μου τὴν χαράν ought to be read similarly. Accordingly, I find that πληρώσατε μου τὴν χαράν complements μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύσωθε (1:27a). Philippians 2:2a defines the propositio relationally in terms of the apostle’s joy over the church’s fidelity to him.

4.6.3. Philippians 2:2–4

Philippians 2:2b–4 progresses towards Paul’s statements about humility. The logic of the ἵνα-clause is that the Philippians can enflesh the principles of 2:1 by being

---

of the same mind, having the same love, and so forth.\textsuperscript{341} Doing so will bring Paul joy. If my reading of 2:1–2a is correct, that both the protasis and the apodosis refer to the Philippians’ fellowship with Paul in the gospel, this epexegetical ἵνα-clause ought to be similarly understood. This is especially so when considering the various allusions aimed at unity in 2:2 (ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονήτε, τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες, σύμψυχοι, τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες). Most scholars hold that Paul is attempting to heal division in the church.\textsuperscript{342} But in my judgment, the letter demonstrates that the reverse is true. Paul repeatedly refers to the sacrificial quality of the Philippians’ care and their high degree of mutual concern (1:7, 19; 2:25–30; 4:10–11, 14–16). Reading the apodosis as proof that the Philippian church was facing internal division could put it at odds with the rest of the epistle.\textsuperscript{343} So each element in τὸ αὐτὸ φρονήτε, τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες,

\textsuperscript{341} Hawthorne (\textit{Philippians}, 85) observes that it is difficult to explain this clause grammatically. It may (1) function as the direct object of a verb that must be supplied, likely παρακαλῶ; BDF, §392 (1.c) (p. 199); so Silva, \textit{Philippians}, 91; (2) substitute for an imperative; Moulton, \textit{Grammar}, 3:94–95; NRSV: “be of the same mind”; or (3) describe what Paul means by competing his joy; Moule, \textit{Idiom Book}, 145–46. I take it as the latter, indicating the means by which πληρώσατε is fulfilled; so O’Brien, \textit{Philippians}, 177; Reumann, \textit{Philippians}, 305; Hansen, \textit{Philippians}, 111. Thus ESV, HCSB, NASV, NCV, NET: “by being of the same mind.”

\textsuperscript{342} Black (“Paul,” 306) finds that “the tenor of this passage rather suggests that only when the health of the church in Philippi, so diseased by strive and self-interest, is restored can Paul truly be filled with joy.”

\textsuperscript{343} Reumann (\textit{Philippians}, 305) notes that “translations here vary, \textit{depending on how factious or divided the interpreters think the Philippians were}” (emphasis added). I readily acknowledge that this is true for my reading.
σύμψυχοι, τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες may be expected to direct the Philippians toward what Paul already said on this subject.344

In Phil 2:3–4, Paul gives the ethic corresponding to these characteristics. The καί in v. 4 (μὴ τὰ ἐαυτῶν ἐκαστος σκοποῦντες ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἐτέρων ἐκαστοὶ) can render a balanced contrast, e.g., ESV, “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”345 But καί can also be an emphatic adverb that increases the force of particular words.346 The literary context, especially the full emptying of Christ (2:6–11), presents the faithful as one who disregards himself or herself for the benefit of

---

344 Φρονέω, occurring twice here, is one of Paul’s preferred terms in Philippians for depicting the orientation of a person’s life in the context of the gospel or fellowship (1:7; 2:2 [2x], 5; 3:15 [2x], 19; 4:2, 10 [2x]). Some mss have ἀυτό instead of ἐν, resulting in τὸ ἀυτὸ φρονοῦντες. But this ἀυτὸ is not attested in the more reliable manuscripts. One possible reason for the change is that later scribes inserted ἀυτὸ to make the two phrases parallel. Some scholars argue (against the majority reading) that τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες is not a general statement, i.e., “intent on one purpose,” but instead draws the Philippians’ attention to a specific matter. For example, Black (“Paul,” 299–302) suggests that “the one thing” is the special case of Euodia and Syntyche. Along the same lines, Reumann (Philippians, 306) writes that “to hen seems climactic.” He adds (325) regarding the phrase, “Is Paul talking in a circle, so that to hen means nothing more than to auto? But the phrase is different. The definite art. gives Paul’s phrase ‘additional strength,’ . . . [a definite thing] known to him and the Philippians.” But, though possible, it seems more likely that the consensus reading of this phrase is correct. The focus of 2:1–4 is broader, namely, fellowship in the gospel. So this limitation of τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες is unnecessary.

I discussed ἀγάπη in Philippians above. Σύμψυχοι recalls μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθλοῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου from the proposition (1:27). Thus σύμψυχοι means that the Philippians are to be united in their trust of the gospel mission.

345 Not all mss include καί after ἀλλὰ in 2:4. Π46, Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, and other major witnesses support its inclusion. D* omits it, but a later corrector has restored it.

346 Smyth, Grammar, §2881 (p. 652).
Therefore this καὶ is probably adverbial, drawing particular attention to concerns of others. What Paul is saying is more than “not this . . . but that.”\textsuperscript{348} It is “Let each of you look not to his or her own interests, but each look \textit{exclusively} to the interest of others.”\textsuperscript{349}

In light of the fact that Paul’s account is written from prison (1:12–26), the Philippians cannot miss the implications of this ethic. Total submission for the sake of others, even to the point of humiliation, demonstrates Paul’s legitimacy and shames his rivals.\textsuperscript{350} He is the one who endures disgrace and hardship at the hands of his rivals so that the gospel may advance (1:12–14). He is the one willing to forfeit joining Christ through a martyr’s death so that the Philippians may enjoy the eschatological blessings that await them (1:25–26). In this he embodies the truth that the Pauline mission is to be lived out in visible and sacrificial mutuality. Thus Paul’s joy is complete in the church’s alignment with his teaching that humility, not personal aggrandizement, confirms one’s place in the citizenry of Christ (2:2d–3).\textsuperscript{351}

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{348} So NRSV: “Let each of you look \textit{not} to your own interests, \textit{but} to the interests of others.”
\item \textsuperscript{349} \textit{Tαπεινοφροσύνη} may come closer to humiliation than humility. See further Reumann, \textit{Philippians}, 308–28.
\item \textsuperscript{351} Philippians 2:1–4 (especially vv. 2d–4) implies that \textit{ἔριθεῖα} (selfish ambition) and \textit{κενοδοξία} (conceit) characterize those who are not in Christ. In 1:15–17, Paul censures his rivals for \textit{φθόνος} (envy) and \textit{ἔρις} (rivalry). He accuses them of peddling Christ out of \textit{ἔριθεῖα}. Philippians 2:2–4 therefore shows that Paul does not consider his
\end{itemize}
4.7. Summary

The Philippian church’s corporate ethic is derived from its identity within the citizenship of heaven / eschatological Israel (πολιτεύεσθε, 1:27a). By beginning his probatio with πληρώσατε μον τὴν χαράν (2:2a), Paul indicates that the Philippians’ place among the people of God is contingent on their relationship with him. Paul will further substantiate the validity of his call (1:27a) with his depiction of Christ (2:5–11), his argument from the Scriptures, especially the wilderness narrative and Daniel (2:12–16a), and his declaration of his own sacrificial love for them (2:16b–18).

Contra Oakes (Philippians, 182), who proposes that Paul’s words are a challenge to the Philippians to assist the economically distressed, even at the cost of dishonor. But in my view, Oakes undervalues the hermeneutical influence of Phil 1:12–18a on 2:1–4.
Chapter Five ~ To Persevere as the People of God, 2: Philippians 2:5–18

5.1. Overview

Chapter Five continues the argument that μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύοιτε (1:27a) is a summons to fidelity to the Pauline mission. I argued in Chapter Four that Paul is attempting to persuade the Philippians to understand that their present experiences and their own understanding of the gospel give evidence of the validity of the Pauline mission. Paul exhorts the Philippians as authentic followers of Christ to persevere in their shared ἁγών against a fraudulent gospel.

In this chapter I wish to show that Phil 2:5–18 supports the charge of 1:27–30 by articulating the eschatological vindication awaiting those who persevere for the Pauline gospel. In 2:5–18, Paul’s argument calls attention to (1) the pattern of Christ (2:5–11); (2) the dichotomy between faithful and apostate Israels (2:12–16a); and (3) his own posture of sacrificial giving (2:16b–18). In each, the subject of eschatological vindication promotes mutuality between him and the Philippians. Finally, I will propose that the climax of Paul’s argument in 1:27–2:18 is not the Christ-hymn (as is often maintained) but the exhortations of 2:12–16.
The purpose of 2:5–11, I shall argue, is to present Christ as the exemplar of μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ ἐναγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε (1:27a). Paul’s point is this: if

---


353 Holloway (Consolation, 123) remarks briefly that “there is little in the hymn that might function by way of consolation, except for the implicit promise in 2:9–11 that those who follow Christ’s example will be rewarded.” He therefore gives scant
the Philippians belong to Christ, they will remain loyal, as Christ did, to their role in the salvific plan of God the Father. And though obedience to this plan requires humiliation and suffering, ultimately God vindicates those who persevere.\textsuperscript{354} My reading of 2:5 also means that 2:6–11 plausibly serves to unite \textit{πολιτεύεσθε} (1:27) to \textit{κατεργάζεσθε} (2:12) and to \textit{ποιείτε} (2:14). Finally, I hope to demonstrate the following: (1) that v. 5 connects vv. 1–4 with vv. 6–11; (2) that the terminology in 2:6–8 is intended to validate the Pauline gospel; and (3) that 2:9–11 presents steadfastness as the way to eschatological exaltation.

5.2.1. \textit{Philippians} 2:5\textsuperscript{355}

I judge \textit{τοῦτο γὰρ φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν} ὅ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ to be the bridge from Paul’s instructions in 2:1–4 to his depiction of Christ in 2:6–11.\textsuperscript{356} \textit{Τοῦτο γὰρ φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν} refers to 2:1–4, while the reference to Christ Jesus points forward to 2:6–11.\textsuperscript{357} The attention otherwise to the Christ-hymn in his analysis. Though I agree with much of Holloway’s reading of 2:9–11, his relative inattention to the Christ-hymn in this regard (the relationship between the Christ-hymn to Paul’s overall argument) lessens the force of his thesis that Paul wrote the entire epistle to console the church.

\textsuperscript{354} Fowler, \textit{Philippians}, 106.

\textsuperscript{355} I will argue below for the presence of γὰρ in the original text.

\textsuperscript{356} Hansen, \textit{Philippians}, 118.

\textsuperscript{357} Lynn A. Losie, “A Note on the Interpretation of Phil. 2.5,” \textit{ExpTim} 90 (1978): 52–53. Käsemann (“Analysis,” 83–84) and Martin (\textit{Hymn}, xii–xix) state that \textit{τοῦτο} here points forward, and so reject a link between 2:5 and 2:1–4. This reading is common among those who advocate the “kergymatic interpretation” (a reading of the hymn that rejects the “ethical interpretation,” seeing instead a focus on Christ’s actions and rule in the soteriological drama) of the Christ-hymn. But \textit{φρονέω} in 2:5 more likely connects the verse to the previous section (2:2, 3). Further, the repetition of the subject of humility makes this view of \textit{τοῦτο} problematic; so already O’Brien, \textit{Philippians}, 204.
majority of scholars agree that 2:5 connects the two sections. Considerable debate exists, however, regarding what Paul is saying in this verse because of the elliptical quality of the statement. Philippians 2:5 implies that there is a correspondence between those who follow Christ and Christ himself. But what has to be determined is whether 2:5 sets up the Christ-hymn so as to encourage the Philippians to direct their behavior towards unity, or if it presents the Christ-hymn as an explanatory truth that corroborates the Philippians’ faith in the Pauline gospel. Though the consensus favors the former, I will argue for the latter.

The *crux interpretum* is φρονεῖτε, which can be read as imperative or indicative. The vast majority of scholars, along with the editors of the UBS 4 /5 and NA 27 /28 editions, presumably hold that φρονεῖτε is imperative because they reject the postpositive γάρ as secondary. Indeed, in my opinion, the textual question of γάρ is determinative for interpreting the intent of the verse and the Christ-hymn. If γάρ is to be read, φρονεῖτε is likely indicative since Paul rarely has a causal particle introduce an imperative. But the omission of γάρ is to be preferred by most scholars because of its

As it happens, elsewhere in Philippians τοῦτο logically connects a previous statement with the next one (1:7, 22, 25; 3:7, 15 [2x]; 4:8, 9).

Coupled with this is the commonly held opinion, voiced by Bockmuehl (*Philippians*, 122), that “Paul’s whole point in the preceding and following verses is to urge the Philippians to adopt a new disposition towards each other.” I have argued in Chapter Four that in 2:1–4 Paul is not attempting to persuade the Philippians to adopt a new course, rather he desires that they resist *altering* their present course.

But see 1 Cor 1:26 (βλέπετε γὰρ τὴν κλῆσιν ὑμῶν; ESV: “For consider your own calling”). By way of contrast: in the undisputed Pauline letters there are over 340 occurrences of γάρ with the indicative, but there are no other examples of γάρ with an imperative.
absence in some of the more trusted Alexandrian manuscripts ($\aleph^*$, A, B, C, $\Psi$). However, γάρ is found in other important witnesses, including the $\aleph^1$, D, F, G, $\bar{\text{S}}$ and the weighty $\Pi^46$. In short, the external evidence is not decisive.

Metzger maintains that “no good reason can be found for its [γάρ] deletion, whereas the anacolouthon involved in τοῦτο standing alone seems to cry out for a connective, whether γάρ or οὖν or καί (each of which is found in a variety of witnesses).” But Metzger surely is begging the question. If a scribe took φρονεῖτε to be imperative because he read it as part of a list of imperatives (πολιτεύσεθε [1:27], πληρώσατε [2:2], and κατεργάζεσθε [2:12]), then possibly his removal of γάρ was to articulate that φρονεῖτε was imperative. In other words, Metzger’s statement about γάρ is contingent on scribes having read φρονεῖτε as imperative.

Reading an imperative here is difficult because it renders 2:5 a command to emulate Christ. This breaks with the intent of the surrounding imperatives (πολιτεύσεθε [1:27], πληρώσατε [2:2], and κατεργάζεσθε [2:12]), which is to connect the Philippians’ commitment with Paul, not with the example of Christ. Further, though Paul routinely calls his churches to imitate him (1 Cor 4:16; 10:11; Phil 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thess

360 Silva (Philippians, 22–26, 112–13) gives a succinct discussion regarding the account of the textual history of the epistle. I follow his lead in arguing for the inclusion of γάρ. But Silva still judges that the verb is in the imperative mood.

361 Metzger, Commentary, 545. Hansen (Philippians, 118) concurs: “if the conjunction [γάρ] were in the original, there is no good reason for omitting it.”
1:6), he rarely exhorts them to imitate Christ directly as an imperative φρονεῖτε in 2:5 surely requires.362

But an indicative φρονεῖτε with an explanatory or confirmatory γάρ more comfortably fits within the logic of Phil 1:27–2:18, which is now turning from the Philippians and Paul to the example of Christ. As I argued in Chapter Four, the exhortation of 2:1–4 is not to change behavior but to have the Philippians affirm that what they understand about their faith came from accepting the Pauline gospel. A possible translation of τοῦτο γάρ φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν is therefore as follows: “for indeed you all are considering these things among yourselves.” Thus γάρ with the indicative φρονεῖτε here makes ὦ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ another commendation of the church’s response to Paul.363 Thus the persuasive quality in Phil 2:5 is akin to Paul saying, “Well done in doing this, so keep doing it. Keep considering things in a manner appropriate to the object and originator of your community of faith.”364

362 Interestingly, in two passages where Paul calls his churches to follow Christ (1 Cor 11:1; 1 Thess 1:6) he also presents himself and his coworkers as facilitators in the endeavor.

363 I take καί as emphatic. While I believe my reading of Phil 2:5 is more consistent with the overall subject of Philippians, my proposal is not crippled if Phil 2:5 is an imperatival statement. In other words, if Paul is emphasizing the need for the Philippians to become more like Christ, this “being like Christ” is still defined by his understanding of the obedience of Christ to the salvific plan of God. The difference is a matter of degree, and depends on how favorable a view Paul held regarding the situation at the Philippi.

364 Ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ possibly is a periphrasis for a congregation that belongs to Christ, equal to Paul’s well-known ἐν Χριστῷ elsewhere (Rom 16:3, 7, 9; 1 Cor 3:1; 4:15 [first instance]; 16:42; 2 Cor 12:2; Gal 1:22; Phil 1:1; 4:21; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 2:14). Both ἐν ὑμῖν and ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ refer to the church at Philippi. Thus the second clause (ὅ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) is in apposition to the first (τοῦτο γάρ φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν). Silva (Philippians, 97) is conceptually right (though he argues for the imperatival reading of φρονεῖτε) when he suggests that Phil 2:5 is “best understood thus: ‘Be so disposed
This reading of 2:5 comports with what I maintain is the letter’s overall purpose.

The praise of the Philippians’ faith is a bestowal of honor from the apostle and strengthens the bond between the church and Paul. This commendation creates “fertile soil” that increases the likelihood that Paul’s subsequent instructions (2:12–18a) will bear fruit in the church. Paul will use the remainder of the Christ-hymn to support three aims: (1) to affirm the necessity of suffering for the gospel; (2) to remind them of the incompatibility of his rivals and Christ; and (3) to encourage them to remain steadfast so as to receive the eschatological blessings. In 2:5, Paul has praised the Philippians for appropriately considering one another. Philippians 2:6–11 now

toward one another as is proper for those who are united in Christ Jesus.” So already Käsemann, “Critical Analysis,” 19–68. On Käsemann’s view, see further Robert Morgan, “Incarnation, Myth, and Theology: Ernst Käsemann’s Interpretation of Philippians 2:5–11,” in Martin and Dodd, Christology, 43–73.

Adolf Deissmann (Die neutestamentliche Formel “in Christo Jesu” [Marburg: Elwert, 1892], 116, cited in Silva, Philippians, 96) identifies two parallel passages in Paul with φρονέω and ἐν (these are the only other occurrences of this combination in the NT). The first is Phil 4:2, where Paul exhorts Euodia and Syntyche to think the same thing in the Lord (τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν κυρίῳ), urging them to display the characteristics befitting those who are united to Christ. The second is Rom 15:5. Paul wants the Romans to live in harmony with one another in accordance with Christ Jesus (τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν ἀλλήλοις κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἡσοῦν). These two verses are strikingly consistent with the pattern of Phil 2:5.

This does not require the wholesale abandonment of the “ethical reading,” i.e., that Christ is a paradigm to be imitated, however. Paul is confirming that the Philippians’ understanding and expression of their corporate identity is consistent with that of a people formed by the salvific plan of God in Christ. Those who are united in Christ have Christ as the example of what it means to be “in Christ” and of how this reality is now expressed (see also Gal 2:20; Phil 3:10; 1 Thess 2:14–15). The Christ-hymn indirectly connects the mind of Christ with the Philippians’ understanding of their faith by way of their corporate identity in Christ. Hansen (Philippians, 121) puts this well: “The indicative of the union of our minds in Christ compels us to obey the imperative to think in harmony with one another in our Christian community.” See further Schenk, Philippbriefe, 185; Stephen E. Fowl, The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul: An Analysis of the Function of the Hymnic Material in the Pauline Corpus (JSNTSup 36; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 92; George B. Caird, New Testament Theology (ed. L. D.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 189.
provides the explanation of 2:5 by showing how their corporate identity relates to the story of Christ.

5.2.2. Philippians 2:6–11

Paul characterizes Christ’s self-emptying (2:6–8) as one of humiliation and of obedience in suffering. Overemphasizing the humiliation neglects the subject of suffering and restricts the range of τοῦτο in 2:5 to the humility referred to in 2:3–4. But equally important in 2:6–8 is Christ’s obedient suffering, which expands the range of τοῦτο to include Paul’s references to suffering in 1:27–30. He is drawing a comparison in 2:6–8 between Christ’s humility and suffering and the Philippians’ humility and suffering. I argued in Chapters Three and Four that Paul understands his and the church’s sufferings to be indicative of their loyalty to the Pauline gospel. In 2:6–8, he supports his view of suffering by grounding it in the person and mission of Christ. The church’s suffering is the inevitable result of its identity in Christ.

I take ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἁρπαγμόν ἠγήσατο τὸ ἐῖναι ἔσα θεῷ (2:6) to be referring to Christ’s selflessness that comes from or is because of his divinity (taking ὑπάρχων as causal, not concessive). Therefore the intent of 2:6 is not “the church is

---

365 There are three principal interpretations of Christ’s “emptying himself”: (1) the kenotic theory (Christ deprived himself of his divine attributes, glory, and power); (2) the incarnational theory (Christ emptied himself by becoming human); and (3) the “Servant of the Lord portrait” (the metaphor of emptying is part of the hymn’s portrayal of Christ as the Isaianic servant of the Lord). See further, Hansen, Philippians, 146–51. (3) is to be preferred because the passage is not concerned with what Christ emptied himself of, but that he emptied himself — an emptying that is fully expressed at his death on the cross.

366 The question is how to understand ὑπάρχων. O’Brien (Philippians, 210) argues that the entire participial phrase accentuates the difference between the desire to get
like Christ when it chooses to be humble and obedient in suffering for the salvific plan of God.” Rather, 2:6 says, “Because the church is in Christ, it is inevitably humble and obedient in suffering for the salvific plan of God.”

Philippians 2:7–8, a précis of Jesus’ mission, expresses it as one of suffering. This outline corroborates Paul’s conviction that suffering is part of the task that advances the gospel of Christ. Accordingly, Paul views the suffering that he experienced from his rivals during his incarceration to be God’s plan for the advance of the gospel (1:12–13, 17–18). He also calls the Philippians to see their own trials as part of the same struggle he faces (1:30) and as a gift from God (1:29).


united to Christ is denial of personal gratification coupled with a full commitment to God’s plan.369 In Chapter Three, I noted that the majority of scholars maintain that Paul does not consider these opponents to be “heretics” because he does not seem to dismiss the content of their proclamation. I argued that a division between belief and practice is a false dichotomy. His rivals’ actions nullify their mission because they reveal a disposition that is not in line with Christ’s humility and obedience to God’s plan. In his prison report, Paul hints that his opponents were false brothers and sisters because they desired to gain advantage over him and cause division. When coupled with 2:6–8, this hint becomes declared truth.

Finally, Phil 2:9–11 addresses steadfastness as the way to eschatological exaltation. Critics of the “ethical interpretation” of the Christ-hymn claim that it renders 2:9–11 superfluous, since the exaltation of Christ is not achievable by the followers of Jesus.370 Others hold that reading 2:9–11 as a model for believers makes the passage teach salvation by works and not by grace.371 So many have preferred to read 2:6–11 through the lens of Christ’s obedience. The sense of reward, however, cannot be struck from the passage. The context requires a correspondence between the church at

369 Peterman (Gift, 116–17) mentions that the “potential political elements” of the Christ-hymn address Paul’s unease over φθόνος, ἔρις, ἐριθεία, and κενοδοξία. But he sees them as Paul’s attempt to mitigate division within the church.

370 For example, Martin (Hymn, 91) remarks regarding Käsemann’ interpretation: “The event of Christ’s coming into the world has a decisive significance for all time. It begins a new era; it opens the door on a new world. Because this is so, there is no room for the ethical view, for who could possibly tread in the footsteps of the heavenly Redeemer who descended and is exalted to the throne of the universe?”

Philippi and Christ.  

God acts deliberately in exalting Jesus (ὑπερψωσεν αὐτόν and ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ, 2:9). The consonance, however, is not between Christ’s exaltation and a believer’s justification. In Philippians, Paul is drawing attention to the process of the church’s sanctification leading to its glorification (1:10–11; 3:13–14). Paul is likening the Philippians’ ultimate exaltation to that of Christ.

As in vv. 6–8, Phil 2:9–11 parallels some of Paul’s previous statements. First, Christ’s exaltation comes from his perseverance (διὸ καί, 2:9). The same is true of the faithful (1:10–11). Second, Christ’s humiliation and suffering for God’s salvific plan, i.e., the gospel, is vindicated (2:9). This compares with the believers’ vindication in 1:28.

In the Christ-hymn, there are intimations of some of the distinctives of Paul’s proclamation. The priority of the cross is seen in the probable insertion of θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ (2:8) into the hymn; I accept the hypothesis that θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ

---

372 Hansen (Philippians, 161) proposes four characteristics that are consistent with my reading of 2:9–11. First, the reward is not the motive for Christ’s obedience. Second, the reward is not redemption from sin. Third, the reward is a gracious gift. Fourth, the reward is divine confirmation of Christ’s true identity.

373 So already Edvin Larsson, Christus als Vorbild: Eine Untersuchung zu den paulinischen Tauf- und Eikontexten (ASNU 23; Uppsala: Gleerup, 1962), 261–62: the comparison between Christ and the church can only be analogous, for indeed if followers of Christ were humbly obedient and sacrificed themselves unto death, even by crucifixion, it could never be equivalent to Christ’s because in Christ it is the divine that condescends.

374 O’Brien (Philippians, 233) understands διὸ καί as pointing to God’s response to Christ’s entire actions expressed in the finite verbs ἔταπείνωσεν and ἐκένωσεν, not just the death on the cross. Contra Otfried Hofius (Der Christushymnus Philipper 2, 6–11: Untersuchungen zu Gestalt und Aussage eines urchristlichen Psalms [2d ed.; WUNT 17; Tübingen: Mohr, 1991], 3–17), who argues that it refers to the crucifixion.

375 Martin, Hymn, 59–60; Hawthorne, Philippians, 103.
interrupts the strophic pattern. Second, as Ware argues, the Christ-hymn reflects Paul's belief that Isa 52:13–53:12 and 45:22–23 corroborate the eschatological uniqueness of the Pauline mission. The agreements between Isa 52:13–53:12 and Phil 3:18. See further Chapter Six.

---


This insertion, it seems to me, anticipates πολλοὶ γὰρ πολλάκις ἔλεγον ὑμῖν, νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίων λέγω, τοὺς ἔχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ (3:18). See further Chapter Six.

377 Ware, *Paul*, 224–36. He offers a convincing argument for viewing Paul’s combined exegesis of the two passages through the lens of the Pauline mission. Much of my work on this topic is dependent on Ware’s exegesis of Phil 2:5–11; similarly N. T. Wright (*Paul and the Faithfulness of God* [2 vols.; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2013], 2:682–83): “[T]his is, of course, a ‘Pauline’ exegesis of Isaiah 40–55. . . . But when we draw out its central themes in this way and place them on a facing page to Philippians 2.6–11 we discover that not only can a highly plausible case be made for saying the entire Pauline poem is a fresh meditation on the origin of Israel’s monotheism of divine identity has taken place at its key eschatological moment. This is what it looked like when ὸΜΗΘ returned to Zion.”

Silva (“Philippians,” in CNTUOT, 836–37) argues otherwise, that the allusion to the Isaianic Servant of the Lord in 2:6–8 is “rather subtle” and “to suggest that the Christ Hymn is primarily an attribution of the ‘Servant of the Lord” description to Jesus seems an overstatement.” But Silva’s challenge does not take into account the frequency of Paul’s references to the Suffering Servant. The fourth Servant Song elsewhere in Paul increases the “volume of the echo” in the Christ-hymn. Hays (Echoes, 29–33) lists this as one of the criteria for discerning echoes.

The correspondences between the Christ-hymn and the Suffering Servant include the following: μορφὴ θεοῦ and μορφὴν δοῦλου (Phil 2:6–7) with οὐκ ἐστιν εἶδος αὐτῶν οὐδὲ δόξα (LXX, Isa 53:2a); ἐν όμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων and σχήματι εὐρέθεις ὡς ἄνθρωπος (Phil 2:7) with ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπων (LXX, Isa 52:14); μορφὴν δοῦλου (Phil 2:7) with δοῦλεύοντα (LXX, Isa 53:11). A similar intertextual blending of the Servant and Son of God is reflected in Herm. Sim. 5.5.5.

Ware (Paul, 224–36), observing commonalities between the relevant passages in Isaiah in Aquila and the Christ-hymn, suggests that Aquila reflects the same textual tradition that influenced the Christ-hymn. Alternatively, since Aquila’s translation is dated from second-century C.E., the reverse may be true. In other words, the similarity possibly shows the influence of the Christ-hymn (or its tradition) on Aquila’s
2:6–9 indicate that Paul connects the person of Jesus to the eschatological arrival of the Suffering Servant. The eschaton was inaugurated when Christ fulfilled this expectation with his crucifixion.

Third, the hymn declares Paul’s belief that God’s plan is to bring the Gentiles into the eschatological people of God through Christ.378 In Phil 2:10–11, he interprets Isa 45:22–23 to identify Christ as the recipient of the homage of all people.379 The reference to “all tongues” confessing that Jesus is Lord legitimizes the Pauline mission to bring Gentiles into faith in Jesus Christ. The exaltation of Christ, therefore, is beginning with the Gentiles’ acceptance of Paul’s gospel (Gal 1:6–9).380


379 Compare ἐμοὶ κάμψει πᾶν γόνυ καὶ ἔξομολογήσεται πάσα γλώσσα τῷ θεῷ (LXX Isa 45:23) with ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὄνοματί Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ ... καὶ γλώσσα ἔξομολογήσεται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (2:10–11). This proclamation is done ἐν τῷ ὄνοματι Ἰησοῦ. The exact meaning of this phrase is difficult to discern. But, as the entire hymn focuses on authority, it seems that the universal affirmation of Christ as Lord happens when in the presence of the authority (“name”) of Jesus. With εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός at the conclusion of 2:11, the universal profession of Christ’s lordship incorporates the recognition that God’s exaltation of Christ is to God the Father’s glory.

380 Ware (Paul, 229) argues that the hymn places Christ’s sovereignty against Roman claims to rule. But in my judgment, an “anti-Roman” opinion is barely present
In sum, Paul presents the mission of Christ as an explanatory and paradigmatic model for the church. It accounts for why the church’s suffering and humility is an apt expression of its unity in the Lord. The pattern of Christ encourages the Philippians to stand firm in the Pauline gospel, as they look towards the day when those who are faithful to it will enjoy the bliss of Jesus’ cosmic vindication. Philippians 2:5–11 complements his command μόνον ἥξιος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύσας (1:27a) and πληρώσατε μου τὴν χαράν (2:2a). Paul both affirms and exhorts the Philippians, while rebuking those who oppose him and the church. The church’s acceptance of the gospel has united them to Christ (2:1, 5) and brought the expected suffering (1:28, 30) that accompanies it. Suffering, humility, and obedience are testaments to the validity of their faith (1:29), and their perseverance guarantees that they will receive the blessing that awaits the steadfast (1:10–11).

Perkins (“Philippians,” 97) similarly holds that “the hymn sets out the central Christian metaphor whose effects are to be detected in the experiences of Paul, Epaphroditus, and the Philippians.”

Joseph H. Hellerman (“Vindicating God’s Servants in Philippi and in Philippians: The Influence of Paul’s Ministry in Philippi upon the Composition of Philippians 2:6–11,” BBR 20 [2010]: 85–102) suggests that Paul purposely “frames the picture of Christ in Phil 2 in a way that resonates with this still-familiar story [Acts 16:11–40].” He hypothesizes that the event of Paul and Silas’s vindication was foundational for the Philippian church’s understanding of the faith and is echoed in the Christ-hymn. If Hellerman is correct, 2:5–11 furthers Paul’s ethos.

The direction of influence is impossible to determine. Paul’s reflection on this Christ story just as likely affects his theology in 1:27a and 2:2a.
5.3. Philippians 2:12-16a

Philippians 2:12–16 constitutes the next major movement in 1:27–2:18. Each of the major subjects of 1:27–2:11 is restated or defined in this movement. Nowhere else in Philippians is Paul’s cause more clear than in 2:12–16a. Paul advances his argument across four main lines. First, he equates τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε (2:12) with obeying him. Second, he appeals to Israel’s wilderness narrative to contrast those who remain loyal to the gospel and those who do not. Third, the Philippian church’s decision to continue to support Paul will have eschatological implications for both parties. Finally, the high point in this soteriological drama is Paul’s conflation of Dan 12:3 and Deut 32 to depict the church’s relationship to the apostolic mission.

5.3.1. Philippians 2:12–13

I will attempt to show that τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε complements ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε (1:27a). They are coordinating imperatives directed towards the Philippians’ commitment to the Pauline mission.

The conjunction ὡστε connects Paul’s exhortation in 2:12–13 with what precedes. But how far back does ὡστε look? Some see it as connecting 2:12–13 with the

---

[384] Contra Betz (Apostel, 34, 37), who views this passage as being hastily arranged.

[385] Regarding 2:12–18, Fee (Philippians, 231) notes, “Almost everything in the sentence echoes some previous word or subject ... everything is once again predicated on the three-way bond that holds the letter together: between him, them, and Christ and the gospel (salvation).”
Christ-hymn only. Nevertheless, the parallels between 2:12–13 and 1:27–30 indicate that Paul intends 1:27–30 to be included. Further, I find these parallels to show that τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε is not a new development.

The first parallel is between εἴτε ἐλθὼν καὶ ἴδὼν ὑμᾶς εἴτε ἀπών ἀκούω τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν (1:27) and μὴ ὡς ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ μου μόνον ἀλλὰ νῦν πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἐν τῇ ἀπουσίᾳ μου (2:12). In both instances Paul calls on the Philippians to demonstrate that their faithfulness persists regardless of his presence. This reminds the Philippians that Paul considers their fellowship to be continuing and reciprocal. Likewise, he is ever mindful of them, regardless of whether he is in their presence or not.

---

386 So Lohmeyer, Philipper, 99; Schenk, Philippbriefe, 90; Hansen, Philippians, 170.

387 O’Brien, Philippians, 274. Watson (“Analysis,” 70) suggests that 2:12–18 is the second development of the proposicio (1:27–30). But I agree with Witherington (Philippians, 158) that this section is the “conclusion of the first argument, which applies to the proposicio.”

Paul’s directive seems to contradict his teaching about salvation through grace and not by works (Rom 1:16; 4:2–8; 5:9–10; 10:9; 11:6; 1 Cor 1:21; Gal 2:16). Different solutions have been offered to try to elucidate his intent here. One common approach has been seeing Paul speaking about the spiritual health or well-being of the community. This is difficult to sustain because it requires that σωτηρία convey a sense that differs from its typical objective in Paul. But elsewhere in his letters σωτηρία regularly refers to the deliverance of the faithful from God’s wrath at the final judgment (Rom 5:9–10; 9:27 13:11; 1 Cor 3:15; 5:5; 1 Thess 5:8, 9; Phil 1:28; 3:20). The passage’s connection of the vindication of Christ with his faithful community does not allow reducing σωτηρία to the communal well-being of the church at Philippi.

Others have tried to sidestep the problem of 2:12 by tilting the interpretation toward the divine initiative of 2:13. But in my estimation, this approach ignores the force of the ὥστε and lessens κατεργάζεσθε. These and other solutions to the crux interpretum of 2:12 do not appreciate that 2:12 does not introduce a new command (or concept) but repeats what Paul has already said.

Paul’s statement about his presence and absence is balanced by what he says about the Philippians’ obedience (καθὼς πάντοτε ὑπηκούσατε, 2:12). This commendation prevents the subsequent imperative (τὴν ἐαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε) from bearing any hint of rebuke. Paul is not calling on the Philippians to adjust their behavior. Rather, he is indicating that he wants them to keep doing what they are doing — but now to an even greater degree (ἀλλὰ νῦν πολλῷ μᾶλλον). This amplification anticipates the direction that the rest of this passage will take.

---

389 I take μή ὡς ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ μου μόνον ἀλλὰ νῦν πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἐν τῇ ἀπουσίᾳ μου with ὑπηκοόςατε, not with κατεργάζεσθε. Contra O’Brien (Philippians, 281), who holds that the phrase is to be taken with the exhortation for the following reasons: “(1) while the word order in the Greek might appear to be in favor of linking this lengthy phrase with ὑπηκοόςατε, Paul’s thought keeps racing ahead to the principal verb κατεργάζεσθε, which dominates the sentence; (2) the negative μή is rarely used with the indicative but regularly with the imperative, which in this instance is κατεργάζεσθε; (3) there are no verbs in the phrase and thus there is not specific time reference; (4) παρουσία has already been used in the letter to speak of a possible future coming by Paul to be with his Philippian friends, and at 2:23–24 the theme is taken up again, though without the noun; and (5) ὡς can also have the meaning ‘when,’ ‘in light of,’ or ‘in view of,’ and the entire expression rendered ‘not only in view of my return but even more from this very moment, although I am absent.’” Thus O’Brien concludes that Paul means that the Philippians in working out their own salvation should not be swayed by the force of Paul’s personality or by his appearing and speaking to them in person.

But I follow Reumann (Philippians, 385). He takes μή ὡς ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ μου μόνον ἀλλὰ νῦν πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἐν τῇ ἀπουσίᾳ μου with ὑπηκοόςατε on the basis of word order, that in Koine Greek μή could occur in declarative, temporal, and causal clauses (see further BDF #428 [5] [p. 221]), and that μή ὑπακοόντες is possibly understood.

390 If I am correct, that ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε (1:27a) and τὴν ἐαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε are coordinating imperatives, καθὼς πάντοτε ὑπηκοόςατε upholds my reading of 2:1–5. It confirms the church’s faith and encourages them to deepen their resolve. Philippians 2:12 should play a greater role than it has regarding the interpretation of φρονεῖτε in Phil 2:5. Hansen (Philippians, 171) argues for the imperatival reading of 2:5 (rejecting γάρ), but when commenting on 2:12 he writes, “By complimenting his readers for their obedience after leading them through the hymn to Christ, Paul implies that they are already obeying the gospel encapsulated in the hymn by following the example of Christ’s obedience (2:8).” It
The second parallel between 2:12–13 and 1:27–30 is the reference to fear. In Chapter Four, I discussed Paul’s urging of the Philippians to not fear those who are pushing them to disavow him (καὶ μὴ πτυρόμενοι ἐν μηδενὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντικειμένων, 1:28). Paul exemplifies steadfast courage (1:19–20), as do the brothers and sisters emboldened by his imprisonment (1:14, 16). In 2:12, however, fear is a positive trait. The Philippians are to work out their salvation (τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε) with fear and trembling (μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου).

Ware is correct when he writes that “it is vain to search, as many interpreters do, for a specific connotation which this expression [μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου] must have in all contexts.”\(^\text{391}\) The significance of this phrase about having fear is its contrast to Paul’s words about fearlessness (1:14, 16, 19–20, 28). Followers of Christ are not to fear those who oppose the gospel faith, but they are to fear God. Fear of God is the right posture of a people following the gospel because God is the one who grants both judgment and salvation (1:28–29), directs the gospel mission (1:13, 16), and determines the fate of the faithful (1:6; 2:13).\(^\text{392}\) From Paul’s perspective, the fear of God motivates the faithful to have courage against those who oppose them. Conversely, he implies that those who cower before others do not dread the judgment of God. His previous appears, then, that Hansen’s understanding of 2:12 does not influence his interpretation of 2:5.

\(^{391}\) Ware, Paul, 244–45.

\(^{392}\) Frequently in the LXX both φόβος and τρόμος are the terror of the nations before God (Exod 15:16; Deut 2:25, 11:25; Ps 2:11; Isa 19:16). This notion of fear is consistent with other Second Temple and early Christian teachings (4 Macc. 13:14–15; Matt 10:28; 1 Cor 2:3).
statements about fear (1:14, 19–20) were in reference to perseverance in allegiance to the Pauline mission.

Further, τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε (2:12), like ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε (1:27), is another way that Paul says, “Remain loyal to my teaching.”393 First, κατεργάζεσθε refers to this because ἔργον (and cognates) elsewhere in Philippians refers to the gospel (1:6; 22; 2:25, 30; 4:30). Second, though he does not directly state whom the Philippians are to obey (καθὼς πάντοτε ὑπηκούσατε), a good case can be made for it being himself.394 Paul expects the Gentile churches’ response to his role as Christ’s emissary to be obedience.395 Therefore when he writes καθὼς πάντοτε

393 Hansen (Philippians, 172–73) proposes that τὴν ἑαυτῶν τῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε refers to Paul’s “call for the whole community to rebuild social harmony.” In my judgment, this reading does not fit the subject of Philippians nor the dynamics of the church at Philippi. Hansen (Philippians, 174–75) does state that “salvation” has an eschatological meaning, and is not to be reduced to simple social cohesion, but instead is “an earthly demonstration of heavenly citizenship.” Yet, he still sees the internal relationships of the church at Philippi as the focus of these words. O’Brien (Philippians, 279–81) comes near the interpretation suggested here by interpreting τὴν ἑαυτῶν τῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε as a corporate heeding of an apostolic admonition to show the “graces of Christ” in their lives. But his “graces of Christ” is too broad given the tighter concentration on the gospel mission.

394 Ware, Paul, 243–44. See Rom 16:3, 21; 1 Cor 3:9; 3:13–15; 9:1; 16:10, 16; 2 Cor 11:13; Gal 2:8; 1 Thess 3:2; Phlm 1. Vincent (Epistles, 64) sees the lack of a receiving object as evidence that Paul is simply affirming the Philippians’ sense of obedience, whether it is to God, or Paul, and so on. Contra Hansen (Philippians, 171), who argues that Christ is the implied object of obedience because of 2:9–10; so already Lightfoot, Philippians, 171; Martin, Hymn, 139. But this reading diminishes Paul’s apostolic position and needlessly restricts 2:12 to the preceding Christ-hymn. Nevertheless, the difference between Hansen’s proposal and mine is minimal since Paul sees his apostleship and his mission as an act of obedience to his Lord, Jesus Christ. O’Brien (Philippians, 275) sums it up thus: “Accordingly, a wedge should not be driven between Paul and Christ at this point.”

395 Bloomquist (Function, 169) similarly posits that “the thrust of Paul’s exhortation does not rest on an appeal to apostolic authority. Rather, it rests on the analogy that has been created between himself and Christ.”
ὑπηκούσατε, he means καθὼς πάντοτε ὑπηκούσατε μου. Further, ὑπακούσατε picks up Christ’s obedience to God the Father as far as the cross (γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ) in 2:8. The Philippians are to understand their obedience to Paul in light of Christ’s obedience to God.

Third, Phil 2:13 confirms that Paul’s command in 2:12 is a directive to work toward the advance of the Pauline mission. Γάρ signals that the reason the Philippians are to work out their salvation with fear and trembling is that God is the one who is working among them for this purpose. Thus the actions of the church in 2:12 are the actions God is doing for his good pleasure (ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας). As I have consistently maintained, when Paul speaks in Philippians of God’s will, it pertains to the advance of the gospel (1:6, 13, 16, 28). εὐδοκία of 2:13, then, is God’s will to include the Philippian church in his salvific plan. My reading of Phil 1:5–6 supports this interpretation of

396 Eade (Philippians, 132) and Ellicott (Philippians, 64) read γάρ as explanatory. But a causal sense is to be preferred because 2:13 is not in apposition to the imperative of 2:12. It is justifying why the Philippians are to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Ἐν ὑμῖν is again a corporate reference (“among you”). The argument that ἐν ὑμῖν has an individual focus — that Paul is calling each individual to attend to personal salvation — does not adequately grasp the parallels between 1:27–30 and 2:12.

397 Ὑπέρ here indicates the goal or object of the Philippians’ actions. Thomas Schreiner (The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2013], 566) comments on 2:12–13: “The imperative ultimately cannot be segregated from the indicative. The ‘for’ grounding 2:12 is crucial in interpreting these verses, showing that 2:12 cannot be interpreted as a call to autonomy. In fact, any work believers do is a consequence of, a result of, God’s work... . The imperative can become a reality only because of the indicative.”

398 Paul opens his letters to the Corinthians (1 Cor 1:21) and the Galatians (Gal 1:15–16) by referring to God’s dynamic pleasure to bring salvation. This is consistent with other NT and LXX texts where εὐδοκία refers to God’s salvific approval (1 Chr 16:10; Sir 2:16; 32:14; 33:13; 35:3; Matt 11:26; Luke 10:21; Eph 1:5, 9); see also T. Benj. 11:2. If εὐδοκία referred to the “good pleasure” of humans (social unity in the church), the

Fourth, elsewhere in Philippians (1:19, 28) σωτηρία conveys God’s vindication of the faithful. In Chapter Three, I held that Paul echoes LXX Job 13:16 (καὶ τοῦτο μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν) in Phil 1:19, paralleling his current resistance to his rivals with Job’s defiance of Sophar (Job 11:1–20). Paul connects Job’s situation to his own by seeing them both being asked to renounce God by supposed “friends,” but remains confident that they will be vindicated in their faithfulness. In Chapter Four, I argued that σωτηρία in 1:28 is the eschatological reward of those who endure against the opposition (those trying to get the Philippians to abandon the gospel). These four similarities combine to make 2:12 a restatement of 1:27a.

In sum, the overlap between 1:27–30 and 2:12–13 indicates that these two passages are equivalent. The means by which the Philippians conduct themselves as citizens befitting the gospel mission is to persist in their path towards the vindication that comes from obedience to the plan of God now revealed in the Pauline gospel. To paraphrase 2:12–13: “You Philippians are to work out your salvation (vindication) by remaining obedient to me and my teaching, as you have done when I am present but clause is tautologous, following θέλειν and ἐνεργεῖν; so already O’Brien, Philippians, 288; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 154; Hawthorne, Philippians, 143. O’Brien (Philippians, 288) suggests that ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας “is highly significant and makes it plain that God’s effective working in these believers is for the resolution and completion of that which is in accordance with his good pleasure. It is not stated that he is at work in every resolve and action of the Philippians Christians, for this would make him the agent of sin in them!”
even more during my absence. This is to be done with the appropriate fear and trembling as if doing it before God because this is his desire for you, which he is accomplishing in you completely.”

5.3.2. Philippians 2:14–16a

In Chapter Four, I proposed that πολιτεύεσθε (1:27) articulates the Philippians’ corporate identity as part of the eschatological Israel of God. Paul continues along this line of argument in 2:14–16a by using known Jewish depictions of faithful Israel and unfaithful Israel to encourage his church to remain within the Pauline network. He shapes a correspondence between the wilderness narrative of ancient Israel and his gospel mission. Those who reject the Pauline mission are the spiritual offspring of the disobedient Israelites who rejected Moses, while those who stand with it inherit the blessing belonging to faithful Israel. Thus 2:14–16 is highly polemical as well as hortatory.

4.3.2.1. Philippians 2:14

Paul urges the Philippians to avoid grumblings and disputes (πάντα ποιεῖτε χωρίς γογγυσμῶν καὶ διαλογισμῶν) in 2:14. Ware sees γογγυσμοί καὶ διαλογισμοί as “echoes [of] the concern of the apostle with disunity at Philippi which we have traced elsewhere in the letter (e.g., 1:15–18a; 1:27; 2:2–4; 2:21; 4:2–3).” But again, Ware overestimates the internal conflicts within the church. Further, his reading of

---

399 Paul, 251; Hansen, Philippians, 179.
γογγυσμός (shared by others) takes inadequate account of the term as a distinct characteristic of disobedient Israel in the wilderness (LXX Exod 16:7, 8, 9, 12; 17:3; Num 11:1; 14:27, 29; 17:6, 20, 25; Ps 105:25; Sir 46:7; Isa 30:12; 58:9). Since in Philippians (including this passage) Paul depicts the church as the people of God, greater weight should be given to γογγυσμός in 2:14.

The majority of the Pentateuchal passages that have γογγυσμός portray many of the Israelites in the wilderness no longer rejoicing at their liberation but bemoaning that they are victims of Moses’ (and God’s) mistreatment. They express doubt in God’s ability to bring them into a promised land. This “expression of doubt” is manifested in their grumbling against God’s appointed leader, Moses. The Pentateuch presents grumbling against Moses as synonymous with grumbling against God.

---

400 Holloway (Consolation, 125) gives examples of ancient consolers discussing the value in avoiding complaining against God (or Fate). A good example is Marcus Aurelius’s instruction to himself in Med. 2.3: “you should not face death grumbling (μὴ γογγύζων) but graciously, with integrity, and from a heart thankful to the gods.” Holloway suggests that γογγυσμός conveys a similar meaning in Paul’s writings. In my estimation, the heavy presence of Deut 32 in this passage (to be argued below), as well as the various references to the Philippians as the people of God in 2:14–16a, mitigate against placing Paul’s words merely in the broad field of ancient consolation. I find that the terminology in 2:14–16a, especially the allusions to the Song of Moses, confines πάντα ποιεῖτε χωρίς γογγυσμῶν καὶ διαλογισμῶν to the narrative of Israel in the wilderness. To this point, Richard N. Longenecker (Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), 160] claims that “in Judaism the Song of Moses (Deut 32:1–43) was used on an equal footing with the Psalms in such various places and situations as the Jerusalem temple, the synagogues of Palestine and the Diaspora, the homes of pious Jews, and the writings of Philo. There are indications of its widespread use among Christians as well.” So interpreting πάντα ποιεῖτε χωρίς γογγυσμῶν καὶ διαλογισμῶν outside of this framework is unnecessary. Geoffrion’s (Purpose, 187) interpretation, that the lack of grumbling during obedience fits the Stoic portrayal of a good soldier, is unsatisfactory for the same reason.
Thus Paul’s γογγυσμός in 2:14 indicates that Paul sees a typological pattern, the events of the wilderness narrative informing the present circumstances.\(^{401}\) Both the Israelites and the followers of Christ have been liberated by God.\(^{402}\) And both suffered after their deliverance. The disobedient (false) Israelites grumbled against their appointed leader, Moses. Therefore when Paul exhorts the Philippians πάντα ποιεῖτε χωρίς γογγυσμῶν και διαλογισμῶν, the logic of the typological pattern means that the Philippians are to avoid following in the footsteps of disobedient (false) Israel and reject their chosen leader, Paul.

This exhortation (πάντα ποιεῖτε χωρίς γογγυσμῶν και διαλογισμῶν) does not require that there were members of the Philippian church who were rejecting Paul, however. Such a reading would be incongruent with Paul’s strong commendations of the church (1:5; 4:10–18).\(^{403}\) O’Brien recognizes the difficulty of seeing the Philippians as those who are “grumbling” since, as he puts it, there has “yet been no hint in the letter so far of this kind of rebellious attitude toward God on the part of the Philippians.”\(^{404}\) So O’Brien speculates that the injunction is mostly “manward” in that the Philippians should avoid potential future squabbling. But this interpretation reduces πάντα ποιεῖτε χωρίς γογγυσμῶν και διαλογισμῶν to moralism. Instead, πάντα

---

\(^{401}\) G. K. Beale (Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2012], 95–102) observes that two of the hermeneutical principles shared by the NT writers was their view of progressive revelation and typological fulfillment.

\(^{402}\) See Galatians 1:4.

\(^{403}\) Contra Hansen, Philippians, 180.

\(^{404}\) O’Brien, Philippians, 291.
ποιεῖτε χωρίς γογγυσμῶν καὶ διαλογισμῶν complements μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε by restating in the negative the command of 1:27. Paul has already introduced a group that stands against him — his rivals (1:15, 17). So, he is not drawing on the story of Israel for future instruction only, but applying an interpretive lens to the current situation. Those who reject him (such as his rivals in Ephesus) are committing the same error as those who rejected Moses in the wilderness.⁴⁰⁵

This reading of 2:14 as Paul analogically pairing himself with Moses is strengthened through its connection with 2:12–13, where he calls on the Philippians to continue to obey him. Those arguing that Paul is addressing the church’s internal turmoil in 2:14 do not adequately value the relationship that v. 14 has with the preceding verses. Paul is presenting himself and his mission as the typological fulfillment of Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness. The Philippians face the same test that their spiritual ancestors faced: will they persevere and remain loyal or will they balk and forfeit their place within the people of God?

I find that 1 Cor 10:10 confirms this reading. There, instead of γογγυσμός the text has the verbal cognate, γογγύζω: μηδὲ γογγύζετε, καθάπερ τινὲς αὐτῶν ἐγόγγυσαν καὶ ἀπώλοντο ὑπὸ τοῦ ὀλοθρευτοῦ. The context of 1 Cor 10 makes it clear that Paul is drawing on the insubordination of Israel to indict the Corinthians for their

⁴⁰⁵ Keown (Evangelism, 128) counsels against any analogous reference to Israel’s rejection of Moses, arguing that there is no indication that Paul’s own leadership is being questioned or that the congregation is complaining against God. Keown is correct regarding the Philippians’ stance toward Paul (though even here the analogy does have precautionary value). All the same, he seems not to recognize that the reference could apply to others who are rejecting Paul.
disobedience and warn them of the risks should they continue. In 1 Cor 10:7–10, he lists four sins of the Corinthians that correspond to those of the Israelites in the wilderness: idolatry (v. 7); sexual immorality (v. 8); putting Christ to the test (v. 9); and grumbling (v. 10).

Paul lists γογγύζω in 1 Cor 10 because one of the grave errors that has led to disunity among the Corinthians is a rejection of his authority over them. Elsewhere in the epistle there are references to the Corinthians’ refusal fully to endorse Paul’s leadership (1:12; 3:4; 4:15). In fact, prior to this indictment of the Corinthians, Paul gives his most sustained defense of his apostolic office in the epistle. Many of the Corinthians are challenging Paul’s authority, in addition to questioning his teaching on idolatry, sexual behavior, and the power of Christ’s death and resurrection. The symbolism of the Israelites in the wilderness (1 Cor 10:6–10) becomes an apt summary of the state of the Corinthians. The Corinthians recapitulate the story of the ancient Israelites: having begun strong, they abandoned the faith, preferred a syncretistic belief system, and grumbled against God’s appointed leader.

406 In 10:1, Paul refers to the Israelites in the wilderness as the “ancestors” of both Paul (a Jew) and the Greek Corinthians. Paul sees a continuation of the story of Israel that embraces the Gentiles as kinfolk; so already Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, The First Letter to the Corinthians (PiNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010), 445.


408 1 Corinthians 9 begins: οὐκ εἰμί ἐλεύθερος; οὐκ εἰμὶ ἀπόστολος; οὐχὶ Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον ἥμων ἐώρακα; οὗ τὸ ἔργον μου ὑμεῖς ἔστε ἐν κυρίῳ; εἰ ἄλλοις οὐκ εἰμὶ ἀπόστολος, ἀλλὰ γε ὑμῖν εἰμὶ ἡ γάρ σφραγίς μου τῆς ἀποστολῆς ὑμεῖς ἔστε ἐν κυρίῳ (vv. 1–2).
First Corinthians 10:10 contributes to interpreting Phil 2:4 by showing the following: (1) Paul fashions the wilderness narrative to current situations; (2) he finds the rejection of his apostolic authority to be equivalent to disobedient Israel’s rejection of Moses in the wilderness; (3) he depicts this rejection with γογγυσμός; and (4) he holds that this rejection of him will result in judgment, as it did to those who rejected Moses (Phil 1:28; 3:19). With γογγυσμός in 2:14 Paul begins a series of references to the wilderness narrative to strengthen the Philippians’ steadfastness.

4.3.2.2 Philippians 2:15–16a

The role of 2:15–16a in understanding Philippians cannot be overstated. It is the climax of Paul’s entire argument since 1:27. Every phrase in Phil 2:15–16a alludes to a Jewish scriptural text, each pointing to the necessity of perseverance if the people of God are to receive eschatological blessings.410 In 2:15–16a, Paul gives the basis (ἵνα, 2:15) for his exhortation πάντα ποιεῖτε χωρίς γογγυσμόν καὶ διαλογισμόν. But the

409 In the Corinthian church internal factions were rejecting him, whereas in Philippians “rebellious Israel” is Paul’s rivals outside the church.

410 Steven Dimattei (“Biblical Narratives,” in As It is Written: Studying Paul’s Use of Scripture [SBLSymS 50; ed. Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Stanley; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008], 79) hypothesizes that “[T]he prophetic verse [from Jewish Scriptures] is thus understood not only in the contemporary context to which it is applied but also in its eschatological context. . . . Thus for Paul, the appropriate and perhaps the only context within which to read and understand the prophetic text is the contemporized eschatological context.” Dimattei’s (92) proposal that the “pedagogical application” of Paul’s interpretation of Scripture is linked with an eschatological understanding of the narrative is consistent with my reading of 2:12–16b. Paul interprets the story of Israel in the wilderness through the eschatological lens of Jesus Christ resurrected. This allows him to reshape the narrative so that it bears witness to the circumstances he and the Philippians are facing.
meaning of these verses is not restricted to 2:14; it also indirectly applies to 2:12 and 1:27a because the three imperatives are towards the same purpose.

Paul exhorts the Philippians to avoid grumbling and disputing so that they may become the pure and innocent, the unblemished children of God (γένησθε ἁμεμπτοι καὶ ἁκέραιοι, τέκνα θεοῦ ἁμωμα, 2:15a). These descriptions are found elsewhere in Second Temple writings to describe those of Israel who remain loyal to God.411 In 2:15b, Paul presses this further, drawing a contrast between the church at Philippi and those who have rejected his gospel by applying Deut 32:5 to keep his argument within the conceptual framework of the wilderness narrative / rejection of Moses. The Philippians are surrounded by a crooked and depraved generation (μέσον γενεᾶς σκολιᾶς καὶ διεστραμμένης). Paul is echoing Moses’ condemnation of the Israelites who worshiped the Golden Calf and rejected God, their liberator. Because of this great apostasy, these idolaters were no longer considered sons and daughters of God and subsequently lost any claim to the promises of God (ἡμάρτοσαν, οὐκ αὐτῷ τέκνα μωμητά, γενεὰ σκολία καὶ διεστραμμένη, LXX Deut 32:5).412 As in the wilderness narrative, the “grumblers” are the “crooked generation” that surround the Philippians.


412 Also LXX Deut 32:21: αὐτοὶ παρεξήλωσαν με ἐπʼ οὐ θεῶ, παρώργισαν με ἐν τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν· κἀγὼ παραξηλώσω αὐτοὺς ἐπʼ οὐκ ἔθνει, ἐπʼ ἔθνει ἁσυνέτω παροργίω ἀυτοὺς.
Implicit in this contrast between the pure and blameless children of God and the crooked and depraved generation is the warning that should the Philippians cease obeying Paul (2:12), their place will be among those who have rejected the teaching and teachers of God.

The force of Deut 32:5 is more pronounced when we consider the parallel between Moses’ characterization of disobedient Israel in Deut 32:28–29 and Paul’s prayer in Phil 1:9–10:

ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη υμῶν ἔτι μᾶλλον καὶ μᾶλλον περισσεύῃ ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν υμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα, ἵνα ἦτε εἰλικρινεῖς καὶ ἀπρόσκοποι εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ. (Phil 1:9–10)

Paul’s prayer in Philippians 1, in light of these probable allusions, is that they not succumb to the temptation to reject him and his mission as the Israelites rejected Moses and his. The church’s fidelity to the Pauline gospel is the “wilderness testing” of those who profess Christ.

Paul’s words here give scant (if any) attention to those who outright deny Christ. If the Roman empire or local pagan culture were considered the surrounding threat, we might expect “slave masters,” or something similar, rather than “crooked and depraved generation” designation (as in Gal 4:3, 9).
διεστραμμένης shows that Paul considers those who appear to be followers of Christ, but are not, as a threat to the Philippians’ eschatological reward.

Many scholars do not consider fully the literary context of this Deuteronomic reference when interpreting Phil 2:15, arguing instead that Paul is contrasting the Philippian church with the surrounding pagan world of Roman Philippi. For example, Ware writes: “Paul, in Philippians 2:15a, takes up Moses’ further description of rebellious Israel in Deut 32:5 as ‘a crooked and perverse generation’ . . . but in Philippians 2:15, this ‘perverse generation’ clearly embraces the unbelieving world.”

This view equates γενεὰ σκολιὰ καὶ διεστραμμένη with immoral pagan practices. So, according to Ware, Paul sees the Philippians’ place in the world as akin to the Jewish Diaspora and not the wilderness setting of Deuteronomy. While “crooked and depraved” may be, in some sense, an accurate Pauline depiction of the surrounding moral culture of Roman Philippi, there is no indication that the culture is Paul’s concern. The enemy of the Philippian church is not the worship of other gods or pagan sexuality, but rather those who offer a false view of Christ. This view is born of the same spirit that gave birth to the rejection of Moses and the worship of the Golden Calf.

Since 1:27 Paul has been driving towards the climax, which he reaches with ἐν ὦς φαίνεσθε ὡς φωστήρες ἐν κόσμῳ, λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες (2:15c–16a).

---

413 Ware, Paul, 253.

414 Witherington (Philippians, 158) notes that since the propositio (1:27–30), Paul has argued from ethos (2:1–4), logos (2:5–11), and now primarily pathos (2:12–18). The pathos is evoked with Paul’s calling the audience “my beloved,” the reference to “fear and trembling,” and now the vivid eschatological drama depicted in his conflating of Dan 12:3 with Deut 32:45–47. This line of reasoning is designed to create a heightened emotional response in the reader and motivate him or her to take the course of action desired by the speaker. The final movement of the pathos is often the most vivid.
conflates the eschatological language of Dan 12:3 with the covenantal exhortation of Deut 32:45–47. He ties together the subjects of perseverance, eschatological blessings and curses, covenant formation, and corporate ethics that he has been developing since μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε (1:27a).

At the end of Phil 2:15 Paul reworks LXX Dan 12:3 (φανούσιν ώς φωστῆρες τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) by making two alterations to the text. First, he replaces τοῦ οὐρανοῦ with ἐν κόσμῳ. Second, the future φανούσιν of Dan 12:3 becomes the present φαίνεσθε. These changes presumably mean that Paul considers the eschatological epoch anticipated in Dan 12 as already present. I will suggest that this reworking renders the Philippians' perseverance both the precondition for their exaltation and the sign of judgment against the “crooked and depraved generation.”

Daniel 12 depicts the time of the final consummation (12:4, 6, 7, 13) when the faithful will be exalted (καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ψωθῆσεται πᾶς ὁ λαὸς, ὃς ἂν εὑρεθῇ ἐγγεγραμμένος ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ, 12:1; see also 12:2, 7, 12, 13) and the enemies of the people of God will be condemned (12:1, 2). In Dan 12:3, those who have understanding (οἱ συνιέντες) will be exalted as heavenly luminaries. Various Second Temple texts draw

---

415 Bockmuehl (Philippians, 158), however, suggest that Paul’s κόσμος “could be because of an alternative translation of the Hebrew word ‘olam in Dan 12:3.”

416 Bruce (Philippians, 62) comments thus on Dan 12:3: “Paul’s Christian friends at Philippi who now share Christ’s risen life already anticipate the ministry of the resurrection age.”
on Dan 12 to describe both the final climactic struggle and the eventual eschatological vindication of the faithful of God.417

The presence of these ideas of perseverance and eschatology in Dan 12:3 makes it a fitting text for Paul’s argument. The reference to οἱ συνιέντες (those who understand) as the group who will receive eschatological glorification further connects Daniel 12 to the epistle. In both Dan 12 and Deut 32 (a chapter that Paul frequently refers to in this section), understanding correlates to obedience. In Dan 12:3, οἱ συνιέντες portrays obedient Israel; whereas in Deut 32:28–29, οὐκ ἔφρόνησαν συνιέναι ταῦτα· καταδεξάθωσαν εἰς τὸν ἐπίοντα χρόνον depicts disobedient Israel. This matches the framework in Philippians that knowing or understanding mark genuine faith (1:6, 7, 10, 12, 14, 16, 19, 25; 2:2, 5, 13). In both Daniel 12 and Philippians 2, those who understand the revelation of God are exalted.

Several commentators argue that Paul finds in Dan 12:3 language that anticipated the mission of the church to take the gospel to the nations. It follows that Paul desires that the Philippians be a “light” that shines in the darkness of the pagan world, drawing them to faith. Others claim that this construction is for moral differentiation: that Paul is contrasting the difference between a holy life (one of light) and the corrupt life (one of darkness) of the surrounding pagan culture. Moreover, those who advocate an evangelistic reading tend to interpret λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες (2:16a) as sharing the gospel with nonbelievers, whereas those finding a moral

417 For example, 1 En. 104:2 reads ὡσεὶ φωστήρες τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀναλάμψετε καὶ φανεῖτε; see also 1 En. 39:7; 2 En. 66:7; 2 Bar. 51:3; T. Mos. 10:9; 4 Macc. 17:5; so already Ware, Paul, 131.
differentiation interpret λόγον ζωής ἐπέχοντες to mean that the gospel is a guide for living a holy life.

Both of these interpretations are inadequate because both take “crooked and depraved generation” as the pagan world. I have argued, however, that Paul appeals to the wilderness narrative in 2:14–15 to contrast the people of God with false brethren, not with pagans. This means that ἐν οἷς in 2:15 refers to Paul’s rivals, who are attempting to lead his churches away under a false gospel. The “luminous” appearance of the faithful in 2:15b, therefore, is not a “light” that draws or repels the pagan world, but rather a statement of judgment against those who wrongly suppose that they are a part of true Israel. 418 By rejecting the gospel of Christ and his apostle these false brethren do not shine, but stand against those who do. 419 This complements Paul’s depiction of the Philippians’ courage as a sign of destruction against those opposing them and of salvation for the faithful (1:28).

---

418 Γίνομαι in 2:15a indicates that Paul considers the Philippians’ “pure and blameless” state to be something that can be viewed, not just as something that exists. The main argument against my reading is the problem of how the faithful can appear (φαίνεσθε) as exalted luminaries to these apostate groups. This obstacle is insurmountable only if one insists that the false generation is able to discern that the faithful Philippians are these exalted stars. But the same events can be perceived one way by the faithful and another by everyone else (1:12, 28).

419 Paul views God as the “perceiving one” who sees the faithful as luminaries. It is God who determines the quality of the fruit of the Philippian church on the Day of Christ (1:11). God also affirms the condescension of Christ by exalting him (2:9–11). Paul stops short of indicating that this exalted status is fully actualized, a matter he returns to in his discussion of attaining the resurrection in 3:12. Nevertheless, he seems confident that the eschatological blessings that are beginning now will be fully realized at the end of history (1:6, 25–26; 2:13).
With most scholars, I take λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες (2:16a) as an instrumental participial phrase that states the reason for the Philippians’ inaugurated exaltation. But the meaning of ἐπέχοντες has been debated: does it mean “hold forth” (like a torch) or “hold fast” (cling to)? The commentaries and lexicons are divided. Ware’s study of the term leads him to the conclusion that “hold fast” should not even be a possibility. He states: “The meanings ‘hold’ and ‘hold fast’ are not attested, and the etymology and usage of the word sketched above, in fact, preclude this meaning.” Consequently, he affirms seeing ἐπέχοντες as evidence that “Paul did understand the

420 The debate as to whether this clause modifies the purpose clause “so that you may become” (O’Brien, Philippians, 297; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 158) or the relative cause “among whom you shine” (Fee, Philippians, 247) is of little consequence. Note also that the proposal by Hawthorne (Philippians, 146) that it is imperative has garnered little support.


422 Ware, Paul, 269. Ware notes that most of the scholars who argue for “hold fast” mistakenly depend on BDAG, s.v. ἐπέχω (p. 285). For example, O’Brien refers to BDAG to support his statement that, “On balance, however, the rendering ‘hold fast’ is preferable. It is well attested outside the NT, and the general context of 1:27–2:18 has to do with standing firm in the faith against the attacks of external opponents.” Ware finds that the evidence supplied by BDAG does not support BDAG’s claim, however, and that scholars using BDAG are perpetuating the error.
church at Philippi as obligated to engage in active mission to outsiders, and in Phil 2:16a he explicitly commands them to do so.**423

Even if Ware is correct about Paul’s desire for his churches to be actively engaged in proselytizing, it is far from clear that 2:16a conveys this. Indeed, the references to perseverance in Phil 1:27–2:16 defy the claim. The context is pregnant with the idea of “holding fast.” It is not only possible that ἐπέχοντες means “holding fast” in 2:16a, it is probable. Further, Ware’s conclusion is contingent on reading λόγος ζωῆς as synonymous with “message of the gospel that gives life to unbelievers.” Most commentators hold this interpretation because it seems to fit the essence of Paul’s mission (Rom 1:17; 2 Cor 2:16). But the expression λόγος ζωῆς never occurs elsewhere in any of his epistles. It likely derives from Deut 32:46–47a, where Moses insists on Israel’s obedience to the Law (καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς Προσέχετε τῇ καρδίᾳ ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς λόγους τούτους . . . ὅτι οὐχὶ λόγος κενός οὗτος ὑμῖν, ὅτι αὕτη ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν). The influence of Deut 32 on Paul’s argument in this section is visible in Paul’s use of Deut 32:5, 20, and possibly of v. 28 in the preceding verse. Therefore in 2:16a λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες is likely designed to recall Deut 32:46–47a. Just as Moses commanded the Israelites to keep the Law, so Paul exhorts the Philippians to remain true to the gospel because it constitutes their life as the people of God.424

---

423 Ware, Paul, 270. See further Keown (Evangelism, 132), who proposes that Dan 12:3 motivates the Philippians to be guides that lead others to righteousness.

424 The relevance of Deut 32:46–47a for interpreting is λόγος ζωῆς is vacant in the scholarship on this passage. For example, Keown provides one of the more extensive studies of λόγος ζωῆς, but does not mention the passage.
In sum, in 2:12–16a Paul urges the Philippians to obey him and thereby receive the blessing given to the eschatological people of God. He presents the wilderness narrative as a typological pattern that accounts for the presence of rival gospels, their proclaimers’ enmity with Paul, and the necessity of the Philippians’ perseverance in the Pauline gospel. Paul pairs this with the eschatological hope of vindication from Dan 12:3 to express the necessity of the Philippians’ choice to remain with him.

5.4. Philippians 2:16b–18

In 2:16b, Paul returns to the subject of the mutuality between him and the church at Philippi (εἰς καύχημα ἐμοὶ εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ, ὅτι οὐκ εἰς κενὸν ἐκοπίασα).\(^{425}\) Philippians 2:16b coheres with 1:26. In 1:26, Paul says that the Philippians will have a reason for eschatological boasting because of his actions toward them (Ἰνα τὸ καύχημα ύμῶν περισσεύῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ διὰ τῆς ἐμῆς παρουσίας πάλιν πρὸς ύμᾶς). In 2:16b, he states that his boast is connected with the church’s actions.\(^{426}\) The relational interplay is captured in the explanatory ὅτι clause (οὐκ εἰς κενὸν ἐδραμον οὔδὲ εἰς

\(^{425}\) This clause belongs to the entire Ἰνα clause that began in v. 15, not just to the preceding circumstantial participial clause. Philippians 2:14–16 might fairly be characterized as a summary presentation of Paul’s thought: it contains his theological understanding of the church within the eschatological age, his own role as the apostle, the continuity between the Jewish scriptures and the coming of Christ, all within the precious relationship he enjoys with his church.

\(^{426}\) See also 2 Cor 7:4; 8:24; 9:2; 1 Thess 2:19; 2 Thess 1:4; especially 2 Cor 1:14 (καθὼς καὶ ἐπέγνωτε ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ μέρους, ὅτι καύχημα ύμῶν ἐσμεν καθάπερ καὶ ύμεῖς ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ).
κενὸν ἐκοπίασα). 427 Paul’s and the Philippians’ labors for one another contribute to each other’s eschatological blessing in Christ. Philippians 2:16b complements Paul’s desire, expressed in 1:26, to be the reason that the Philippians have a similar boast (ἴνα τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν περισσεύῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐν ἐμοί).

Paul ends this critical section, “the heart of the epistle,” by reminding the Philippians in 2:17–18 of the full measure of his commitment to them. His metaphor in 2:17, a final libation poured over the sacrificial offering of the Philippians’ faithfulness, has rightly been interpreted as a reference to martyrdom. 428 Nevertheless, this view does not require that Paul was considering an imminent death. On the contrary, his confidence that he will soon return to the Philippians (1:24–26, 2:24) negates that idea.

Philippians 2:17 reflects Paul’s supposition that when he eventually considers the entirety of his apostolic mission (only possible at the time of his death), he will rejoice if his death is in the service of completing the Philippians’ sacrifice to God. 429 Paul wants the Philippians to see his willingness to give the last full measure of his life as parallel to Christ’s obedience unto death (2:6–8). 430 The metaphor demonstrates the

427 Τρέχω and κοπιάω are common Pauline metaphors for his apostolic labors: τρέχω (1 Cor 9:24, 26; Gal 2:2); κοπιάω (1 Cor 4:12; 15:10; Gal 4:11); and κόπος (1 Thess 2:9; 3:5; 2 Cor 11:23).

428 I take ἀλλά here to be ascensive, rather than adversative, εἰ καί introducing a concessive clause regarding a possible escalated situation. Contra Collange (Epistle, 113) and Hawthorne (Philippians, 148), who argue that Paul is using sacrificial terminology in 2:17 to describe his various apostolic sufferings in general. This reading does not account for ἀλλά εἰ καί. See further O’Brien (Philippians, 301–10).

429 Bruce, Philippians, 63–65.

430 Hansen (Philippians, 188) suggests that the imagery of “pouring out” resembles Christ’s “emptying of himself.” Although David Seeley (The Noble Death: Graeco-Roman Martyrology and Paul’s Concept of Salvation [JSNTSup 28; Sheffield: Sheffield
character of the fellowship he wants to continue with the Philippian church. Whatever is lacking in the church’s sacrifice, Paul will give to the full limit of himself to see it met. This is anticipated in the narratio, where Paul considers it more necessary to remain with the Philippians than to depart and be with Christ (1:21–26).

Witherington speculates that the Philippians’ “sacrifice” in 2:18 refers to the monetary gift the church sent to Paul. The same term (θυσία) is indeed used by Paul in 4:18 in his depiction of the church’s gift.431 Paul also has λειτουργία (2:17) in 2 Cor 8:2 to refer to a monetary contribution to the collection of the poor. This does not mean that the sacrifice of 2:18 is restricted to financial support, but it certainly includes it. θυσία here confirms that Paul considers the church’s financial support to be a significant part of their obedience to him. In return, Paul desires to contribute whatever is necessary, so that at the eschaton both the church and Paul become each other’s reason for eschatological joy and an occasion for mutual rejoicing (χαίρετε και συγχαίρετε μοι, 2:17b–18).

Philippians 2:16b–18 reveals the weight Paul places on their mutual fellowship. Wright remarks on 2:16b–18 thus: “Mutual generosity within the koinōnia of the

---

431 Witherington, *Friendship*, 73.

---
Messiah’s people, in other words, functions as part of the God-given means by which the community is bound together (in this case, the apostle and this particular church) with God himself both taking the initiative and being delighted with the result.” So Phil 2:16b–18 is not an afterthought or parenthetical aside — it is the inevitable declaration of a relationship informed by the theology of the Pauline gospel and the struggle against competing missions.

5.5. Summary

Philippians 2:5–18 completes the main section of the epistle (1:27–2:18). With the Christ-hymn, Paul commends the Philippians for living out their faith in a manner appropriate to the object and originator of their community of faith. Philippians 2:5–11 also advocates for their continued humility and obedience to the salvific plan of God. Here Paul draws a sharp contrast between himself and other gospel missions. In 2:12–16a, he evokes the wilderness narrative to encourage the Philippians to persevere towards their vindication by obeying his teaching. In 2:15–16a, he conflates Dan 12:3 and Deut 32 to present the Philippians’ steadfastness as evidence of the genuineness of their faith, anticipating their eschatological vindication. In Phil 2:17–18, Paul finishes by returning to the subject of the church and Paul’s mutual, sacrificial fellowship, one for which he is willing to give the last full measure.

---

432 Wright, Faithfulness, 1342.
6.1. Overview

In Chapters Four and Five I argued that Paul presents four proofs to convince the Philippians that commitment to him is also commitment to Christ. These topics are (1) agreement on the characteristics of faith and the gospel (2:1–4); (2) the story of Christ (2:5–11); (3) the typological pattern of the wilderness narrative (especially Deut 32) combined with the eschatology of Dan 12 (2:12–16a); and (4) Paul’s love of and service to the church (2:16b–18). He continues his appeal in Phil 2:19–4:1, submitting himself (3:1–4:1), and to a lesser extent Timothy (2:19–24) and Epaphroditus (2:25–30), as the next proof of what it means to be united in the gospel. In consideration of this, Phil 2:19–30 is not a diversion from Paul’s main argument, but continues what he began in 1:27.

Many scholars hold that Paul presents Timothy and Epaphroditus as “secondary paradigms” to be emulated because of their Christ-like behavior. This view is not wrong, but it is incomplete. I will argue that their paradigmatic role is meant to

---

433 Following Witherington (Philippians, 169), who, quoting Shakespeare’s Othello, calls Timothy and Epaphroditus “ocular proofs” of a gospel life.

434 They are “secondary” in the sense that Paul presents Christ and himself as the primary examples. Oakes (Philippians, 104): “These two examples [Christ and Paul] and their outworking among the Philippians occupy the bulk of the letter. We may be able to add 2.19–30 to this structure [series of exemplary parallels]. Epaphroditus and Timothy seem also to act as examples for Philippian behavior.”
support Paul’s self-depiction as the standard the church is to follow. First, he indicates that he is sending Timothy and Epaphroditus to Philippi as expressions of his love for the church. Second, Timothy and Epaphroditus will bear witness to the strength of fellowship between Paul and the Philippians. They are tangible expressions of the mutuality they already share. Third, Paul portrays his resistance to the Judaizers in 3:1–19 as the quintessential gospel struggle. The heart of 2:19–4:1 is 3:17, which I shall propose is a recapitulation of μόνον ἄξιως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτευόσθε (1:27a), τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζοσθε (2:12), and πάντα ποιεῖτε χωρὶς γογγυσμῶν καὶ διαλογισμῶν (2:14). In 3:20–4:1, Paul completes this section by resuming the subject of shared eschatological blessings.

6.2. Form and Purpose of Phil 2:19–30

Philippians 2:19–30 has been related to the rest of the epistle in many ways. Robert W. Funk describes this passage as a “travelogue” and an “apostolic parousia” (forms used to inform the audience about the eventual coming of an apostle, as well as

Marchal (Hierarchy, 140) argues that Paul depicts Timothy’s and Epaphroditus’s status in this way because he feels threatened that he could be usurped by them. But there is no evidence elsewhere in the epistle to support this reading. Marchal’s approach reduces any commendation to a contest for power.

So already Kittredge, Community, 87.

William S. Kurz (“Kenotic Imitation of Paul and of Christ in Philippians 2 and 3,” in Discipleship in the New Testament [ed. Fernando F. Segovia; Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress, 1985], 115, 122) views imitation as the central feature of the letter. The constant interplay between Paul’s actions and convictions with those of the Philippians gives a good deal of credibility to this proposal.

Reumann (Philippians, 434–39) provides a detailed summary of the various theories.
the honorable status of the emissary who bears his letter and speaks in his name). Those who agree with Funk note that material corresponding to this form typically comes at the end of an epistle (Rom 15:22–29; Phlm 22) and often contains a light persuasive touch on the topics to be covered. Many see this state of affairs (especially when coupled with the presence of τὸ λοιπὸν of 3:1) as evidence that Philippians is a composite document.

Others maintain that 2:19–30 is a constitutive element of the standard Greco-Roman “letter of recommendation.” The purpose of 2:19–30 would be to engender a welcoming reception of Timothy and Epaphroditus, thus allowing them to fulfill their assigned tasks. The majority of scholars, regardless of whether they take 2:19–30 to be a travelogue / apostolic parousia or to be a letter of recommendation, deemphasize the passage’s role in supporting the propositio of 1:27–30, seeing it as speaking largely of separate matters.


441 See the discussion of the integrity of the epistle in Chapter One. A travelogue in Paul’s letters does not always signal the approaching end of the epistle (1 Cor 4:17–19; 1 Thess 2:17–3:6).

442 Kim, Chan-Hie, Form and Structure of the Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation (SBLDS 4; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1972), 120, 131–35; Reumann, Philippians, 436.

443 N. T. Wright (The Resurrection of the Son of God [Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2003], 228) describes the “pen-portraits of Timothy and Epaphroditus” as an “unexpected interlude.” Silva (Philippians, 134–35) argues that 2:19–30 is the resumption of Paul’s missionary report (1:12–26) and serves to bracket 1:27–2:18 before
Watson does try to tether 2:19–30 more tightly to 1:27–2:18, viewing 2:19–30 as a digressio within the probatio. Witherington, however, rightly notes that 2:19–30 has none of the essential elements of a digressio. He proposes instead that 2:19–30 is a movement within the probatio, following the common rhetorical practice of offering living examples to support the overall argument. Further, Watson’s analysis is an unnecessary attempt to resolve a problem that does not exist, namely, the supposed break in the argument that occurs at 2:19.

It is understandable that there are different opinions regarding 2:19–30. In many ways, each of them touches on part of the reason Paul wrote 2:19–30. The passage does provide a travelogue of Paul and (especially) his emissaries. But this does moving to a new section. But this explanation is not convincing because little in the text indicates Paul is returning to the topic of his prison report.

444 Watson, “Analysis,” 71; idem, “The Integration of Epistolary and Rhetorical Analysis,” in The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference (JSNTSup 146; ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 419. Similarly Edart, Épître, 201–3. Watson defines a digressio as a passage that addresses topics and issues that have bearing on the issues at hand but involves digressing from the logical order of the development of these arguments. Watson sees this digressio illustrating the “manners of life worthy of the gospel of Christ, the striving side by side for the faith of the gospel called for in the propositio.” Philippians 2:28–30, then, ends the digressio.

445 Witherington, Philippians, 169; also Williams, Enemies, 141. A digressio is used for honoring and shaming, for making emotional appeals, amplifying topics, or enhancing styles. So Cicero, Inv. 1.51.97; Quintilian, Inst. 4.3.12–15.

446 So Aristotle, Rhet. 2.20.

447 Reed (Discourse, 228) describes Watson’s attempt to see Phil 2:19–30 as a digressio as “special pleading” designed to preserve the letter’s integrity. Bloomquist (Function, 173) takes a middle ground: “It [2:19–30] does double duty: (1) as exempla, presenting the Philippians with well-known and visible apostolic emissaries who exemplify the servant-hood depicted in 2:6–11, and (2) as a digressio, presenting the Philippians with those who also embody the Christ type.”
not mean that Paul is following a set epistolary form. Rather, I will argue that he is using the *topos* of travel to continue his overall argument.\footnote{Terence Y. Mullins (“Visit Talk in New Testament Letters,” *CBQ* 35 [1973]: 350–58) argues that travel was a common subject with a variety of purposes in non-literary papyri, ancient letters, and other species of rhetorical discourse.}

The passage also commends both Timothy and Epaphroditus. But Paul is not honoring them because he is anxious about their reception. I will show that his praise serves to reveal the quality of the church and Paul’s relationship. Witherington correctly views these commendations as part Paul’s overall argument. Nevertheless, he sees them as part of Paul’s plan to promote unity within the church, whereas I propose that these two emissaries serve as ocular proofs persuading the church to remain united to Paul.\footnote{Witherington, *Philippians*, 169; so already Swift, “Theme,” 245.} Accordingly, the account of Timothy and Epaphroditus has two main purposes: (1) to give attention to the church and Paul’s mutual affection (especially Paul’s love of the Philippians); and (2) to introduce the paradigmatic role of Paul’s faith in encouraging the Philippians to stand firm in the gospel (3:1–4:1).\footnote{Osiek (*Philippians*, 75) comments that 2:19–30 “obviously serves as a transitional section between the exhortation to unity in 2:1–18 and the warning and autobiographical reflection of chapter 3.” But in my judgment, she misreads this because both of these sections are about the church’s relationship with him. Philippians 2:19–30 is more than transitional, but is part of the main argument.}

6.3. *Philippians* 2:19–24

Timothy is the first of the two emissaries mentioned. Paul laid the groundwork for this section by introducing Timothy as a fellow slave who partners with him to send greetings to the church (1:1). Timothy is therefore not an outside party but is from
within Paul’s ministry. Paul praises Timothy further in 2:19–24. Indeed, the key question is why Paul does speak highly of him again in 2:19–24. Most commentators suggest that Paul’s praise of Timothy is designed to garner the church’s favorable reception of him (perhaps needed because of Timothy’s youth). But this argument is incomplete. Certainly Paul does want Timothy to be accepted as a leader in Philippi so that he can direct them in matters of faith. But what is more important is that the Philippians see that Paul also needs Timothy, yet will part with him for their sake. Put another way, this praise of Timothy bespeaks the extent of Paul’s sacrificial giving. Paul is not merely sending Timothy; he is giving him up for them. Timothy becomes a token of the sincerity of Paul’s commitment to the fellowship.

In 1:24–26, Paul declares that he is certain he will remain alive because the Philippian church’s faith requires his presence. This is his service to the Philippians: to devote his time on earth to the growth of their faith. In 2:24, he reaffirms his intent to come (πέποιθα δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς ταχέως ἐλεύσομαι). But since Paul is currently

---

451 Though Paul presents Timothy as one of the authors (1:1), this section shows that Paul was the real author.

452 Collange (Philippians, 116) views this commendation of Timothy as evidence that Paul is concerned that the Philippians might reject him. But this reading reduces any praise of another to concerned entreaty. Further, there is nothing in the text that indicates Paul is uneasy about the church’s regard for Timothy; so already Fowl, Philippians, 132. O’Brien (Philippians, 320) and Silva (Philippians, 136–38), on the other hand, argue that Paul’s words about Timothy come from his need to justify why he must delay sending him. Although Paul does justify why he cannot send Timothy immediately, it seems to me that the passage points to Paul’s decision to send him, not to his need to keep him.

453 Hendriksen (Philippians, 135) is one of the few commentators to mention the sacrificial quality of Paul’s sending of Timothy.
unable to meet this goal, he resolves to send Timothy instead — as soon as he can.\textsuperscript{454} So Paul’s words about Timothy in 2:20–23 must be read in light of the apostle’s desired but prevented coming. He sends Timothy to begin to give them his apostolic presence, if only indirectly.

Paul considers Timothy qualified because of his commitment to the gospel and his Paul-like love for the Philippians. In 2:20, Timothy is described as being ἰσόψυχος (a term rare in the NT, denoting equality in mindset or character) with Paul in his concern for the Philippians (2:20).\textsuperscript{455} Paul characterizes Timothy’s devotion in terms of a son’s dedication to the trade of his father (ὡς πατρὶ τέκνον σὺν ἐμοὶ ἔδούλευσεν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, 2:22).\textsuperscript{456}

Timothy’s qualifications are established in contrast to what is lacking in those who surround Paul in Ephesus. Paul’s lament in 2:21 that everyone around him (save Timothy) is concerned about his or her own selfish interests and not the affairs of Christ is a rebuke of his rivals (οἱ πάντες γὰρ τὰ ἐαυτῶν ζητοῦσιν, οὐ τὰ Ἰησοῦ

\textsuperscript{454} Fred B. Craddock, \textit{Philippians} [IBC; Atlanta, Ga.: John Knox, 1985], 49) proposes that Paul is waiting to send Timothy once the ruling against him is determined. But Paul’s expectation that Timothy will report back to him (2:19) suggests that Paul does not expect his circumstances to change dramatically during the course of Timothy’s travels and visits. Most likely, Timothy has some service that he alone can render. It is probably to this service, and not some court ruling, that Paul refers. Holloway (\textit{Consolation}, 126–27) suggests that Paul is sending Timothy as a consoling surrogate. But this limits Timothy’s care for others to consoling. It seems to me that the “care” that Timothy exhibits is the same as Paul’s, namely, a desire to help the Philippians grow in their faith.

\textsuperscript{455} Bloomquist (\textit{Function}, 174) argues that Paul’s ἰσόψυχος recalls ἰσα in 2:6, thus connecting Timothy to Christ.

\textsuperscript{456} Keown (\textit{Evangelism}, 157) sees Paul extending the Greco-Roman conception of \textit{paterfamilias} to include a “spiritual fatherhood.”
Those who are seeking their own interests are those who were motivated by envy to take advantage of Paul’s incarceration (1:15–18a). He implies in 1:12–18a that these rivals have disqualified themselves (and their message) by their actions. In 2:5–11, his presentation of Christ casts his opponents’ selfishness in sharp relief. Now, he states that these rivals are against the concern of Christ. Now in 2:21, Christ’s cause is synonymously parallel with Paul’s care for the Philippians. So Paul determines that these opponents care little for the Philippians because they care little for Christ.

The choice of sending Timothy or not is akin to the dilemma Paul faces in prison (1:21–24). There, he was torn between his preference for being with the Lord through

457 It is hard to imagine that Paul is referring to the Praetorian Guard or the household of Caesar since in that case the remark is redundant to the point of being nonsensical.

458 It is surprising that 2:21 has not played a greater role in the understanding of 1:12–18a. There is little to support the proposal that Paul is being harassed by doctrinally-correct rivals. The logic of 2:21 accords with Gal 6:12–13, where Paul depicts the heretical Judaizers as caring less for the Galatians than for their own selfish desires.

459 Similarly, Loh and Nida (Handbook, 79) have τὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as “the cause of Jesus Christ.” I agree with this translation because it better reflects what I take to be Paul’s intent, namely, to connect this passage with 2:6–11.

460 This affirmation of Paul and Timothy parallels 2:4 (μὴ τὰ ἐκείνων ἐκαστός σκοποῦντες ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἐκείνων ἐκαστοί). Engberg-Pederson (Paul, 129) suggests that Paul is stating that Timothy (like himself) is the only one who has truly followed the Stoic path of moving from a self-centered disposition to a community-centered one as depicted in 2:4. But I think that Engberg-Pederson’s overall characterization of Paul as a “type of Stoic” divorces him from his Jewish eschatological framework and his confessed experience of the risen Christ.

461 As discussed in Chapter Three, the difficulty of Paul’s choice in 1:21–24 does not require Paul having the ability to determine his own freedom or demise. It is a hypothetical, rhetorical struggle.
death and the necessity of remaining alive to continue his gospel mission (1:23). He
knows that his sacrifice is what they need (1:24–25); therefore he commits himself to
this outcome. Likewise, Paul presents Timothy as a blessing he is willing to relinquish
for the Philippians’ benefit. In 2:20–21, he voices his belief that he has no one besides
Timothy who cares similarly about the Philippians’ faith in Christ.462 Even allowing for
hyperbole, Paul’s decision to send Timothy is a sacrificial act because it will deprive
him of the one who most understands him and his mission. Philippians 2:19–22
demonstrates the sincerity of his willingness to be poured out as a drink offering on
behalf of the Philippians (2:17–18). So sending Timothy demonstrates Paul’s love for
the church.

The arrival of Timothy will also provide the Philippians with the opportunity to
demonstrate their loyalty to Paul because he expects the Philippians to send Timothy
back to him with news about their commitment to the gospel (tà περὶ ὑμῶν in 2:19,
referring back to tà περὶ ὑμῶν of 1:27).463 Timothy will inform him of their response to
his commands: that they make his joy complete (2:2) and continue to obey him (2:12).

462 Paul’s sweeping statement seems to be incongruent with his description of
the brothers and sisters who had been inspired by his gospel mission (1:14). Various
suggestions have been offered to account for Paul’s words, most prominently (1) that
the others whom Paul trusted were absent at the time; (2) that no one was willing to
make the journey to Philippi; and (3) that everyone was involved in factionalism of
some sort. Vincent (Epistles, 74) wonders if any explanation is possible given the
limited information available. In light of the context, however, it seems that the
contrast being drawn is hyperbolic in order to demonstrate that Timothy, like Paul,
sees the work of the gospel at Philippi to be of utmost priority to Christ.

463 Τὰ περὶ αὐτῶν provides another link between 2:19–30 and 1:27–2:18,
indicating that Paul’s discussion of Timothy and Epaphroditus is not to be separated
from the main rhetorical purpose of the epistle. I argued in Chapters Four and Five
that tà περὶ ὑμῶν of 1:27 refers to the Philippians’ unity in the gospel.
In sum, 2:19–24 does more than announce Timothy’s impending visit. Paul presents Timothy as evidence of the unselfish love he has for the church. Lastly, the stability of their fellowship will be measured by the report that Timothy brings back prior to the apostle’s own arrival to the church at Philippi. Therefore there is nothing in 2:19–24 that cannot be read as contributing to the propositio of Paul’s argument.

6.4. Philippians 2:25–30

The Philippians had sent Epaphroditus to administer aid to Paul during his imprisonment (2:25; 4:18). In 2:25–30, Paul addresses the arrival of Epaphroditus and his decision to send him back to the church at Philippi. As discussed in Chapter One, the coming of Epaphroditus to Ephesus stands as one of the key moments in the history of the early church because it occasioned the writing of Philippians. Through Epaphroditus Paul received the gift of the Philippian church and the joy of knowing that the church at Philippi was not lost to him.

Why, then, does Paul send Epaphroditus back? Various theories have been espoused, most prominently: (1) to ease Epaphroditus’s burden; (2) to report on Paul’s

464 Paul speaks similarly in 1 Cor 16:15–17 regarding Stephanas. Stephanas, like Epaphroditus, is presented as one who served in ministering to Paul (and others) and thus is commended by Paul as an honored leader. Contra Osiek (Philippians, 79), who argues that Paul returns Epaphroditus because of his failure to be an adequate help to him. Osiek hypothesizes that Epaphroditus did not need any commendation since the church already knew him. In her view, Paul’s words are an attempt to navigate the social awkwardness of his rejection of Epaphroditus. Osiek conjectures that it is Epaphroditus’s mental or physical health that prevented, even disqualified, him from serving Paul. But this speculative reading probably stretches Paul’s words beyond what they can hold. I will hope to show that it is Epaphroditus’s very capability to serve that drives Paul’s statements about him.
situation; (3) to bear and perform the letter; (4) to console the Philippians; and (5) to assist in mending potential rifts. Each likely contains a measure of truth. But at its core, the return of Epaphroditus is intended to influence the church to maintain its fellowship with Paul.

6.4.1. The Epithets of Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25)

I regard the epithets attached to Epaphroditus in 2:25 to be the key to interpreting 2:25–30 and to answering the question as to why Paul sent him back. The first set of labels (ἀδελφός, συνεργός, συστρατιώτης) shows Epaphroditus’s status in relation to Paul, while the second set (ἀπόστολος, λειτουργός τῆς χρείας μου) refers to his service as the church’s representative. These two groupings complement each other to portray the apostle-church partnership.

Each of the three terms with which Paul describes Epaphroditus (ἀδελφός, συνεργός, συστρατιώτης) ties him to the Pauline mission. Ἀδελφός is one of Paul’s favorite terms for depicting those who accept his proclamation: the gospel has created a new people whose familial bonds are now in Christ through faith. This fictive kinship challenges normal understandings of “kinship” by dividing humanity into two families: those who have faith in Christ, his death and resurrection; and those who do not (Gal 6:15–16).

---

465 These three titles occur in the same order in Phlm 1–2, but only in Phil 2:25 are they used for the same person.

466 Ἀδελφός occurs 113 times in the “undisputed” Pauline letters.

I find ψευδάδελφοι in 2 Cor 11:26 and Gal 2:4 helpful for seeing that Paul’s gospel is inseparable from this fictive kinship. “False brothers” are listed in 2 Cor 11:23–28 among the hardships that he endures in service to the gospel mission and his churches. Since this catalog in 11:26 includes κίνδυνοι ἐκ γένους (dangers from own people) and κίνδυνοι ἐξ έθνων (dangers from Gentiles), listing ψευδάδελφος as a distinct peril indicates that this group constitutes a separate category, a non-ethnically defined group that ostensibly follows Christ but has proved itself false. In Gal 2:4, Paul describes the bogus brothers and sisters as a group that, though apparently welcomed at the church meetings, sought to compel the Jerusalem church leadership to reject his gospel message that faith in Christ is sufficient for justification. They showed themselves counterfeit by demanding that his companion, Titus, be circumcised, whereas the Jerusalem apostles demonstrated their legitimacy by affirming Paul’s mission (Gal 2:8–9).

Paul writes similarly of ἄδελφοι in Phil 1:12 and 14. In 1:12, he reports to the Philippians the state of his gospel mission. Their interest is assumed because they are among the ἄδελφοι created by this mission. Thus by calling Epaphroditus his ἄδελφος, Paul signals that he considers Epaphroditus part of the familial group created by a proper faith in Christ.

DeSilva (200) makes the following observation: “Christians were heirs to the Jewish conception of the people of God as ‘brothers and sisters,’ which was for Israel merely an exaggeration of natural genealogical proximity. This conception of the people of God as kin takes a particularly Christ-centered focus . . . [I]t gives the early church a sense of shared identity and binds the members together in the solidarity of the kinship bond; it provides them with a legitimate connection to the promises of God recounted in the Jewish Scripture.” According to DeSilva, it is kinship that motivates Christians to share resources, seek harmony, affirm cooperation, and resist outside influence.
Epaphroditus is also described as a συνεργός. συνεργός frequently designates a member of a group that assists Paul in ministering to his churches (Rom 16:3, 9, 21; 1 Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 1:24; 8:23; 1 Thess 3:2). Further, the term occurs again in 4:3, referring to Euodia, Syntyche, and Clement (αἵτινες ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ συνήθλησαν μοι). συνεργός may designate a specific office, but even when it is a mere moniker it belongs to those whom Paul entrusts with his charge to bring the good news of Christ to the nations.⁴⁶⁸ Therefore, by extolling Epaphroditus as a συνεργός, Paul marks him as one he has commissioned, in this case to the task of presenting the Philippian church as a pure and blameless people at the Day of Christ (1:6, 10; 2:15–16).⁴⁶⁹ The Philippians sent to Paul an emissary (ἀπόστολος, 2:25) in Epaphroditus; now Paul returns him to them as a notarized συνεργός. Their gift to him has become his greater gift to them in return.

Lastly, Paul describes Epaphroditus as his συστρατιώτης. The precise meaning of this term in the Pauline corpus is difficult to determine given its infrequency. Outside of Phil 2:25, it only occurs in Phlm 2. Whereas Geoffrion intuits that Paul’s στρατιώτης / συστρατιώτης, as a topos of militia spiritualis, portrays the perpetual conflict that faces every Christian, I suggest that συστρατιώτης in 2:25 is to be read within the context of Epaphroditus’s suffering to the brink of death (2:27). First, Paul

⁴⁶⁸ Interestingly, twice elsewhere Timothy is listed as a συνεργός (Rom 16:21; 1 Thess 3:2), though in Philippians he is not.

⁴⁶⁹ In Chapters Two, Three, and Five I have argued that Paul employs ἔργον (and cognates) in Philippians to refer to the divine work of the gospel in the life of the Philippian church. In Phil 1:6, the eschatological ἔργον that God is bringing to completion is paired with their fellowship in the Pauline gospel mission (κοινωνία ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, 1:5). In 1:22, Paul refers to his continued presence with the Philippians as part of his “fruitful work” (τοῦτό μοι καρπὸς ἔργου) in the gospel. Κατεργάζομαι in 2:12 refers to being committed to the gospel plan of God.
does not apply σωτρατιώτης to Christians in general; it is attached to Epaphroditus specifically. He depicts Epaphroditus as a fellow soldier, perhaps because they have both been gravely wounded in the service of the gospel. Second, in Gal 4:13 Paul describes his own beleaguered (possibly beaten) state on arriving in Galatia as being ἀσθενής. This is the term for Epaphroditus’s state when he comes to him in Ephesus (2:26). And third, this conception of suffering and soldiering is reflected in 2 Tim 2:3 (συγκακοπάθησον ώς καλὸς στρατιώτης Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ).  

If this reading is correct, these three titles form a crescendo. Epaphroditus is to be received by the Philippian church with celebration because they are receiving not just a brother but one of the apostle’s coworkers and not just any of his coworkers, but one who has experienced a near-fatal wounding in service to the gospel. The three honorable epithets together demonstrate the high value of Epaphroditus. And this stacking of designations is not designed to counter a tepid welcome. Rather, Paul’s dispatch of Epaphroditus is similar to that of Timothy. Until Paul is able to arrive, the apostle, out of fidelity to his mission to increase their faith, has sent none other than Timothy and Epaphroditus to serve them.

Whereas this first set of titles (brother, coworker, fellow soldier) depicts how Paul sees Epaphroditus in relation to himself, the second presents how he views him as

---

470 Even if 2 Tim 2:3 is not Pauline (as is the consensus view, though not mine), the passage still indicates that an early interpreter of Paul saw in his letters a connection between suffering and soldiering.

471 So already Hendriksen, Philippians, 139.

472 It is possible that Epaphroditus’s miraculous recovery spurred Paul to view him as more than the church’s emissary, as a tool spared by God to be used for the advance of the Pauline mission.
an extension of the Philippian church (your emissary and minister of my need). As the church’s emissary (ἀπόστολος), Epaphroditus represents them and their intentions. His arrival, therefore, proves that the Philippians have not abandoned Paul. Likewise, Paul’s initial acceptance of Epaphroditus confirms that he desires to continue the fellowship.⁴⁷³

Paul’s description of Epaphroditus as their λειτουργός τῆς χρείας μου indicates that he considers their support to be more than an act of friendship.⁴⁷⁴ He wants the Philippians to see that their aid has a sacramental quality; it is a creaturely reality set apart for divine purpose. Λειτουργός suggests this, as Pauline phraseology elsewhere shows. For example, in Rom 13:6 Paul describes the governments of the world as λειτουργοί purposed by God to maintain order. Paul considers himself in a similar manner, as a λειτουργός of Jesus Christ (Rom 15:16) given the task of proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles. So Epaphroditus is a λειτουργός appointed to the divine service of meeting Paul’s needs.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷³ Some in the Philippian church may have been concerned that Paul was displeased with them because they temporarily ceased aiding him (4:10), a concern heightened by Epaphroditus’s immediate return. But E. Randolph Richards (“Reading, Writing, and Manuscripts,” in The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts [ed. Joel B. Green and Larry M. McDonald; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2013], 361) suggests that the church considered Epaphroditus to be a designated private post carrier for them. In 4:18, then, Paul is assuring the church that Epaphroditus did deliver their package. If this is correct, the return of Epaphroditus would not have been so disconcerting, especially if he was carrying Paul’s return correspondence.

⁴⁷⁴ So Dibelius, Thessalonicher, 57.

⁴⁷⁵ Bloomquist, Function, 176. Paul argues similarly in 2 Cor 9:12 (οτι η διακονια της λειτουργιας ταυτης ου μονον εστιν προσαναπληρωσα τα υστερηματα των αγιων, άλλα και περισσευσα δια πολλων ευχαριστιων τω θεω). In 2 Cor 9:12, meeting fellow believers’ needs (which Paul also calls a λειτουργια) is a thanksgiving to God. I find this to be consistent with Paul’s characterization in Philippians of mutuality in cultic terms.
In sum, v. 25 justifies Paul’s request that the Philippians receive Epaphroditus as one deserving honor (προσδέχεσθε οὖν αὐτὸν ἐν κυρίῳ μετὰ πάσης χαρᾶς καὶ τοὺς τοιούτους ἐντίμους ἔχετε, v. 29). Epaphroditus himself is a gift to both parties, from both parties, representing both parties — exemplifying the mutuality enjoyed between the church and its apostle. These accolades lay the foundation for understanding why Paul deemed it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to the Philippians (ἀναγκαῖον δὲ ἡγησάμην Ἐπαφρόδιτον . . . πέμψαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς, 2:25).

6.4.2. Philippians 2:25–30

It seems that Paul sent Epaphroditus back to assuage the Philippians’ worries when they heard that Epaphroditus had grown ill (σπουδαιότερος οὖν ἔπεμψα αὐτόν, ἵνα ἰδόντες αὐτὸν πάλιν χαρῆτε κἀγὼ ἀλυπότερος ὦ, 2:28). But it is improbable that In 2:17, he describes his service to the Philippians as a libation poured on their sacrificial service. In 4:18, he labels their gift a fragrant offering and a pleasing sacrifice acceptable to God.

476 K. Barth (Philippians, 89) sums this up nicely: “Paul, then is not coming yet; Timothy not yet either, but here directly is the man from their own midst, their messenger, whom Paul now makes his. May they receive him in the spirit in which he sends him: in the Lord with all joy.”

477 Fee (Philippians, 278) plausibly posits that the Philippians received word of Epaphroditus’s condition from one of his entourage. Since Epaphroditus had the church’s money, he was probably not alone. As his health turned, Epaphroditus sent word back to the church that he might die. So the church’s anxiety included both their concern for him and their unease over how the gift is administered should he die. Conversely, Bernhard Mayer (“Paulus als Vermittler zwischen Epaphroditus und der Gemeinde von Philippi: Bemerkungen zu Phil 2:35–30,” BZ 31 [1987]: 176–88) holds that the absence of any direct claim that the Philippians actually were worried about Epaphroditus’s welfare suggests that Epaphroditus’s illness did not elicit any compassion for him. It is this muted response that has troubled Epaphroditus and Paul. Mayer argues that Paul’s commendation of Epaphroditus has a mediatorial role designed to reconcile the two parties.
this is the whole of the matter. Why do they need to see him personally if a report of his recovery would suffice? Returning Epaphroditus so promptly indicates that there is something more going on.478

This “something more” is hinted at in 2:25–30. First, the titles discussed above (especially συνεργός) imply that Epaphroditus has a task to complete on behalf of Paul. Second, ἀναγκαῖον recalls its previous occurrence in 1:24, where he considers his own presence at Philippi to be required. In both instances, Paul sees the physical presence of someone (Epaphroditus first, himself later) as necessary. This combination of συνεργός and ἀναγκαῖον means Paul intends Epaphroditus to serve the church as Timothy will, namely, as an extension of himself.

The urgency in sending Epaphroditus is partly due to Paul’s need to delay Timothy’s departure. When he says that he will be “less anxious” (ἵνα . . . κάγω ἀλυπότερος ὦ, 2:28) once Epaphroditus arrives at Philippi, he is referring to his unrest over his own absence there, not to any anxiety that the church might be needlessly

Craddock (Philippians, 51) speculates that there is an anti-Epaphroditus movement brewing in Philippi. Similarly, William Barclay (“Great Themes of the New Testament: Philippians 2:1–11,” ExpTim 70 [1958]: 4) wonders if Epaphroditus is viewed by the church as a quitter (see further R. Alan Culpepper, “Co-workers,” 256; David A. Black, Paul, Apostle of Weakness: Astheneia and Its Cognates in the Pauline Literature [Eugene, Oreg.: Pickwick, 2012], 213). Against this are the following considerations: (1) there is no intimation of rebuke that the Philippians have behaved inappropriately toward Epaphroditus; (2) Epaphroditus shows concern for all the Philippians, not a particular subgroup (one either “for him” or “against him”); and (3) Paul’s commendation moves beyond reconciliation. He wants the church not only to love Epaphroditus, but to prize him as well.

478 Contra Holloway, Consolation, 128. Betz (Apostel, 29) suggests that the urgency of Epaphroditus’s departure stemmed from Nero’s officials becoming suspicious of him.
overwrought over Epaphroditus’s condition. Epaphroditus will not only carry Paul’s letter and give witness to the truth of what is occurring during Paul’s incarceration (1:12–14). He is also to rally the church to Paul (ἵνα ἰδόντες αὐτόν [Epaphroditus] πάλιν χαρίτε [2:28], and προσδέχεσθε οὖν αὐτόν [Epaphroditus] ἐν κυρίῳ μετὰ πάσης χαρᾶς καὶ τοὺς τοιούτους ἐντίμονος ἔχετε [2:29]) by his example.

Epaphroditus’s desire to see them and his unease about their welfare (ἐπιποθῶν ἦν πάντας ὑμᾶς καὶ ἀδημονῶν, 2:26) parallels Paul’s concern for them (1:8; 2:24).

Further, Paul’s depiction of Epaphroditus’s willingness to give the full measure to make up for the apparent shortfall of support from the church (2:30) reflects his own determination (1:20–21 and 2:17) to sacrifice in service to the Philippians.

479 E. Randolph Richards (Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition, and Collection [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004], 207) holds that Paul did not worry over the Philippians’ anxiety regarding Epaphroditus’s illness, but that they would feel slighted when Epaphroditus did not immediately return with Paul’s thanks for the gift. In light of this, Paul makes sure that the church understands that Epaphroditus was not able to travel immediately, and that a delay was inevitable. The difficulty with this position is that Paul does not imply that he is unsettled over not meeting the Philippians’ expectations of a speedy reply. The context also suggests that Paul’s decision to send Epaphroditus back was one he makes quickly after his arrival.

The urging of the Philippians to rejoice and to honor Epaphroditus, as well as to honor men like him, means that Paul recognizes the value of others in the advance of the church’s faith. Reducing Paul’s χαίρω here to mere “joy in the good health of Epaphroditus” runs counter to χαίρω and χαίρω in Philippians as depicting acts of faith among God’s people (1:4, 18, 25; 2:2, 17, 18; 3:1; 4:1, 4, 10). The report Timothy will bring back to Paul regarding the Philippians (2:19) will (he hopes) bring news of Epaphroditus’s success.

480 I find Peterlin’s (Letter, 199–205) suggestion that Paul’s commendation of Epaphroditus reveals that it was Epaphroditus himself who offered to attend to Paul’s needs at his own expense in order to “salvage the situation” (p. 224) that occurred when the church divided over supporting Paul to be unsustainable. Paul’s words do not indicate that there were some against the sending of Epaphroditus. While I hold that the delay in sending aid resulted over this question, the sense of the letter is that this matter was resolved with the sending of Epaphroditus.
Paul’s perspective, the only reason Epaphroditus did not die was that God had willed that he complete this mission (καὶ γὰρ ἠσθένησεν παραπλήσιον θανάτῳ ἀλλὰ ὁ θεὸς ἠλέησεν αὐτόν, 2:27). This echoes Paul’s certainty that his own service to the Philippians requires that his current situation not result in death (1:24–25). Paul sends Epaphroditus back to the Philippian church so that they will see in him what they would see in Paul if he were there: a man wholly committed to the Pauline mission, and a man who loves the Philippian church as Paul does and is working for the benefit of their faith.  

The ebbing of the church’s support for him revealed a potential diminishing of commitment to the work of Christ (2:30). This in turn placed the church’s eschatological assurance in doubt, since they now lacked the καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης τὸν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1:11). Therefore Epaphroditus’s arrival and dedication not only encourages Paul in the conviction that he had not lost the Philippian church, it also provides him with a means to act immediately on his desire to strengthen (and measure) the church’s resolve.

482 In many respects, Epaphroditus exemplifies both the care for others depicted in 2:1–4 and the uncomplaining obedience of 2:12–16. Paul’s description of Epaphroditus matches the ethical thrust of the Christ-hymn (2:5–11). Not surprisingly, therefore, Culpepper (“Co-workers,” 350) claims that 2:30 is the “most striking echo of the Christ-hymn” in the epistle. The honors given to Epaphroditus in v. 25 (brother, co-worker, fellow soldier) support my contention that reward / vindication belongs to those who persevere in the gospel (1:26; 2:14–15).

483 Contra Vincent (Epistles, 78), who argues that what was lacking and what Paul desired was that the church provide this offering in person. But his language in this passage is similar to Col 1:24, where he (or possibly a later disciple) suffers on behalf of the Gentiles to fill up what was still lacking there.
6.5. Summary of 2:19–30

In Phil 2:19–30, Paul announces his intent to send both Timothy and Epaphroditus to the church at Philippi. I have argued that this notice fits comfortably within Paul’s overall purpose in Philippians. Timothy’s dispatch not only provides support to the Philippians; even more it exemplifies Paul’s sacrificial commitment to the church. He likewise desires the Philippian church to see in Epaphroditus the character of one truly committed to both the church and Paul. The examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus further his argument by demonstrating what it means to be part of the fellowship of the gospel. They both serve Paul and the church because both are committed to the advance of the gospel. Further, both Timothy and Epaphroditus are worthy exemplars because they reflect his love and faith.

6.6. Philippians 3:1–4:1

The last century has seen several challenges to the integrity of Philippians, yielding various arrangement theories to account for its present composition. Philippians 3:1 is one of the alleged seams often cited by proponents of partition. The two primary arguments for 3:1 as an indicator that there are multiple letters are (1) that Paul is reminding the Philippians of something he (apparently) has not yet discussed, namely, his anxiety about Judaizers (3:2–7); and (2) that τὸ λοιπὸν signals that a closing is imminent.

---

484 So already Geoffrion, *Purpose*, 192.

485 So already Peterman, *Gift*, 118–19.
Since my overall argument gives a reading that affirms the integrity of the letter, some attention needs to be given to 3:1. As mentioned in Chapter One, partition hypotheses are often contested on the basis of a lack of manuscript support. Though relevant, this reliance on manuscript history is not decisive. If the final compilation occurred before the textual transmission of the epistle began, the recoverable manuscript history reflects it accordingly. More damaging to partition arguments are the ancient rhetorical processes that support the epistle’s integrity. This is the case with 3:1. Philippians 3:1 bears the marks of a transition that is occurring from one movement in the argument to another.

Witherington correctly judges that “too much has been made of the occurrence of to loipon here at Phil 3:1, as if this must signal that Paul is drawing his argument to a close.”\textsuperscript{486} To λοιπόν can indeed be used to sum up a letter, or indeed any written communication. But τὸ λοιπόν can also mean “now then” or “and so” (1 Cor 1:16; 4:2; 7:29; 2 Thess 3:1).\textsuperscript{487} As a resumptive, τὸ λοιπόν can also draw attention back to a previous subject or signal a slight shift in the discourse.\textsuperscript{488} The variety of meanings of τὸ λοιπόν, and the fact that none of the early Greek Fathers interpreted this τὸ λοιπόν

\textsuperscript{486} Witherington, \textit{Philippians}, 186. Barry S. MacKay (“Further Thoughts on Philippians,” \textit{NTS} 7 [1961]: 161–70) likewise remarks that too large a building, i.e., partition theories, has been constructed on too minor a term.

\textsuperscript{487} Vincent (\textit{Epistles}, 90) sees τὸ λοιπόν in 3:1 as a loose transition from one subject to another. But this view does not take into account that Paul has not moved to a new subject but is drawing to an end the topos he began with his depiction of Timothy. Further, it mistakenly separates the examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus from that of Paul.

as the introduction to a conclusion, along with the lack of textual evidence, diminishes it as support for partition theories.\(^{489}\) Paul’s τὸ λοιπὸν in Phil 3:1 marks that he is coming to the end of the part of the argument he began in 2:19, not the end of the epistle. Τὸ λοιπὸν also sets his discussion of himself apart from that of Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Paul exhorts the Philippians, χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ.\(^{490}\) Some have argued that this imperative is out of place in 3:1 (τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν), proposing instead that it is better viewed as completing Paul’s commands to the Philippians in 2:29. And since he commanded the Philippians to receive Epaphroditus with joy (2:29), reading χαίρετε in 3:1 as part of Paul’s words about their reception of Epaphroditus creates a redundancy. That line of reasoning has not fully integrated χαίρω and its cognates into the interpretation of the letter. Χαίρω and χαρά indicate the proper posture and response to the work of the gospel / Christ within the fellowship of believers.\(^{491}\) χαίρετε ἐν

\(^{489}\) See also a Hellenistic letter quoted by Adolf Deissmann (Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History [orig. 1912; 2d ed.; trans. William E. Wilson; Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1972], 14), where λοιπὸν (though without τὸ) occurs in the middle of the epistle and is translated “furthermore.”

\(^{490}\) χαίρετε can mean “farewell,” and can be read as indicating that a letter is ending (3:2 being added by a later redactor). But as Alexander (“Letter-Forms,” 97) notes, the infinitive χαίρειν was more commonly used for closings than the imperative. Though χαίρετε did connote “farewell” in oral discourse, it did not in the written word. Further, Francis Xavier J. Exler (The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter of the Epistolary Papyri [3rd c. B.C.—3rd c. A.D.]: A Study in Greek Epistolography; [orig. 1923; Chicago, Ill.: Ares, 1976], 62–63) cites “about thirty” instances (mostly from the 2d and 3d centuries C.E.) in which the optative or the single imperative is used instead of the infinitive in Hellenistic letters. No example of the plural χαίρετε occurring as a farewell is cited.

\(^{491}\) In 1:4, Paul offers his prayer for the Philippians with joy (χαρᾶ) because of their fellowship with him in his mission. He rejoices (χαίρω) in 1:18a over the advance of the gospel by him and those emboldened by his perseverance. He declares in 1:18b that he will rejoice (χαρῆσομαι) because the Philippians’ provisions and prayers will
κυρίω combines with τὸ λοιπὸν to indicate that the subsequent argument is to be read through this lens of joy in the gospel.  

Finally, the parenthetical statement (τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ οἶκνηρὸν ὑμῖν δὲ ἄσφαλές) completes the transition from 2:19–30 to 3:2–16. Paul is allow him to continue his work. Paul names the Philippians' joy (χαρά) in the faith as the reason for his remaining on earth in 1:25. The Philippians' solidarity with him will make his joy complete (2:2). He declares that he will rejoice and calls the Philippians to join him in this (χαίρω καὶ συγχαίρω πᾶσιν ὑμῖν) if his life is fully expended for them (2:17–18). In 2:28, Paul sends Epaphroditus back so that they may rejoice in seeing him. In 2:29, he exhorts the church to receive Epaphroditus with all joy (χαρά). The former (2:28) speaks about their hearing that Epaphroditus is healthy and has completed his assigned task. The latter (2:29) refers to how the Philippians are to treat one who comes to assist them in Paul's work.

492 Contra Holloway (Consolation, 143), who argues that joy in 3:1–4:1 is designed to mitigate the disappointment the Philippians are feeling given the apparent failure of the Pauline mission.

493 Reed ("Philippians 3:1 and the Epistolary Hesitation Formulas: The Literary Integrity of Philippians, Again," JBL 115 [1995]: 63–90) suggests that Paul has used a modified version of a “hesitation formula” that was common in Hellenistic letters. Ὄκνεω indicates that the author wants to show that he does not shy away from discussing a matter. Reed notes that “hesitation formulas” typically notified the recipient that another letter would be coming. But, according to Reed (p. 88), Paul “relates his hesitation formula to the immediate situation . . . rather than solely to future correspondence. When this is done in letters, the hesitation formula is often located in the main body of the letter, often following a narrative account of some event, as in Phil 2:25–30 with the narrative of Epaphroditus’s illness.” Reed takes this “hesitation formula” as referring to Paul’s previous exhortation (2:29) to rejoice over the situation with Epaphroditus. He translates 3:1: “From now on, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord [in light of the news about Epaphroditus]. (To write the same things [vis. to rejoice] to you is, with respect to me, not a cause of hesitation and is, with respect to you, a cause of steadfastness.)” But “hesitation formulas” point forward more often than they point backward. I argue, therefore, that Paul is indicating that he is not hesitating to repeat himself regarding what he is about to say in the next section (his recounting of his struggle with the Judaizers).

Engberg-Pederson (Paul, 83–84), along with Wick (Philipperbrief, 40) and Philippe Rolland ("La structure littéraire et l’unité de l’Épître aux Philippiens," RevScRel 63 [1990], 213–16), argue that Phil 3:1 is a hinge between two halves of the epistle that mirror each other. They see the plural τὰ αὐτά signaling that Paul is going to restate in some fashion everything that he has just said. While I agree that there are thematic
telling the Philippians that there is a slight shift in argument from the travels of Timothy and Epaphroditus (which they did not know about) to his own narrative (which they did). Tα αὐτά in 3:1, then, refers to what he will say about his experience with the Judaizers (3:2–16).

The question is how “these things” are a reminder of something he has already said, since Paul has yet to mention Judaizers in the letter. It may be that he is now stating clearly something he has been alluding to — that those antagonizing him and the Philippians are Judaizers. The detail of 3:2–11, however, is in stark contrast to any supposed antecedent in the first two chapters. More probable is that Paul is referring...
to previous testimony (from an earlier visit or unknown letter) of his problems in 
Galatia and Jerusalem (Gal 2:4–5). The placement of a reminding notice prior to the 
first reference to the actual reminder in a speech or letter is within Greco-Roman 
rhetorical conventions.

In short, 3:1 sets up 3:2–11 and its accompanying commentary (3:12–16) by 
introducing Paul’s example as the safeguard (ἀσφαλές, 3:1) for the Philippians because 
it shows them that he is the exemplar to follow in preparing for the coming Day of the 
Lord. Paul’s account of Timothy and Epaphroditus enhances his self-presentation.

6.6.1. Philippians 3:2–16

The general consensus regarding 3:2 is that Paul is forewarning the Philippians 
of a potential (perhaps pressing) Judaizing threat. The threefold occurrence of 
him to be of the same genus; even if they differ in incidentals, they are made by 
enemies of the cross (Phil 3:18).

Vincent’s (Epistles, 90) observation that Paul’s connection with “so many 
churches during at least twenty-five years [makes] it highly probable that he wrote 
more than thirteen letters” makes plausible that Paul is referring to one of these 
unknown correspondences in 3:1. Contra Stowers (“Friends,” 116), who suggests that 
Paul is following a recognized “hortatory idiom of parenetic letters,” one that protects 
the honor of the recipient by indicating that the readers are receiving only a reminder 
of something they already know and are not in need of advice.

Cousar, Philippians, 68; for example, Dio Chrysostom, Orations 3.14–15, 25–26; 
17.2.

Note that even here, the subject of sacrificial mutuality is present in Paul’s 
statement that his repeating himself is not an undue hardship if it will assist the 
Philippians.

I will not be doing a verse-by-verse analysis of this section, but examining the 
more relevant verses that demonstrate the overall rhetorical purpose of the passage.
βλέπετε, the amplification of the descriptors of the Judaizers (from dogs, to workers of evil, to mutilators of the flesh), and the recurrence of the same letter (kappa) in these descriptors (κύων, κακός, and κατατομή) have been seen as rhetorical conventions that combine to create an emphatic warning (“Watch out!”).⁵⁰⁰ This reading presents a problem for interpreting 3:2: if the threat of the Judaizers is dire, why does Paul not show more concern over it elsewhere in the epistle?⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁹ Christopher Zoccali (“‘Rejoice O Gentiles, with his People’: Paul’s Intra-Jewish Rhetoric in Philippians 3:1–9,” CTR 9 [2011]: 30) offers a variation of this idea, arguing that Paul is fearful that the Philippians might become attracted to Judaism once they begin to have more contact with it because of their new conversion to Christ. Contra René López (“A Study of Pauline Passages with Vice Lists,” BSac 168 [2011]: 308), who, argues that Phil 3:2 refers to unbelievers in general.

⁵⁰⁰ But note Mark Nanos’s (“Paul’s Reversal of Jews calling Gentiles ‘Dogs’ [Philippians 3:2]: 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging an Exegetical Dog?” BibInt 17 [2009]: 448–82) challenge to the commentary tradition since Chrysostom that Paul is using a common Jewish pejorative of Gentiles (“dog”) to demean the Judaizers. Nanos argues that the evidence for this is anachronistic. According to him, Paul’s “dogs” refers to pagan cultic figures and philosophies (including Silvanus, Diana, Cerebus, Hekate, Cybele, and Cynicism). These pagans are the ones who mutilate the flesh and do evil, while the people of God (the true circumcision) reject such practices. Nanos’s challenge to the view that “dogs” was a common Jewish derogatory depiction of Gentiles is strong, and it may be that Paul is simply calling his opponents derogatory names. Nevertheless, he presses his reading too far by seeing the fear of a return to paganism as the source of Paul’s warning. There is nothing here that the church needs to be aware of the danger of pagan thought. Though Paul addresses pagan practices elsewhere (1 Cor 9; 10:20–33), his main pastoral concern in his letters (especially Philippians) is to teach the churches to distinguish between true and false understandings of Christ, not to keep them from adopting their former pagan ways. In keeping with this, Paul’s autobiographical statements in Phil 3 reinforce that the context is his interactions with the Judaizers. Therefore, he may not be “flipping on its head” a Jewish insult of Gentiles, but he is most certainly calling the Judaizers “dogs.”

⁵⁰¹ This apparently abrupt move to the Judaizers is used to support multi-letter theories. But as discussed before, it is possible that the Judaizers have been alluded to earlier (1:15–18a). Nevertheless, given the sudden, overt introduction of the Judaizers, the burden of proof as to how Paul’s discussion of them fits comfortably rests on those arguing for the integrity of the letter.
The problem exists because most scholars read βλέπετε in 3:2 as a warning.\footnote{Loh and Nida (Handbook, 90) maintain that “it is important, therefore, to employ a rendering [of βλέπετε] which clearly means ‘beware of’ or ‘be on your guard against.’” They allege that this is absolutely necessary because of the context.} George D. Kilpatrick has argued, however, that βλέπετε is best understood as a spirited appeal to regard or consider the case of the Judaizers — not as a warning against their pending presence or potential influence.\footnote{Kilpatrick, “ΒΛΕΠΕΤΕ, Phil 3,2,” in In Memoriam Paul Kahle (BZAW 103; ed. M. Black and G. Fohrer; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968), 146–48. With the exception of a few (Garland [“Composition,” 147–73; Peterlin, Letter, 95] and more recently Park [Submission, 48–57]), most scholars have rejected Kilpatrick’s reading. Reed (Discourse, 244–46), for instance, calls it into question by holding that words must be defined semantically, not just syntactically. (For Reed, the context requires a warning.) Reed’s general point is right, but his rejection of Kilpatrick’s reading errs because (as I hope to show in this section) the semantic meaning of the text supports Kilpatrick’s syntactical observations.} Kilpatrick examined βλέπω in the NT, LXX, and Apostolic Fathers and found that it conveys a warning only when it is followed by ἀπό or μή. There is no evidence of βλέπω followed by an accusative to denote “beware of” in the NT, LXX, or Apostolic Fathers.\footnote{Silva (Philippians, 153) has disputed this reading by arguing that when βλέπω is followed by a μή clause (Matt 24:4; Mark 13:5; Luke 21:8; Acts 13:40; 1 Cor 8:9; 10:12; Gal 5:15; Col 2:8; and Heb 3:12), the verb itself partially expresses the idea of a warning. But as Park (Submission, 53) counters, the prohibitive element is the μή clause, not the verb. In each of these texts, there is an action that is being excluded or proscribed in the μή clause. Βλέπω does not itself voice the warning. Whereas, in 3:2 the only action being conveyed is βλέπειν.} If Paul is issuing some sort of warning in 3:2, he is going against established form and convention, which he himself follows in 1 Cor 8:9 (βλέπετε δὲ μή πως ἡ ἐξουσία ὑμῶν αὕτη πρόσκομμα γένηται τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν); 10:12 (‘Ωστε ὁ δοκῶν ἐστάναι βλεπέτω μὴ πέσῃ); and Gal 5:15 (εἰ δὲ ἄλληλοις δάκνετε καὶ κατεσθείτε, βλέπετε μὴ ὑπ’ ἄλληλων ἀναλωθῆτε).
The general response to Kilpatrick’s interpretation has been that anything less than a warning is inconsistent with the force of expression rightly detected in 3:2. In other words, Paul would not draw such attention to the Judaizers except to warn the church of them. But this argument is simplistic. His rhetoric does not require a pending threat. Rather, 3:2 points to the significance of the Judaizers’ opposition to Paul without requiring that it also forebodes their menacing of the Philippians. He is building towards συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε in 3:17, and he needs to strengthen his ethos — which he does by heightening the contrast between the Judaizers and himself.

The threefold βλέπετε, therefore, serves to show the stark difference between Paul and this particular group, the Judaizers, who followed a pseudo-gospel.505 Philippians 3:3–11 expresses Paul’s willingness to sacrifice everything for the gospel. His encounter with the Judaizers provides the best example of his sacrificial steadfastness. To that end, Phil 3:2 is not an urgent warning that Paul then immediately abandons. Further, he is not disturbed by the Philippians’ stance on justification by faith alone. There is no hint that the Philippians might reject his view.506 He discusses the question of justification by law or by faith in 3:9 because it was the matter at the heart of his conflict with the Judaizers.

505 Geoffrion (Purpose, 197) suggests that the change in tone in 3:2 “fits Paul’s rhetorical aim to draw a sharp wedge between the (false) theological alternatives and faith in Christ to underscore the absolute necessity of steadfastness.” Bloomquist (Function, 178) is correct, that this “tour de force requires Paul’s ‘opponents’ to prove the validity of their own experience of being ἐν Χριστῷ.”

506 Aída Besançon Spencer (Paul’s Literary Style: A Stylistic and Historical Comparison of II Corinthians 11:16–12:13; Romans 8:9–39, and Philippians 3:2–4:13 [ETSMS; Jackson, Miss.: Evangelical Theological Society, 1984], 206) argues that Paul’s style in this passage indicates that he “could communicate the most complex values to a receptive audience . . . [because] the Philippians could complete the meaning of his referents.” If Spencer
This is the safeguard (3:1) that Paul wants to provide in Timothy, Epaphroditus, and himself. These three comprise an instructive hedge for the Philippians that guards against any temptation to privilege anything (or anyone, including oneself) over the supremacy of the Pauline gospel.

In 3:3, Paul groups the Philippians with himself by using concepts he has already introduced (ἡμεῖς γάρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή [1:27; 2:14, 15], οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες [1:19, 27; 2:17, 25]). So when he comes to the key difference between the two groups (καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες), he has predisposed the Philippians to agree with him that the Judaizers stand outside the people of God.

Paul’s rhetorical synkrisis contrasts the worst example (the Judaizers) with the best example (himself). The underlying comparative question is what makes the

is correct, Paul is probably giving the church a digest of the story, including only the points that feature his resistance to the Judaizers. Besides, if Paul had feared that the Judaizers might find success among the Philippians, I would have expected him to showcase the damaging effect the Judaizers can have on a community.

507 Paul’s reference to a fictive kinship (ἀδελφοὶ μου ἐν κυρίῳ) in 3:1 also helps neutralize any perceptions that he is lording his position over them when he calls for their imitation of him. Their relationship is certainly hierarchical and Paul’s apostolic authority is present. Even so, Paul frames his role with the Philippian church as more an elder brother figure who is charged by the father to help train his younger siblings.

508 Dormey (“Readers,” 155) argues that Paul’s autobiography shows that he assumes their knowledge of the OT and Jewish Law.

509 Witherington, Philippians, 191–93. Kittredge (Community, 90) suggests that Paul introduces the Judaizers as a “third proof” (a negative example) in preparing for Paul. The logic of 2:19–3:21 would be as follows: (1) consider Timothy; (2) consider Epaphroditus; (3) consider the Judaizers; and (4) now consider me. Peterlin (Letter, 76–100) suggests that Paul’s strong language here is because the apostle detects similar divisive tendencies (especially “attitudes of superiority, spiritual arrogance, self-assertiveness, and self-righteousness” [p. 94]) in the Philippians themselves and he is trying to prevent them from taking root. Again, Peterlin’s argument sees division within the church (or between competing house-churches in Philippi) as the subject of
Judaizers so deplorable and Paul so admirable. Philippians 3:3–11 sets out the contrast between what the Judaizers value and what Paul offers. The former esteem what belongs to the sphere of σαρξ (Torah practices, ethnic lineage, personal accomplishment, religious zeal), whereas the latter prizes what belongs to Christ (especially the exaltation / resurrection that accompanies his suffering and death, 3:10–11).\(^{\text{510}}\)

In 3:2–11, Paul presents what he deems the most abhorrent of his rivals, the Judaizers, as a group united in the cause of advancing their position rather than submitting to the gospel of Christ.\(^{\text{511}}\) Philippians 3:2–11 is the protective teaching that Paul provides the Philippians in his self-presentation: one who boasts in Christ the epistle. But, if anything, the Judaizers had proven in Galatia that greater threat was their ability to turn a church against Paul.

\(^{\text{510}}\) Marc Debanne (“Paul face au judaïsme de son temps et de son passé: l’émergence d’une nouvelle circoncision,” Science et esprit 60 [2008]: 262–65) maintains that Paul’s radical redefinition of circumcision indicates that he is replacing the religion of Judaism with a more authentic experience of the Spirit available by converting to faith in the risen Christ. Methodologically, Debanné places Paul’s language within a history of religion approach that “softens” Paul’s faith by divorcing it from its Jewish roots into what he considers a more palpable experience of the Spirit. But Paul does not see his gospel as a new development that distances itself from its Jewish roots. On the contrary, he envisions his mission as part of the final movement of God’s salvific plan involving Israel, anticipated in the Scriptures (Rom 1:1–6). For Paul, faith in Christ is the fullest expression of fidelity to Yahweh and the revelation of the Law and the Prophets. He rejects the plan of the Judaizers precisely because it denies his understanding of the teaching of Scriptures now revealed in the advent, death, and resurrection of Christ.

\(^{\text{511}}\) Bloomquist (Function, 178–79) classifies 3:1–16 as a reprehensio designed to defuse the objections of the opponents. But this reading is more suitable to Paul’s argumentation in Galatians and 1 Corinthians than it is to Philippians. Paul’s words in 3:1–16 are targeting his rivals in Ephesus and those troubling the church at Philippi. And this targeting is more of an elucidation of their failings than a counter to specific attacks on his gospel. Paul’s reasoning assumes that the church at Philippi shares his view of the Judaizers.
sacrifices everything for the advance of the gospel. This sacrifice unites one to Christ and brings him or her into the exaltation enjoyed within Christ’s resurrection.

Philippians 3:12–16 imparts a second instruction: one who boasts in Christ is motivated to persevere to the end. The repetition of διώκω (from v. 6) in vv. 12 and 14 sets this tone. In this passage Paul asserts that faith requires a constant advance towards the goal of enjoying the resurrection of Christ.512 Ironically, he is the perfect example of maturity (τέλειος, 3:15) in the faith because he acts as one who is not perfected (οὐχ ὃτι ἡδη ἐλαβον ἡ ἡδη τετελείωμαι, 3:12).513 This helps account for the gravity that Paul places on his present situation in Ephesus (Phil 1:20): continued steadfastness reveals the quality (or status) of faith, more so than do one’s past victories (Ἐν δὲ, τὰ μὲν ὀπίσω ἐπιλανθανόμενος τοῖς δὲ ἔμπροσθεν ἔπεκτεινόμενος, 3:13). His own narrative personifies his encouragement of the church in 2:12–16a.514

Much more could be (and has been) said regarding Phil 3:3–16. Setting aside such bigger questions as the relationship between the Law and the Pauline gospel, Paul’s personal history, the Pauline understanding of righteousness, and the meaning of πίστις Χριστοῦ, I am concerned with the role of 3:1–16 in preparing the Philippians

512 As elsewhere in Philippians (1:6; 2:12–13), Paul maintains the interplay between human effort and providential control (διώκω δὲ εἰ καὶ καταλάβω, ἐφ’ ὦ καὶ κατελήμφθην ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, 3:12; and καὶ εἰ τι ἑτέρως φρονεῖτε, καὶ τούτο ὁ θεὸς ύμῖν ἀποκαλύψει, 3:15). The first expresses the election of the saints, the second their perseverance. Contra Marchal (Hierarchy, 145) and Osiek (Philippians, 99), who argue that these words carry a sense of foreboding and even coercion.

513 This parallels the irony of the Christ-hymn (2:6), that it is Christ’s denial of his divine rights that demonstrates his divinity.

514 There is no need, therefore, to assume that Paul is attempting to correct a problematic realized eschatology in the Philippian church.
for 3:17. First, Paul contrasts himself and the Judaizers so as to demonstrate that a true member of the people of God (ἡ περιτομη, 3:3) denies any personal privilege in the service of Christ and the gospel. His denial of personal advantage reflects Christ’s self-emptying (2:6–7). Second, by withstanding the Judaizers he gives prominence to perseverance as a sign of his being an authentic follower of Christ (2:8). Both of these subject matters have been featured in Paul’s exhortation up to this point. Further, 3:1–16 suggests that vv. 17–21 ought to be interpreted as a continuation of 1:27a.

6.6.2. Philippians 3:17–21

In my judgment, in 3:17, Paul exhorts the Philippians to join together as one body in emulating him (συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε) in following his pattern of discipleship. Paul’s self-confidence is not arrogance, but originates from his sacrificial perseverance for the gospel (3:2–16). He links 3:17–21 with 1:27–30 to

---

515 Similarly, Eve-Marie Becker (“Polemik und Autobiographie: Ein Vorschlag zur Deutung von Phil 3,2–4a,” in Polemik in der frühchristlichen Literatur: Texte und Kontexte [BZNW 170; ed. Lorenzo Scornaienchi and Oda Wischmeyer; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011], 233–54) suggests that Paul’s autobiographical statements in Philippians are not given to address a specific concern (that the Philippians desire to elevate Torah-observance) nor are they the product of later redactors. Rather, they have “a rhetorical appeal and a literary framing function in the argumentation of Chapter 3” (253).

516 The meaning of the second half of 3:17 (καὶ σκοπεῖτε τοὺς οὕτω περιπατοῦντας καθὼς ἔχετε τύπον ἡμᾶς) is dependent on the first half. The pattern available in those like him is that of himself.

517 Marshall (“Appeal,” 370) theorizes that Paul creates a “portrait of himself that casts him in authority roles.” Drawing on Aristotle’s three categories for creating an effective ethos (φρόνησις [good sense], εὖνοια [goodwill], ἀρετή [virtuous excellence]), he suggests that Paul maintains a positive ethos (mainly by identifying himself with either the Philippians or God / Christ) to create the impression that he can be trusted.
encourage the Philippian church to see that, by imitating him, it will fulfill the mandate
ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύσοθε (1:27a).\(^{518}\)

Self-boasting, however, is typically not an honorable approach in Greco-Roman rhetoric (see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Pomp. 92.28, cited from The Three Literary Letters [ed. W. Rhys Roberts; Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1901], 27–29; Quintilian, Inst. 11.1.17–18, 23 [referred to in Duane F. Watson, “Paul and Boasting,” in Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook (ed. J. Paul Sampley; Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2003), 78–79]). But Plutarch (Mor. 7.43.541 A–C; 540C) argues that self-boasting is permissible in circumstances where one is answering a charge or enhancing one’s reputation for the greater good. Scott C. Ryan (“The Reversal of Rhetoric in Philippians 3:1–11,” PRSt 39 [2012]: 67–77) maintains that Paul is following this exception in 3:1–11. In 3:5–6, Paul ironically composes his own apparent (brash) encomium only to dismantle it. This reversal serves to promote Paul by virtue of his “anti-boast” in both the ascribed and acquired honors. His humility, sustained by depending on Christ, becomes the boast (3:7–16) that advances his mission.


\(^{518}\) Paul is following both Jewish and pagan practices in calling on the Philippians to emulate him (Philo, Virt. 66; 4 Macc. 9:23; Seneca, Ep. 6:5–6; 7:6–9; 11:9; 52:8; Pliny, Ep. 7:17). In Ep. 52:8, Seneca writes, “Let us choose . . . men who teach us by their lives, men who teach us what we ought to do and then prove it by their practice. . . . Choose as a guide one whom you admire more when you see him act than when you hear him speak” (quoted in Witherington, Philippians, 214; see idem, 213–15, for other examples from Jewish and pagan writings). Engberg-Pederson (Paul, 117) argues that Paul is following “the pattern of a Stoic sage who realizes his own identity as a rational being and it follows from this that he will next reach out to other rational beings and try to bring them up to his own level.”

I take μου as an objective genitive. It is possible that it is associative — where the one actually being imitated is implied (as in 1 Cor 11:1). The difficulty with this reading (associative genitive) is the strongly autobiographical character of the passage. If Paul is pointing to his imitation of Christ, I would expect this to be explicit in the context. Contra Susan G. Eastman, “Imitating Christ Imitating Us: Paul’s Educational Project in Philippians,” in The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays (ed. J. Ross Wagner, C. Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb; Grand
Philippians 3:17–21 corresponds to 1:27–30. Both passages are concerned with the church’s corporate solidarity. This is the only occurrence of συμμιμητής (3:17) in the NT, LXX, or Apostolic Fathers. With it, Paul urges the Philippians to join together as a single unit that imitates him. If his desire were to present himself as an example for individual Philippians (or factions in the church) to follow, μιμηταί would have sufficed. Συμμιμηταί has the Philippians picture the church operating as a single,

---

Rapids: Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 427–51. Eastman argues against συμμιμηταί being a call to follow Paul, proposing instead that he is exhorting people to join him in becoming an imitator of Christ. She maintains that there is an interplay between Christ imitating humanity and humanity reciprocating by imitating him.

Hooker (“Philippians,” 534) holds that regardless of how one translates the genitive, the meaning is the same in that the ultimate referent is Christ. This flattening of the distinctions lessens the force of Paul’s words. Hooker’s reading of 3:17 as a call to imitate Christ naturally stems from her assessment that Paul’s exhortation is merely pedagogical, towards right living. She misses its polemical and ecclesial purpose. Paul addresses both his role in their faith and the insufficiency of other (that is, false) apostles to do the same.

519 Linko (“Letters,” 156–71) argues that this lexical connection does not prove the integrity of the epistle. He holds that the lexical connections “can be explained by the fact that Paul was writing explicitly to the Philippians.” Accordingly, Linko views Philippians as a composition of two letters (A: 1:1–3:1; 4:1–23; and B: 3:2–21): suggesting that this solution accounts for the difference in tone and content of 3:2–21 while affirming the unity of the other elements of the epistle.

Linko’s method, however, requires an arbitrary picking and choosing of when an overlap supports a letter’s integrity and when it is merely a by-product of circumstances. Further, Linko’s consideration that 3:2–21 marks a shift in tone and content disregards the interconnectedness between what Paul says about himself in 2:19–3:1. The shift in tone and content does not introduce a new movement, but serves to augment what he has been saying about himself when discussing Timothy and Epaphroditus.

520 In 1 Cor 4:16, Paul similarly exhorts the Corinthians to imitate him. There he writes μιμηταί μοι γίνεσθε, not συμμιμηταί. Μιμητὴς in 1 Corinthians possibly derives from Paul’s aggravation over the divisions within that church. The situation at Corinth is different from that at Philippi. Loh and Nida’s (Handbook, 114) solution is that “keep on imitating me (each and all of you)” best captures Paul’s intent in 3:17. This comes close, though it slightly perhaps neglects Paul’s focus on the collective uniformity of the church’s unity in its imitation of Paul.
homogeneous entity in following the example of Paul. This reference to the church’s collective unity to Paul is consistent with 1:27 (στήκετε ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι, μιᾶς ψυχής συναθλοῦντες). When coupled with his corporate injunction of 2:12 (καθὼς πάντοτε ὑπηκοόσατε [me, Paul], μὴ ὡς ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ μου μόνον ἄλλα νῦν πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἐν τῇ ἄπουσίᾳ μου), the pattern is evident: corporate solidarity in the fellowship of the faithful means following Paul’s apostolic teaching and example in unison. Even more, contextually συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε is the protective measure for the church (3:1). In 1:27, Paul calls for unity to the gospel to strengthen the church against its opposition (οἱ ἀντικειμένοι, 1:28). Likewise, in 3:18–19, he beckons the Philippians to be as one in their imitation of him because of the numerous enemies of the cross (πολλοὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦσιν οὕς πολλάκις ἔλεγον ύμῖν, νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίων λέγω, τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 3:18).

Various theories have been offered regarding the identity of these ἐχθροὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ. A strong case can be made that Paul is referring specifically to the Judaizers. First, Paul’s statement that he has referred to these groups often in the past (οὗς πολλάκις ἔλεγον ύμῖν, 3:18) accords with his statement in 3:1 about repeating himself regarding this struggle with the Judaizers. Second, his claim that their god is their stomach (ὡν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία, 3:19) has been argued to be a circumlocution for Jewish dietary customs, since he has mentioned circumcision, Torah practices, and Jewish commemorative days in 3:3–6. Third, and perhaps most importantly, is his similar

521 Vincent (Epistles, 116) also sees σύν rendering a union of the subjects of γίνεσθε, translating it “be unitedly imitators of me.”

522 Osiek, Philippians, 103.
language in Galatians to attack the Judaizers’ theology and ecclesiology (Gal 3:1; 5:11; 6:12).

It is unlikely that he is speaking only of Judaizers, however. “Enemies of the cross” is a suitable moniker for every opponent of Paul, especially those attempting to thwart his mission.523 The cross is the centerpiece of his gospel. Jesus’ crucifixion is an ironic display of divine power and wisdom that unites the believer to Christ (Rom 6:6; 1 Cor 1:23; 2:2, 8; 2 Cor 13:4; Gal 2:9; 5:24; 6:14; also Eph 2:16; Col 1:20; 2:14). To Paul, the Judaizers are enemies of the cross because they have rejected his gospel of justification by faith (Gal 2:15–21; 3:1–6) and his subsequent leadership in the churches of Galatia (Gal 1:6–11). But he also considered those in the church at Corinth who sought to gain position over other members to be against the cross of Christ (1 Cor 1:13, 17, 18). Several of these factions rejected his apostolic authority (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4–11; 4:2–7; 4:15; 2 Cor 10:7–11:14).524 And to reject Paul’s apostolic authority is to reject Christ, especially his cross.

In Philippians, this teaching about the cross is seen in Paul’s probable insertion of θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ (2:8) into what is likely an established hymn, disrupting its structure. This draws attention to the “unChrist-like character” of Paul’s rivals, who are seeking their own aspirations against him (1:15, 17). So when he speaks of the many ἐχθροὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ in Phil 3:18, he means any group that challenges his gospel,


524 Note that in 1 Cor 4:16–17 Paul also sends Timothy to the Corinthians to remind them of what he is teaching.
be they Judaizers in Galatia, his rivals plaguing him while he is imprisoned in Ephesus, the leaders of the factions in Corinth, or the group currently troubling the Philippians (1:30).\footnote{525}

\footnote{525} Koιλία (v. 19) is to be understood therefore as “stomach” as it pertains to “appetite,” not Second Temple dietary practices. The “appetite” of the enemies of the cross is to feed one’s fleshly / earthly ambitions (οι τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες, 3:19). Contra Jeremy Moiser (“The Meaning of koilia in Philippians 3:19,” ExpTim [1997]: 365), who argues that koilía is a euphemism for the circumcised penis. Williams’s (Enemies) book-length treatment on the subject suggests that “the cross” is present throughout Philippians. Even if Williams over-presses his reading at times, I follow his lead in that Paul understood that at the heart of his gospel mission was the cross of Christ. Williams (247) rightly notes regarding Phil 2–3 that the cross is the same standard for measuring the behavior both of the faithful within Paul’s circle and of his opponents. Williams (248) adds that the “enemies of the cross” is a Pauline depiction of any group that has sought to avoid the suffering and humiliation of the cross. While I think this is too limited a definition, my quibble is rather minor. Williams is correct to describe the theology of the cross as “he died for us,” and faith is manifested in one’s willingness to die for others and the gospel of Christ.

Peterlin (Letter, 98–100) argues that Phil 3 pertains to the divisions in the church at Philippi — and not to any real opponents that might have been present. Paul is illustrating the “incipient dangers of certain tendencies” present in the church at Philippi. According to Peterlin, Paul discerned these tendencies when Epaphroditus reported the situation at Philippi, even though his report was lacking in detail regarding its “precise theological ingredients.” This, argues Peterlin, accounts for the vagueness regarding the identity of the opponents in Phil 3. Further, he maintains that Paul assumes that the conflict at Philippi involves pride. But I find this suggestion unsustainable. First, it requires that Epaphroditus lacks a clear understanding of the supposed problem, yet has enough of a grasp of the situation to motivate Paul to address the matter. Second, though Paul apparently does not know why the community is fracturing, Peterlin assumes that it stems from pride. If this were correct, I would expect Philippians to resemble 1 Corinthians more than it does.

It is more plausible that the supposed “vagueness” on the specific identity of the “enemies of the cross” is because from Paul’s perspective all enemies are the same at their heart. David A. DeSilva (“No Confidence in the Flesh: The Meaning and Function of Philippians 3:2–21,” TJ 15 [1994]: 52) interprets Phil 3:2–21 similarly, stating that “for Paul it is not the opponents themselves but what is learned from the opponents’ mistaken or deficient understanding that is of central importance . . . the opponents function rhetorically as a foil to the example of Paul and, together with the other references to hostile or rival groups, as a device which aims at strengthening the cohesion and commitment of members of the group.” Along the same lines, Park (Submission, 41) maintains that Paul’s discussion of the Judaizers is not a digression, but
In Philippians, Paul divides those “proclaiming Christ” into two antagonistic bodies. Each group is similarly described in 1:27–30 and 3:17–21. One group is united with him and constitutes the people of God. In both passages, the same civil-language occurs (πολιτεύεσθε, 1:27; πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς, 3:20) to depict this community. Those with Christ are advancing towards salvation (compare ὑμῶν δὲ σωτηρίας, καὶ τοῦτο ἀπὸ θεοῦ [1:28] with ἐξ οὗ καὶ σωτῆρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν [3:20]). Those opposing the Pauline gospel are labeled enemies of Christ (the cross). Paul states in both 1:28 and 3:19 that this group is eschatologically fated to destruction (ἵτις ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἐνδείξις ἀπώλειας, 1:28; ὅν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια, 3:19).

Lastly, 1:27–30 and 3:17–21 both refer to perseverance. In 3:20, Paul links the salvation (or, rather, a fully consummated salvation) that still awaits to the imperative συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε. Philippians 1:29–30 likewise attests that the Philippians are enduring in the same manner as Paul. Further, the depiction of Christ transforming the faithful’s humble bodies into the likeness of his glorious body (ὁς μετασχηματίζει τὸ

is a “deliberate and essential element . . . in addressing the issue of self-promotion and the overall concept of the heavenly πολίτευμα (3:20; 1:27).”

526 Seyoon Kim (“Paul’s Common Paraenesis [1 Thess 4–5; Phil 2–4; and Rom 12–13]: The Correspondence between Romans 1:18–32 and 12:1–2, and the Unity of Romans 12–13,” TynBul 62 [2011]: 136–37) suggests that “the list of exhortations in Philippians passages is basically the same as the list in Rom 12–13 and 1 Thess 4–5, although the exhortations are presented in compact form in the former and are much enlarged and elaborated in the latter two lists.” While I disagree that the passages are “basically the same,” I concur that Paul’s language across his epistles tends to conceive of those who reject the gospel as one group (regardless of the manifestation of their disobedience).

527 Cotter’s (“Politeuma,” 102–3) argument, that Paul has πολίτευμα because it reflected the Philippians’ own terminology, is plausible. Paul C. Böttger (“Die eschatologische Existenz der Christen: Erwägungen zu Philipp 3:20,” ZNW 60 [1960]: 245–47) holds that the location of ἡμῶν before τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς conveys the same.
σώμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ, 3:21) parallels the perseverance-exaltation trajectory of Christ (2:5–9) and of the faithful (2:15). Peter Doble hypothesizes that ὃς μετασχηματίσει τὸ σώμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ (3:21) does not refer to the faithful’s metamorphosis from vile bodies to glorious ones. Rather, τὸ σώμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν refers to the persons who are “disciplined to humility” in the likeness of Christ and are awaiting their glorification. This reading is in line with my argument that the ταπ- words in Philippians serve to distinguish those who are authentic members of Christ’s body from those who are not (2:3, 8). So, in Phil 3:21 Paul is not contrasting the

528 Contra Kittredge (Community, 89), who argues that 2:9–11 does not correspond to 3:20–21 since the former is a completed act and the latter is a future act. But Kittredge’s evaluation is overly restrictive because the hope of the believer’s future transformation is founded on the completed exaltation of Christ.

Several scholars (Hooker [“Philippians 2:6–11,” 151–64]; Kurz [“Imitation,” 103–26]; Paul Minear [“Singing and Suffering in Philippi,” in Fortna and Gaventa, Conversation, 202–19]; Stowers [“Friends,” 120]; Bloomquist [Function, 135, 168, 184]; Fee [Philippians, 314]; Oakes [Philippians, 121]) propose that Paul composed Phil 3 to conform to 2:5–11. Contra Brian J. Dodd (“The Story of Christ and the Imitation of Paul in Philippians 2–3,” in Martin and Dodd, Christology, 154–61), who argues that any such similarities are reductionistic.


530 Jeremy R. Treat (The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2014], 156) maintains that the Christ-hymn conveys both exaltation through humiliation and exaltation in humiliation, not exaltation after humiliation. Treat’s argument applies to 3:21: the “lowly ones” are already exalted, shining like stars.
believers’ present corruptible bodies with their future perfected ones (as he does in 2 Cor 5:1), he is affirming that Christ will exalt the humble.

Philippians 3:18–21 is two complex sentences that depict the two different ways that Paul has been presenting throughout the letter: the way of the faithful and humble who will come to salvation, and that of the self-centered who are destined for destruction. Philippians 3:18–21, together with 3:17, gives a succinct summary of Philippians. In sum, by following Paul’s example, the Philippian church can be assured of its place among the people of God.\textsuperscript{531} His own history in this contest against alternative Christian belief systems in 3:2–14 is to strengthen the church’s resolve. This summons to corporate imitation serves a polemical purpose by placing any group that takes a position against Paul under the label “enemies of the cross.”

6.6.3. Philippians 4:1

Philippians 4:1 reveals what motivated Paul to devote almost a quarter of the epistle to his self-presentation and direct call for imitation.\textsuperscript{532} He loves the Philippians and treasures their fellowship. Paul twice expresses his love for them in this verse. He calls them his beloved brothers and sisters (ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί) and again beloved (ἀγαπητοί), terminology that conveys the fictive kinship relationship they share in

\textsuperscript{531} Dodd (“Story,” 160) similarly argues that Paul’s self-exemplification is primarily a statement about Christ’s soteriological accomplishment in creating those who are now “in Christ.” See further Geoffrion, \textit{Purpose}, 201.

\textsuperscript{532} Geoffrion (\textit{Purpose}, 202) argues that 4:1 makes explicit the principal issue in all the exhortations: the need for the Philippians to stand firm in their Christian identity.
Christ. Paul also describes them as his joy and crown (χαρὰ καὶ στέφανός μου). Χαρὰ connects the church’s corporate imitation of him with the other “joyful” actions (1:4, 18, 25; 2:2, 17, 29; 3:1). Στέφανος likely refers to the reciprocal eschatological character of their relationship, from which each benefits from the blessing received by the other (1:6, 26, 28; 2:15–16). That is, the Philippian church will be Paul’s crown of glory, his boast, if they remain with him until the end.

6.7. Summary

I have argued in this chapter that Phil 2:19–4:1 is not a digression. Everything in 2:19–4:1 is directed towards guiding the Philippians to the hoped-for conclusion that they must remain in their fellowship with Paul. Following an established practice in deliberative rhetoric, Paul sustains his main argument by giving three “ocular proofs” of loyalty: Timothy, Epaphroditus, and himself. His dispatch of Timothy and Epaphroditus also demonstrates his love for the Philippian church. Paul ends this section by presenting himself as the paradigmatic follower of Christ to be emulated by the church. Finally, the links between 3:17–21 with 1:27–30 indicate that he considers

533 Contra John T. Fitzgerald ("Philippians," 148), who contends that this terminology reflects “friendship language.”

534 See also 1 Pet 5:4: καὶ φανερωθέντος τοῦ ἀρχιποίμενος κομμεῖσθε τὸν ἀμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον.

535 Osiek (Philippians, 108) states that the reference to the crown need not be viewed eschatologically. This view, however, works against the thrust of Philippians and Paul’s evocation of the heavenly city. Paul speaks similarly of the church at Thessalonica in 1 Thess 2:19.
his example to have a normative value for the Philippians’ faith and eventual
eschatological destiny. 536

I have attempted to show that συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε (3:17), like each of the
imperatives that preceded it (πληρώσατε, 2:2; ὑπηκοόσατε, 2:12; ποιεῖτε; 2:14;
προσέχεσθε, 2:29), points back to 1:27, filling out what is meant by ἀξίως τοῦ
εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε.

536 So already Victor P. Furnish (Theology and Ethics in Paul [Nashville, Tenn.:
7.1. Overview

With Phil 4:1, Paul completes his primary set of injunctions and ends the probatio that began in 2:1. But before he begins the peroratio in 4:4, he makes a brief, almost parenthetical, appeal in 4:2–3. Following the peroratio (4:4–9) he closes the epistle, returning to the occasion that instigated its writing, namely, the matter of the Philippians’ financial support (4:10–20).

In this chapter I will argue that both the appeal to Euodia and Syntyche and the peroratio are designed to recall previous petitions and to ensure the persuasive strength of 4:10–20. Further, Paul delays speaking directly about the church’s financial support until he has set the proper condition for considering this aid. Philippians 1:1–4:9 is where he lays out this argument to prepare the Philippians for his final words about their gift. Thus I offer a reading of 4:10–20 through this lens.

---

537 According to Lausberg (Handbook, 236), a peroratio had two purposes: to refresh the memory and to elicit an effective response. See further Edward P. J. Corbett, Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student (3d ed.; New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1990), 303; Kennedy, Interpretation, 10–11, 48; A. H. Snyman, “Persuasion in Philippians 4.1–20,” in Porter, Rhetoric and the New Testament, 326. Philippians 4:4–9 is best classified as a peroratio because it comes at the end of the epistle and performs these two tasks; so already Witherington, Philippians, 30, 242–43; contra Watson, “Analysis,” 76–77. Watson argues that 4:2 begins the peroratio. But 4:2–3 introduces too much new material to be included in the peroratio. Even more, Snyman (“Persuasion,” 331) points out that 4:3 contains an enthymeme, which is rare in a peroratio. The transition from imploring specific named figures in 4:2–3 to the more thematic general command χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ πάντοτε (4:4) marks a change in the rhetorical structure of the epistle.
7.2. Philippians 4:2-3

The lack of grammatical indicators of a transition from 4:1 to 4:2, along with παρακαλῶ with an object in 4:2, signals that Paul has moved to a new appeal.\textsuperscript{538} The general sense of this appeal is plain: Euodia and Syntyche, two women in the church, are at odds with each other and Paul desires that they be reconciled. The bulk of scholarly interpretations of 4:2–3 speculate about the aspect of the dispute that prompts Paul to mention it directly. Though much of the discussion is unproven because of the brevity of the reference, the terminology of 4:2–3 and the general purpose of the letter provide some guidance.

A few preliminary observations can be made. First, the women’s dispute is not the primary reason Paul wrote the epistle.\textsuperscript{539} Paul waits until near the end to mention this division, and even then very briefly. Indeed, there is no reference to their quarrel elsewhere in the letter. Some scholars have seen 4:2–3 as evidence (if not the source) of

\textsuperscript{538} Carl J. Bjerkelund (Parakalô: Form, Funktion und Sinn der parakalô-Sätze in den paulinischen Briefen [Bibliotheca Theologica Norvegica 1; Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1967]) has demonstrated that Paul frequently begins a new appeal section with this combination.

\textsuperscript{539} Contra Nils A. Dahl, “Euodia and Syntyche and Paul’s Letter to the Philippians,” in The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks (ed. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1995), 14. Dahl suggests that “it makes sense to read the letter with the assumption that the disagreement between Euodia and Syntyche is the chief problem Paul faces and the main reason why his joy over the Philippians is less than complete.” Dahl adds that Euodia and Syntyche were likely competing for honors in the church, and that Paul writes Philippians to address this aspiration. While Dahl and I agree that humility is one of Paul’s primary subjects in Philippians, the way he addresses Euodia and Syntyche does not indicate that this is a concern.
disunity within the Philippian church. But as this study has attempted to show, there is little to indicate that there is any rift within the Philippian church. Unity in Philippians typically refers to the church’s corporate solidarity with Paul. Elevating the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche to something divisive communally forces a reading that contradicts the tone of the epistle.

Second, Paul does not consider these women to be in opposition to him. In his letters, he routinely follows the rhetorical practice of addressing his friends by name, but not his adversaries. By naming these women Paul marks them as allies. He offers

---

540 So James M. Boice, Philippians: An Expositional Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1971), 267; Kittredge, Community, 93; Silva, Philippians, 192; Hansen, Philippians, 282; Still, Philippians, 121.

541 My study strongly differs with Peterlin’s (Letter, 101–32) here. Peterlin holds that the two women were διάκονοι [which he defines as “leading / hosting a house-church]. He finds that Paul’s mentioning of them by name means that the dispute between the two was widespread. According to Peterlin, Paul discusses this dispute after Phil 3 because their quarrel reflected the “incipient perils of the tendencies” that so concern him. Finally, Paul refuses to take sides because he does not want to show favoritism: “if there is blame, it is on both sides” (p. 131).

But Peterlin’s reconstruction requires that Paul took a light-handed approach when dealing with divisions between households that were dividing the church. This is inconsistent with his typical approach to such circumstances. Further, Peterlin’s argument does not account for the brevity of Paul’s address to a situation that, in his words, is “so distinctive . . . within the larger disunity-situation in the church” (p. 123). Peterlin’s solution is counterintuitive: there is a major division growing in the church, yet one that Paul distances himself by delegating it to others to resolve. His hypothesis rests primarily on the fact that Paul addresses the two women directly. In my judgment, it is the lack of attention that Paul gives to this matter that indicates its relative insignificance. Though Peterlin makes a convincing argument that both Euodia and Syntyche likely were financial leaders of the church, his treatment of their conflict seems predetermined by his thesis.

three commendations of them. First, he says that they both struggled at his side for the gospel mission (ἀἵτινες ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ συνήθησαν μοι). He also counts them among his coworkers (συνεργοί), a term that he applies to Epaphroditus in 2:25 to denote a person whom he trusts with the work of his mission. Finally, by declaring that their names are in the Book of Life (ὅν τὰ ὄνόματα ἐν βιβλίῳ ζωῆς, 4:3), Paul affirms that the women will receive the eschatological blessings that belong to the faithful.

His allusion to Dan 12:1 (καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ὑψωθήσεται πᾶς ὁ λαός, δὲ ἃν εὐρεθῇ ἐγγεγραμμένος ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ), when combined with his previous reference to Dan 12:3 in Phil 2:15 (ἐν οἷς φαίνεσθε ὡς φωστῆρες ἐν κόσμῳ), means that he deems Euodia and Syntyche to have a persevering faith. In light of this, Paul’s manner of addressing the two women shows that whatever the dispute between them, he considers it neither theologically disqualifying nor a current challenge to his apostolic authority. His respectful treatment of Euodia and Syntyche stands in contrast to the harsh criticism he directs towards his rivals in Phil 1:15, 17, 18a.

Third, Paul does not take sides on this issue nor offer his opinion as to a direct course of action. He implores them both individually, using the same language (Εὐοδίαν παρακαλῶ καὶ Συντύχην παρακαλῶ). Παρακαλῶ indicates that he is not

---

543 Francis X. Malinowski (“The Brave Women of Philippi,” BTB 15 [1985]: 60–64) proposes that this is a reference to the women’s help during Paul’s initial ministry work in Philippi in the 40s.

544 See previous discussion in Chapter Six.

commanding them, but urging them to be reconciled. The extent of Paul’s counsel is that the two women are to be of one accord in their intent (τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν).

Given these preliminary observations, the natural question is why Paul mentions the situation at all. I submit that he singles out this incident for public reading because it offers the church the opportunity to respond immediately to his call that its members be corporately united to him (3:17) and to receive his affirmation of Epaphroditus’s leadership. It also anticipates his own remarks regarding his reconciliation with the church (4:10).

Though the details are lacking, there are hints that the quarrel between Euodia and Syntyche involve the church leadership’s decision to send the church’s contribution to Paul. Witherington notes that “in Greek and Roman oratory, women were not mentioned by name unless they were notable or notorious.” Since Paul speaks directly to these women by name, it is likely they are leaders in the church. It was not uncommon in ancient Macedonia for wealthy women to support and influence

---

546 Unlike 1 Cor 5:1–7, where Paul directly rebukes the Corinthians for their failings, declares his apostolic authority, and issues a direct command.

547 See BDAG, s.v. φρονέω 2 (p. 1065).

548 Contra David M. Allen, “Philippians 4:2–3: ‘to Agree or not to Agree? Unity is the Question,’” ExpTim 121 (2010): 537. Allen holds that Paul ignores the cause of the conflict because he values relational matters over doctrinal orthodoxy.

549 Witherington, Philippians, 233; so already David M. Schaps, “The Women Least Mentioned: Etiquette and Women’s Names,” CQ 27 (1977): 323–30; Kittredge, Community, 91. There is little reason to doubt that these two individuals are women. Since Roman women were addressed by the family’s cognomen and not their personal names, we can surmise that these two are Greek (Macedonian) women, not Roman.

civic and religious organizations.⁵⁵¹ As leaders in the church, they were possibly part of the initial decision to withhold aid to Paul (4:10), as well as the more recent decision to resume it.⁵⁵² Though this is speculative, one can easily imagine Epaphroditus reporting that the cessation and resumption of support was connected to the dispute between Euodia and Syntyche.⁵⁵³ Moreover, Paul’s desire that the two τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν κυρίῳ connects 4:2 with similar language in 1:27–30; 2:2; and 3:16.⁵⁵⁴ Each of those earlier references conveys his wish that the church remain united to him.⁵⁵⁵ Therefore Paul’s imploring of Euodia and Syntyche to be in harmony with each other fits this same


⁵⁵² Osiek (Philippians, 111–12) suggests that these two women provided space in their household for the church to gather. Holloway (Consolation, 48) hypothesizes that Paul singles them out because their distress over Paul’s incarceration was the most disruptive in the church since they had previously been among his key supporters. Paul’s imprisonment, then, was at the heart of the fractiousness in Philippi (147).

⁵⁵³ Dahl (“Euodia,” 7) hypothesizes that “the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche was not merely a personal quarrel but was related to their work and trials for the sake of the gospel.” Contra Cousar (Philippians, 82–83), who suggests that the brevity of this appeal, its separation from 4:10–20 by the peroratio, and the lack of reference to finances, means that the situation does not involve the church’s financial support. But, as I have attempted to show, the entire epistle attends to this matter. Cousar’s approach requires that Paul must directly mention specifics even if the cause of the dispute was well known to the community and therefore did not warrant restating.


⁵⁵⁵ Geoffrion, Purpose, 116.
purpose. By placing the appeal directly after 3:2–21, he situates their reconciliation within the church’s response to his summons in 3:17.

Mending the rift between the two women is also an opportunity for the church to demonstrate its positive reception of Epaphroditus. Determining the identity of this person is difficult.556 But it seems to me that the enigmatic figure is most likely Epaphroditus, because he is the one bearing the letter. Stowers shows that it was common for the person carrying the letter also to be recommended in the letter to do a

---

556 Frequently noted proposals include the following: (1) An individual named Σύζυγος; so Meyer, Handbook, 194–95; Gnilka, Philippbrief, 166; Ollrog, Paulus, 28, 88, 182; so CJB, GW, MSG, NOG. Γνήσιος Σύζυγος becomes a play on words, “rightly named Syzygos.” But there is no evidence elsewhere of the term being a proper name; see BDAG, s.v. (p. 954); (2) Paul’s wife: so Clement of Alexandria, Strom. 3.6.53. This suggestion likely stems from the term’s association with marriage; see LSJ, s.v. (p. 1670): “yoked together, paired united, esp. by marriage”; BDAG, s.v., (p. 954): “ἡ σύζυγος=‘wife.’” There is no indication in Acts or the letters that Paul was married, however; see especially 1 Cor 7:1–7; 9:5; (3) Timothy: so Schmithals, Paul, 76–77, 252; Collange, Epistle, 143. This would recall γνήσιος in Phil 2:20. There Paul says that Timothy “genuinely” cares for the Philippians. The difficulty with this reading is that it would have Paul delay their reconciliation until Timothy can eventually get there; (4) Epaphroditus: so Lightfoot, Philippians, 158; Reumann, Philippians, 629; Witherington, Philippians, 239; see above for my preference for this; (5) Luke: so Bruce, Philippians, 113; Fee, Philippians, 394. If Luke is the person identified with the “we-passages” in Acts, the narrative implies that Luke was in Philippi during the intervening years between Acts 16 (the first “we-passage,” when Luke arrives with Paul at Philippi) and Acts 20 (the second “we-passage,” coinciding with Paul’s return to Philippi, suggesting that Luke then departs with him). This proposal has a lot to say for it. Nevertheless, I would have expected Paul to have mentioned Luke by name. Σύζυγος does not occur elsewhere in Paul as an epithet. It does not appear to be a moniker he reserves for those who travel with him. Further, there would be no “awkwardness” in naming Luke such as there might be in naming Epaphroditus; (6) the Philippian church: so Hawthorne, Philippians, 242; Michael J. Gorman, Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 445. If so, this is the only occurrence of σύζυγος as a reference to a church. Besides, in this passage Paul is bringing individuals to the forefront, not the church as a whole. O’Brien (Philippians, 481) maintains that “it is no longer possible to determine with certainty just whom Paul has in mind.” So also Bockmuehl, Philippians, 241, Hansen, Philippians, 285.
certain task. 557 One ought not be surprised that Epaphroditus is not mentioned by name, because “it would be awkward for Epaphroditus as messenger to read these words publicly in Philippi.”558 Further, συζυγος is similar to Paul’s commendations of Epaphroditus in 2:25–30. Epaphroditus as “true yokefellow” also accounts for why Paul gives no specifics about this situation: Epaphroditus had this knowledge himself.559 It places the reconciliation of Euodia and Syntyche within Epaphroditus’s broader task of representing Paul to the church (2:25–29).

Most striking about 4:2–3 is the gentle and measured quality of Paul’s wording. He praises both Euodia and Syntyche, avoids criticizing either woman for deficient belief or enmity with him, and addresses them both equally, offering no judgment against either party. This is all the more remarkable if my proposal is correct that the dispute involved the leadership’s decision to support Paul.

By responding to the Euodia-Syntyche conflict in this manner, Paul announces to the Philippian church that he does not consider their temporary cessation of support to constitute a break in their fellowship or a sign that their faith in the gospel has waned. His harsh language regarding his rivals (1:15, 17, 28; 2:14; and especially 3:2, 18–19) presents him as one who is unforgiving of those who stand against him. Therefore

557 Stowers, Writing, 153. For example, Ps. -Dem. Typoi epistolikoi 2: “So-and-so who is conveying this letter to you, has been tested by us and is loved on account of his trustworthiness. . . . Indeed, you, too, will praise him to others when you see how useful he can be.”

558 Reumann, Philippians, 629.

559 If one of the women were pessimistic about Paul’s effectiveness as a missionary, Epaphroditus’s eyewitness testimony to the spread of the gospel in Ephesus (1:12) would mitigate against her complaint. If this is correct, Paul’s hurried return of Epaphroditus is understandable.
he uses the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche to show that he does not extend this same animosity to them. Paul trusts the Philippian leadership to continue in their reengaged participation. He avoids shaming them and protects the stability of the fellowship by treating them gently.

Philippians 4:2–3 anticipates 4:10–20 by signaling that Paul's treatment of the church in general will not be punitive. The kindness of Paul towards Euodia and Syntyche (and the parties they represent) also engenders a favorable hearing for Paul's advice about giving. Lastly, by mentioning several individuals (Euodia, Syntyche, the true yokefellow [Epaphroditus], Clement, and the rest of Paul's coworkers), Paul defines life in their fellowship of the gospel as an act of communal love, trust, and faith. He considers the Philippian church as a singular familial unit, one not comprised of competing factions.

7.3. Philippians 4:4–9

Philippians 4:4 marks the beginning of the peroratio. Philippians 4:4–9 follows the standard two-part peroratio form, in which a repetitio (4:4–7) is followed by an adfectus (4:8–9). The repetitio restates the main subjects (4:4–7) while the adfectus

---

560 Perhaps more correctly, it shows Paul's trust in God to correct any lingering misgivings (Phil 3:15).

561 Witherington, Philippians, 242. See Cicero, Inv. 1:52–56; Quintilian, Inst. 6.1.1–8; Aristotle, Rhet. 3.19. Paul A. Holloway ("Notes and Observations Bona Cognitare: An Epicurean Consolation in Phil 4:8–9," HTR 91 [1998]: 89–96) argues that 4:8–9a is itself an instance of avocatio-revocatio, an Epicurean rhetorical technique encouraging the turning of one's mind away from what is painful to what is pleasant. See further idem, Consolation, 153.
makes an emotional appeal (*pathos*), often designed to provoke action.\(^{562}\) I shall first identify the reiterations present in 4:4–7, and then discuss the rhetorical qualities of 4:8–9. I will also show that Paul’s *peroratio* is to prepare the Philippians for the “dénouement” of his epistle, 4:10–20.\(^{563}\)

7.3.1. Philippians 4:4–7

The *peroratio* begins with χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ (4:4). By introducing his emotive summary in this way, Paul places the subsequent exhortations of 4:5–9 within the framework of his gospel mission. As I noted previously, Paul presents χαίρω / χαρά as the character or right response to the advance of the gospel. Whatever the precise correspondence between 4:4b–9 and other Greco-Roman moralizing, 4:4a sets his final advice within his overall purpose for writing Philippians.

Therefore the interpretation of Phil 4:5 (τὸ ἐπιεικὲς ὑμῶν γνωσθῆτω πᾶσιν ἄνθρωποις, ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς) may be presumed to be consistent with the subject of Philippians. Ἐπιεικής (forbearance, gentleness) conveys the sense of not standing on

---

\(^{562}\) Witherington’s (*Philippians*, 242) rhetorical analysis of this section contributes significantly.

\(^{563}\) Witherington (*Philippians*, 29, 242) notes that it was not uncommon for an ancient orator to have a “dénouement” (his term for “concluding comments”), after the *peroratio*, to address any remaining pressing concerns. His position is that Paul has waited until now to mention the gift because of the awkwardness of the subject matter. I will contend that it is the significance of the gift, not social discomfort, that warrants Paul’s delay. Kittredge (*Community*, 90) argues that 4:10–20 constitutes the emotional appeal of the *peroratio*. 
personal rights but being generous towards others.\textsuperscript{564} Τὸ ἐπιεικὲς ὑμῶν γνωσθῆτω πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις (“let your forbearance be known [visible] to everyone”) fittingly follows Paul’s exhortation to rejoicing. The joy of a follower of Christ is authenticated by a humility that is recognized by others. This attention given to the visibility of lowliness likely means that Paul considers his humbleness while incarcerated to be part of his public testament (1:13). This contrasts with his rivals’ intent on self-advancement (1:17). The “joy-humility” pattern is also in 2:1–4, where sacrificial service to each other (μηδὲν κατ᾽ ἐριθείαν μηδὲ κατὰ κενοδοξίαν ἀλλὰ τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ ἀλλήλους ἠγούμενοι ὑπέρεχοντας ἑαυτῶν, 2:3) is included as part of Paul’s call for the Philippians to make his joy complete (2:2). Philippians 3:21 declares that the humble will be glorified at Christ’s return (ὁς μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ).

Paul consistently demonstrates his refusal to press advantage. His acceptance that his presence is still needed by the Philippians (1:24–6) parallels his willingness to be poured out as a libation in their sacrificial service to Christ (2:17a). He couples this statement with χαίρω καὶ συγχαίρω πᾶσιν ύμῖν τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ καὶ ύμεῖς χαίρετε καὶ συγχαίρετε μοι (2:17a–18). His dispatch of Timothy and Epaphroditus (those meant to help him) to the Philippian church (2:19–30) corresponds to his refusal to claim privileged status (3:4–6) or a right to rest (3:12–14). Therefore by linking τὸ ἐπιεικὲς ὑμῶν γνωσθῆτω πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις (4:5) with χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ πάντοτε (4:4), Paul qualifies true gentleness as an expression of a heart that celebrates the gospel mission.

\textsuperscript{564} Aristotle, Eth. nic. 5:10; BDAG, s.v. ἐπιεικής (p. 371); H. Preisker, “ἐπιεικής,” TDNT 2:589. In the LXX, the term refers to God’s patience with corrupt humanity (Ps 85:5; Bar 2:27). Second Corinthians 10:1 lists it as a characteristic of Christ.
This pairing anticipates 4:10–12, where he will locate his acceptance of the Philippians’ aid within the scope of worship and not as part of some expected honorarium.

Ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς (4:5) interrupts the series of exhortations. Its meaning is difficult, given the lack of grammatical connectives with the surrounding verses and the ambiguity of ἐγγύς. Like the English “near,” ἐγγύς refers to nearness, usually to spatial or temporal proximity. Scholarships are divided between the two, the majority claiming that ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς is eschatological. In this sense, Paul’s words parallel the early Christian plea, μαράνα θά (1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20). Paul’s reminder that the time of the Lord’s return approaches, consequently, becomes an exhortation to persevere a little longer and to an encouragement now that their time of vindication draws near. This makes 4:5b similar to Jas 5:7–8 (Μακροθυμήσατε οὖν, ἀδελφοί, ἐκ τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου . . . μακροθυμήσατε καὶ ύμεῖς, στηρίξατε τὰς καρδίας ύμῶν, ὅτι ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου ἠγγίκεν).

But although the subject of persevering until the return of Christ is dominant (especially in 2:15–16), this temporal interpretation of ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς is to be rejected. When ἐγγύς connotes temporal proximity, it is always a time or an event that is near, not a person. O’Brien diminishes the significance of this, reasoning that “there seems to be little difference between saying the parousia is near or that he is near. Clearly Paul

---


567 BDAG, ibid.
believed in an imminent advent, in the sense that it *might* happen at any time.\(^{568}\)

O’Brien is correct that the arrival of the Day of the Lord means the presence of the Lord, but this does not mean that the reverse is true. The nearness of the Lord in some mystical sense is not synonymous with the onset of the Day of the Lord. In Jas 5:8, it is the event of the παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου that is ἐγγύς, not the κύριος himself.

In Philippians, Paul presents the Day of the Lord as a future event (1:6, 10; 2:16). But it is not evident that he sees this moment as imminent. The tenor of his language regarding continued perseverance implies that he sees a lengthy passage of time before this day arrives. In Phil 3:20–21, he does state that believers are eagerly awaiting (ἀπεκδέχομαι) the coming of Jesus. There is no hint regarding how long (or brief) this eager expectation is to be maintained, however. Moreover, Phil 3:20–21 speaks to the reward that belongs to the faithful when Jesus comes, not to the immediacy of his coming.

In support of the spatial sense of ἐγγύς it has been proposed that Paul is drawing from the OT, especially the Psalms, to reassure the Philippians of the Lord’s comforting and strengthening presence during suffering.\(^{569}\) For example, LXX Ps 144:18 reads ἐγγύς κύριος πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις αὐτόν.\(^{570}\) David M. Stanley hypothesizes that Paul echoes Ps 144:18 in 4:5 to transition from his discussion of prayer to his treatment of

---


\(^{570}\) See also LXX Ps 33:18; 118:151.
the Philippians being troubled.\textsuperscript{571} Ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς, therefore, corresponds to εἰ τις οὖν παράκλησις ἐν Χριστῷ (2:1). So a suitable paraphrase of 4:5 is as follows: “The Lord is near [to the brokenhearted, so take heart and] do not be anxious about anything.”

Nevertheless, despite the strength of this reading, it limits Ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς by connecting it primarily to Paul’s words about not being troubled. But if Ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς is linked to τὸ ἐπεικὲς ύμῶν γνωσθῆτω πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις, the sense changes to one more fitting his overall aim in the epistle. A preferred paraphrase that unites the two parts of 4:5 is: “Let your forbearance be evident to all, because the Lord is present among you.” The presence of Christ is evident when the Philippians are conducting themselves accordingly (1:27). This pattern is not foreign to the letter. For instance, the Philippians demonstrate the validity of their faith by their submission to the sovereign plan of God.\textsuperscript{572} This parallels 2:5–11, and Christ’s humility as foundational to his obedience to God’s plan for bringing salvation to his people. Finally, Phil 4:5 anticipates 4:15–19, where Paul characterizes the Philippians’ gift to him as an act of worship and evidence of their continued devotion to God.

The final reiteration that Paul includes in this part of the peroratio is the purpose of prayer (4:6–7). Most commentators treat his turn towards anxiety (μηδὲν μεριμνάτε) as a general encouragement to the church. This reading is supposedly supported by


\textsuperscript{572} This is especially evident in Phil 1:27–2:18. “The Lord is near” parallels “The kingdom of God / heaven is near” in the Gospels. In the Gospels, the sovereignty of God is present in the person of Jesus. Acceptance of this is marked by repentance and belief. In Philippians, the sovereignty of God within the church, i.e., in a body of people that has repented and believes in Christ, is expressed by forbearance and perseverance.
μηδὲν and ἐν παντὶ in 4:6. But since 4:4–5 arguably echoes the epistle’s main subject of steadfastness, Paul’s words on anxiety and prayer may to be similarly interpreted. But this point will need to be argued, not merely stated.

There are two specific references to prayer in Philippians, in 1:3–11 and 1:19. Paul prays that the Philippians’ love (of the gospel) may abound in knowledge and discernment so that their place among the faithful may be assured on the Day of Christ (1:9–10). His concern is to ensure the Philippians’ perseverance and their reception of eschatological blessings. In 1:20, Paul cites his unease that his current troubles with his rivals while incarcerated will cause his resolve to dampen. In both instances (1:3–11; 1:19), the act of prayer is part of the mutuality of fellowship. In the first, Paul prays (εὐχαριστέω, 1:3; 4:6) for the Philippians’ growth in their love of the gospel. In the second, it is the Philippians who are praying that Paul will faithfully endure his hardships. Therefore, regardless of what other matters are potentially included in μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε (4:6), the main interest that drives prayer in Philippians is the welfare of the members of the fellowship.

This prayer of the faithful will be met by the advent of the peace of God that guards the hearts and minds of the people (ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ . . . φρουρήσει τὰς

573 There are four different terms for prayer in this section: προσευχή, δέησις, εὐχαριστία, αἰτήμα. This variation of terms is mostly stylistic. With the exception of εὐχαριστία, there is little reason to find in each a different type of prayer.

574 Concern for others is a constant characteristic of the fellowship (2:3–4; 20; note: Paul says that Timothy is concerned [μεριμνᾶω] for them; 26). Since a statement of inspired confidence complements prayers given from anxiety, Paul’s words in 2:13 (θεός γὰρ ἐστιν ὁ ἐνεργῶν ἐν ψυχή καὶ τὸ θέλειν καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας) most likely disclose that in 2:12–18 he expresses his expectation that the Philippians are / will be anxious about their prospects of meeting his demands.
καρδίας υμῶν καὶ τὰ νοήματα υμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, 4:7). Various interpretations have been offered regarding the meaning of ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ, but the most common is that prayer relieves anxiety because it is replaced by trust in God. In Philippians, however, the peace of God that guards the hearts and minds refers to more than the absence of worry. It is the gift of an inspired certainty. For instance, Paul’s prayer for the Philippians in 1:3–10 is accompanied by his confidence that the church will be sustained by God’s protection (πεποιθῶς αὐτὸ τὸῦτο, ὅτι ὁ ἐναρξάμενος ἐν υμίν ἔργον ἄγαθὸν ἐπιτελέσει ἄχρι ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, 1:6).

7.3.2. Philippians 4:8–9

Paul ends his peroratio with two parallel sentences in 4:8–9. He composes the two sentences, I shall argue, to stir the Philippians so as to prepare them for his final appeal for support. Verses 8 and 9 exhibit the same structure, each sentence driving towards its concluding imperative. The rhetorical structure of these two verses indicates that the peroratio is reaching its climax, the summit being Paul’s final appeal.

575 Philippians 1:19 may be another example. If my suggested reading is right, Paul is convinced that his present circumstances will end in his salvation (οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι τοῦτο μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν) because of the Philippians’ prayers and provisions, both of which are from the Holy Spirit (διὰ τῆς υμῶν δεήσεως καὶ ἐπιχορηγίας τοῦ πνεύματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). See Chapter Three, above.

576 The introductory τὸ λοιπὸν, followed by the vocative of address (ἀδελφοὶ), sets 4:8 apart from the first part of the peroratio.

577 Fee (Philippians, 413) detects a three-part structure. First, each begins with a series “whatever things” emphasized rhetorically by the repeated ὅσα in v. 8 and repeated καὶ in v. 9. Second, each list is qualified in the first instance by compounded “if” clauses (εἰ τις ἄρετή καὶ εἰ τις ἐπαινοῦ), in the second by the prepositional phrase ἐν ἐμοί. And third, each concludes with appositional ταῦτα followed by the imperative (ταῦτα λογίζεσθε, ταῦτα πράσσετε).
exhortation that the Philippians put into practice all that they receive from Paul (ἀ καὶ 
ἐμάθετε καὶ παρελάβετε καὶ ἡκούσατε καὶ εἶδετε ἐν ἑμοί, ταῦτα πράσσετε, 4:9).

The distinct role of 4:8 as part of the peroratio is not Paul’s call to the Philippians
to ruminate on the listed virtues in themselves. Rather, in my judgment 4:8
anticipates 4:9, where Paul declares that these things (ὅσα ἐστὶν ἀληθῆ, ὅσα σεμνά, ὅσα
dίκαια, ὅσα ἀγνά, ὅσα προσφιλή, ὅσα εὑρήμα) are authentically present in him.

There has been no shortage of studies comparing Paul’s list in Phil 4:8 with
those in ancient moralists’ writings; see e.g., B. S. Easton, “New Testament Ethical
Lists,” JBL 51 (1932): 1–12; Dibelius, Thessalonicher, 95; Beare, Philippians, 148; Jan N.
Sevenster, Paul and Seneca (NovTSup, 4; Leiden: E. Brill, 1961), 153–55; Furnish, Theology,
88; Abraham J. Malherbe, Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook (LEC 4;

Markus N. A. Bockmuehl (Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the
that “Philippians 4:8 would seem to confirm that the demands of the gospel encompass
what is good for humanity in general. . . . The general Hellenistic nature of this list of
virtues has been often pointed out: aside from the address to Christian believers
(ἀδελφοί), it contains little or nothing that could not have been written as part of
contemporary Stoic moral exhortation. The paradox is that after his repeated
development of a stark antithesis between Christ and the world, Paul now offers a
properly inculturated Christian exhortation in the philosophical vernacular of Roman
Philippi.” Witherington (Philippians, 250) also argues that Paul “incorporates such
terms [Greco-Roman virtues] into his own thought world and into the matrix of the
story and example of Christ and . . . of his followers, including the apostle himself.” So
also Wendell Willis, “The Shaping of Character: Virtue in Philippians 4:8–9,” ResQ 54

So already Bockmuehl (Philippians, 254): “There is no implied contrast of v. 8
with v. 9. Instead, the change in Greek pronouns from the indefinite hosα in v. 8 to the
definite ha of v. 9 indicates a more particular resumption of the former in the latter.
Sentences beginning with ha kai often introduce a further and specific elaboration of
the preceding subject at hand (cf. similarly Acts 11:30; 26:10; 1 Cor 2:13; Gal 2:10 [here ὅ
καί, however]; 1 Pet 3:21; 2 Macc 4:33; 3 Macc. 3:1]”; so also O’Brien “these excellent
characteristics described in general terms [v. 8] had been presented clearly and
specifically in Paul’s teaching and instruction as well as by his exemplary behavior [v.
9]; contra Sevenster, Paul, 152–56; Fee, Philippians, 414; Schenk, Philippberiflhes, 270.
Philippians 4:9 is not adding to the list but elucidating what Paul means by giving it.  The one who follows his lead is the one who is truly virtuous.

To achieve this end, Paul first mentions what the Philippians learned (ἐμάθετε) and received (παρελάβετε) from him. This refers to the confessions and practices that were handed down from the apostles to subsequent followers of Christ. Therefore the Philippians are to see the virtues that Paul gave to them as the embodiment of the gospel and traditions of the church.

Second, he offers his own example (ἀ... καὶ ἡκούσατε καὶ εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοί) as a second repository of virtue. This recapitulates one of the letter’s constant subjects, namely, that the more the church is like Paul the more its faith is confirmed. Paul’s certainty that his presence is needed to keep the Philippian church true motivates him

O’Brien (Philippians, 508) regards ἃ καί as introducing a subordinate clause, ἃ being a relative pronoun dependent on its antecedent ταῦτα (v. 8). But the parallel structure of v. 8 and v. 9 seems to require that the ἃ is cataphoric, i.e., dependent on ταῦτα in v. 9.

Accordingly, I translate 4:8–9: “Finally, brothers and sisters, all that is true, all that is honorable, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is lovely, all that is worthy of admiration — indeed, whatever is morally excellent, whatever is praiseworthy — attend to these things. Indeed, put into practice these very things, which are what you learned and received from me, what you heard from me, what you saw in me. And then the God of peace will be with you.”

Many hold that in v. 9 Paul adds to the list he began in v. 8; others maintain that v. 9 is in contrast to v. 8. The difficulty with the latter is that it requires that καί at the start of v. 9 be adversative (a relative rarity in the NT). The former is the more likely of the two, but it also is not without problems. I find it questionable that Paul would introduce a “new” exhortation in his peroratio. But this is the outcome if 4:9 is not epexegetical. Rather, I consider 4:8–9 to be similar to 2:1–4, the meaning of a “general” statement (2:1; 4:8) being redefined along more Pauline lines.

Ἐν ἐμοί modifies the whole list in v. 9; so already Sumney, Philippians, 107. The repetition of καί joins the four verbs in the relative clause.

See also 1 Cor 11:23; 15:3; 2 Thess 3:6. See also Pol. Phil 3:2.
to seek to come to them again (1:25–26). Philippians 4:9 reminds the reader of 1:30, where Paul expresses that he considers the church to be united to him because it shares in the same struggle which they saw and now hear in him (ἐΐδετε ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε ἐν ἐμοί). Further, he tells his own story of resisting his rivals (3:4–16) to prepare the ground for his call in 3:17 that the Philippians become united in their union with him (συμμιμητά μου γίνεσθε). Thus Paul offers himself as the paradigm of one who lives out what it means to be numbered among the followers of Christ (1:27–30).

Whereas the result of prayer in 4:7 is the advent of God’s peace upon the faithful, the result (connective καὶ) of putting into practice Paul’s teaching is the presence of God himself (καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἔσται μεθ’ ὑμῶν). O’Brien rightly holds that by referring to the divine as ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης, Paul is presenting God as the source and giver of all true blessings, including final salvation. This provides a hedge against reading ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἔσται μεθ’ ὑμῶν as a restatement of 4:7. The force of ὁ θεὸς

---

583 Holloway (“Notes,” 95) suggests that 4:9a refers to Paul’s “choice to focus on what is good in his circumstances, and not what is bad.” He sees this as part of Paul’s strategy to help the Philippians fight anxiety arising from difficult circumstances. This of course corresponds to Holloway’s overall classification of Philippians as a letter of consolation. My overall reading differs from Holloway’s; nevertheless, we both see 4:8–9 as referring to what Paul has said previously regarding his confidence in God’s oversight of his mission, his belief that hardship is a gift, and his conviction that suffering leads to knowing Christ.

584 Witherington (Philippians, 258): “[Philippians 4:9] shows exactly what sort of relationship he [Paul] had with his audience.” Paul is the one who conveyed the gospel and passed along sacred tradition; so already Willis P. de Boer, The Imitation of Paul: An Exegetical Study (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok, 1962), 186–87.

585 ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης is one of Paul’s favorite designations for God (Rom 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor 13:11; 1 Thess 5:23).

586 O’Brien, Philippians, 512.
τῆς εἰρήνης ἔσται μεθ’ ὑμῶν is not in τῆς εἰρήνης but in ἔσται μεθ’ ὑμῶν. God’s presence with the Philippians is contingent upon the Philippians persevering in the true gospel.  

So Phil 4:8–9 is an apt summary of the entire epistle because of the prominence it gives to the Philippians’ imitation of Paul. In other words, the church conducts itself in a manner worthy of the gospel (1:27) when it thinks and acts as Paul does. Its concern for praxis is also consistent with the letter’s repeated attention to good and bad examples. And finally, the union of ταῦτα λογίζοθε (4:8) with ταῦτα πράσσετε (4:9) forms a thematic inclusio with Paul’s opening prayer for the church (1:9–11). All this prepares them to receive Paul’s words regarding their gift (4:10–20) as an act befitting a virtuous eschatological fellowship.

7.3.3. Summary of 4:4–9

The first half of the peroratio recalls several of the main subjects of the epistle: rejoicing, forbearance and sacrifice, evidence of loyalty to the Lord, mutuality in prayer. Each of Paul’s exhortations in 4:4–7 also anticipates 4:10–20, preparing the Philippians to receive his final words regarding their support. The second half of the peroratio (4:8–9) offers a rhetorically rich summary, drawing the reader once more into the supremacy of the Pauline gospel as the revelation of true virtue and the basis for...

---

587 This is similar to the covenantal language in Exod 6:6 and Jer 31:33 (LXX 38:33). The promise of divine accompaniment is the promise that God makes to his people, Israel.

588 Fee (Philippians, 419) says of v. 9 that “it is not surprising that [the exhortations] end on the note of ‘imitation.’ Not only is such imitation urged on them explicitly in 3:17, but this motif . . . is probably in view from the beginning of the letter.”
persevering in God’s covenantal assurance.

7.4. Philippians 4:10–20

With nearly the entire epistle still sounding in the mind of the Philippians, as well as the peroratio, Paul now squarely addresses the gift the Philippian church sent with Epaphroditus. It is not that he waits until the end to discuss this matter because of social sensibilities. Having considered the fact of the church’s fellowship in the Pauline mission, he presents their offering as he sees it: as a creaturely reality set apart for divine purposes, as a fruit of righteousness (1:11). I will argue in this section that Phil 4:10–20 is both Paul’s affirmation of the correctness of the Philippians’ actions in supporting him and a subtle appeal for this sharing to remain a part of their fellowship.589

7.4.1. The Delay of 4:10–20

Various theories have been espoused regarding the placement of 4:10–20. Most of these stem from the premise that it is irregular in Greco-Roman epistolary convention for someone to delay the acknowledgement of a gift until the end of the letter.590 This has led some to hold that 4:10–20 was an initial letter sent by Paul to the

589 So already Peterman, Gift, 121.

590 Ingratitude was considered a major vice, indicative of a flawed character. Seneca (Ben. 1.10.4) declares that “homicides, tyrants, traitors there will always be; but worse than all these is the crime of ingratitude.” Seneca considers ingratitude a universally recognized crime against society (Ben. 3.1.1; 3.6.1; 4.16.3; 5.15.1–2). Similarly, Cicero holds that a man who does not acknowledge or repay a gift is not to be called a good man (Off. 1.48; 2.18.63).
Philippians, penned immediately upon Epaphroditus’s arrival with the church’s aid. On the other hand, many who uphold the integrity of the epistle have proposed that Paul put off discussing the support until the end because of the delicateness required when discussing finances and relationships.

I have addressed the question of integrity in Chapter One and often since, and therefore will not repeat the entire argument again. Nevertheless, as a reminder: there is no textual history or patristic commentary to support 4:10–20 ever being divorced from its present location. Further, Peterman shows that it was not uncommon for ancient Hellenistic letters between close relations to locate expressions of gratitude toward the end of the letter.591 As mentioned above, rhetorical convention also allowed for a matter of special interest to come between the peroratio and the farewell. Lastly, as I have tried to show, this is not in fact the letter’s first mention of the Philippians’ support, only its most sustained treatment (see 1:5, 7, 19; 2:25, 30).

The question, therefore, is not whether 4:10–20 comes at the end of Paul’s letter, but why it does. Related to this, why does Paul seem to give a “thankless thanks”?592

591 Peterman, Gift, 18.

592 Vincent (Epistles, 146) attributes the label “thankless thanks” to Carl Holsten, which means the tag was being used in the late nineteenth century (if not earlier). It became a frequently used apellation for this pericope in the twentieth century (see Dibelius, Thessalonicher, 95; Lohmeyer, Philipper, 178; Gnilka, Philipperbrief, 173). The label stems from εὐχαριστέω (and its cognates) not appearing in 4:10–20. Attempts to find hints of gratitude in 4:10–20 have nevertheless been made. Schenk (Philipperbriefe, 43) suggests that since χαίρω shares a common semantic field with εὐχαριστέω, the former, found in 4:10, is Paul’s thanksgiving to the church; but this attempt to find “gratitude” via etymology has received little support (see Silva, Philippians, 208). But χαίρω is a thanksgiving to God in the same way that εὐχαριστοῦ τῷ θεῷ is an offering of praise (see the discussion of 1:3 in Chapter Two). Martin (Philippians, 164) and Bruce (Philippians, 154) see καλῶς ἐποίησατε (4:14) as sounding a note of gratitude. Peterman
The answer to both questions comes from reading 4:10–20 through the lens of the entire epistle. From his opening words in 1:1 Paul has crafted his letter to persuade the Philippians to adopt his view of their partnership in the gospel mission. It is incorrect to say that the entire letter has been moving towards this moment. It is equally incorrect to view 4:10–20 as an appendix loosely connected to 1:1–4:9. Rather, Paul’s depiction of the Philippians’ gift shows why it mattered to him and spurred him to write to the church.

(Gift, 145), however, argues that the past tense of ποιέω with καλώς is not an expression that typically carries the meaning “thank you.” Holloway (Consolation, 155) reads the same phrase as a “formal acknowledgement” of the receipt of the gift.


Gerald W. Peterman (“‘Thankless Thanks’: The Epistolary Social Convention in Philippians 4.10–20,” TynBul 42 [1991]: 261–70) argues that Paul’s silence is consistent with the epistolary convention of intimate friends withholding verbal statements of gratitude. He examines various non-literary papyri, especially P. Merton 12, and finds that verbal gratitude was typically withheld as a social convention in correspondence between those who were intimate; that gratitude in the form of repayment was of primary significance; and that when verbal gratitude was offered, it took the form of an expression of debt (262). Therefore Peterman maintains that one should not expect a statement of thanks in Phil 4:10–20 because Paul is following standard practice within the topos of friendship. Peterman’s proposal has garnered much support; see Holloway, Consolation, 156–57; Fee, Philippians, 446; Engberg-Pederson, Paul, 319; Reed, Discourse, 282–83.

593 So already Snyman (“Persuasion,” 335): “I am convinced . . . that 4.10–20 also recapitulates an important topos in Philippians, namely, thanksgiving, referred to in 1.5 and 2.25–30.”

As I hope my discussion of 4:10–20 will show, the correlation between 1:1–11 and 4:10–20 indicates that the latter is to be read in light of the former. These two sections form an inclusio to the entire epistle. Unsurprisingly, 4:10–20 recalls several passages because the gift, if its meaning is properly grasped, symbolizes the unique theological conviction which envisages God as the supreme giver of all gifts and the Philippians as mediators of divine resources.” Briones thus challenges Peterman’s theory, arguing instead that it is Paul’s understanding of the role that he and the Philippians have as brokers of God’s gifts that accounts for the apparent lack of gratitude in 4:10–20. Briones rejects Peterman’s argument on the grounds that: (1) it is not certain that Philippians can be compared with ancient friendship-letters since it lacks several characteristics typical of such correspondence; (2) that Philippians is not private correspondence between two individuals (like the papyri of Peterman’s study), but is a letter of an apostle to a community; and (3) that the friendship model only accounts for two parties in gift exchange (Paul and the Philippians), but does not account for God’s presence. Briones holds that Paul sees the Philippians as brokers between God (patron) and himself (Paul). Further, when Paul is supplying the Philippians, he serves as the broker between God (patron) and them (clients). Since the giver of the gifts, and not the broker, deserves the gratitude, Paul refrains from giving thanks directly to the Philippians. The fellowship between the Philippians and Paul is a matter of each serving as broker to the other in the distribution of God’s gifts, with all honor going to God as a result (see Briones, “Thanks,” Figure 2c, 62). See further David E. Briones, Paul’s Financial Policy: A Socio-Theological Approach (LNTS 494; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), especially 58–130.

Though my conclusions were reached independently of Briones’s, they are quite similar. Briones and I maintain that 4:10–20 reflects Paul’s theological concern to place his fellowship with the church within the activity of God’s work and benefaction. Briones’s study of 4:10–20 is consistent with my reading that Paul sees both himself and the church as being divinely appointed to serve each other in the advance of the gospel. My study parts with Briones’s in that I add that the benefaction of God that each party distributes to the other is part of God’s plan to advance the gospel mission, whereas Briones (63–64) reads 4:10–20 as describing more generally the relationships created among all Christians. While I do not disagree with Briones’s (63) assessment that “the earth-shattering grace of the Christ-event . . . transforms Christ-followers into mutual brokers of grace for one another,” in my estimation Briones’s reading of κοινωνία is too general and does not account for the centrality of mission in Paul’s conception of this relationship.

595 So already Suggs, “KOINONIA,” 123.
relationship that exists between Paul and the Philippians in their joint service to God.  

7.4.2. Philippians 4:10–14

Structurally, Paul introduces the main idea of 4:10–20 with ἐχάρην δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ μεγάλως ὃτι ἡδη ποτὲ ἀνεθάλετε τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν (4:10a). He next supplies two parenthetical comments (4:10b and 4:11–13). Philippians 4:10b (ἐφ᾽ ὧ καὶ ἐφρονεῖτε, ἰκαιρεῖσθε δὲ) protects the honor of the Philippian church, while vv. 11–13 maintain the apostle’s honor. In 4:10–13, Paul introduces how he intends the Philippians to see this gift he received from them. Finally, Phil 4:14 is a reaffirmation of the Philippians’ actions, framed in terms of their fellowship.

7.4.2.1. Philippians 4:10

I have argued that the arrival of Epaphroditus with the church’s gift shapes the whole of the epistle. Philippians 4:10a gives evidence of this in that Paul says he greatly rejoiced (ἐχάρην μεγάλως) over the gift because it signaled that the Philippians were interested in him again. Two phrases in 4:10 anchor Paul’s statement to the rest of the epistle: ἐχάρην δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ μεγάλως and τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν.

As discussed previously, Paul applies language of joy / rejoicing only to the gospel mission. Therefore ἐχάρην δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ means that Paul understands the

---

596 Davis (Criticism, 90) notes that Phil 4 is also linked to Phil 1 by Paul’s return to the subject of the Philippians’ association with him in his imprisonment. This indicates that Paul considered the church’s proper understanding of his imprisonment (1:12) to be vital to the purpose of the epistle.
Philippians’ gift as indicative of their renewed participation in the gospel mission.\(^{597}\)

The addition of μεγάλως discloses the relief this moment brought for Paul. This is the only time in the epistle that χαίρω is modified. In 2:18 and 3:1, Paul exhorts the Philippians to rejoice over his actions on their behalf, but here he declares that he greatly rejoiced over theirs.

Ἔχάρην δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ μεγάλως substantiates Paul’s claim in 1:3–5 that he offers thanksgivings and joyful prayers to God because of the Philippians’ continued commitment to his gospel (ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ύμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν). Paul can write to the Philippians in a spirit of joy, not out of sorrow or anger (2 Cor 2:4; 7:8; Gal 1:6). His joy that the Philippians’ presence in the gospel mission has bloomed again (ἕδη ποτὲ ἀνεθάλετε) is so strong that he no longer counts their recent lack of support against them.

The phrase τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν further illustrates that Paul considered their gift a signal of continuance of their part of the fellowship with him. In Philippians, φρονέω predominantly describes the harmony one has with others who are committed to the gospel. For example, in 2:2 Paul exhorts the Philippians to make his joy complete by being in harmony (τὸ ἀυτὸ φρονήτε), in light of the gospel. In 2:5 and 4:2, φρονέω conveys more specifically the harmony that exists among those who belong to Christ.

\(^{597}\) In eight of its nine occurrences (this being the final one) in Philippians, ἐν κυρίῳ modifies a mental or emotional state (πείθω, 1:4; 2:24; ἐλπίζω, 2:19; χαίρω, 3:1; 4:4, 10; στήκω, 4:1; φρονέω, 4:2). The only exception is προσδέχομαι in 2:28, and even there a mental or emotional motivation might not be too distant. The relationship between 2:28 and 4:10 is strengthened in that Paul rejoiced in the Lord at the arrival of Epaphroditus and the Philippians are to welcome Epaphroditus in the Lord on his return from Paul. Campbell (Paul, 163) understands “in the Lord” as causal in that Paul recognizes the Lord’s provision in the Philippians’ care for him.
Paul hints in 3:15 (ὅσοι οὖν τέλειοι, τοῦτο φρονῶμεν· καὶ εἶ τι ἐτέρως φρονεῖτε, καὶ τοῦτο ὁ θεὸς ὑμῖν ἀποκαλύψει) that such thinking is a sanctifying work of God. The only time φρονέω does not describe a harmony such as this is 3:19, where he proclaims the eventual destruction of his opponents (enemies of the cross of Christ) because their mind is on earthly things (οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες).

Τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν (4:10) recalls καθὼς ἑστιν δίκαιον ἐμοὶ τοῦτο φρονεῖν ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν διὰ τὸ ἐχεῖν με ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμᾶς (1:7). Paul justifies his love for the Philippians in his opening remarks because their gift indicated that they remained fellow partakers in his stand for the gospel, even in prison (1:7b). He reciprocates their concern (1:7a, 8), consequently, on account of this rekindling (ἀνεθάλετε τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν, 4:10). Paul’s desire to see them again (1:24–25; 2:24) is in response to the arrival of Epaphroditus.

7.4.2.2. Philippians 4:11–13

A subtle rebuke is issued in 4:10a with ἡδὴ ποτέ. Nevertheless, Paul is writing not to shame them over their inaction but to affirm them in their renewal. He therefore does not allow the hurt of the rebuke to be long endured, and offers his first parenthetical qualification: ἐφ’ ᾧ καὶ ἐφρονεῖτε ἡκαίρεισθε δέ. Several commentators maintain that Paul quickly makes this parenthetical comment in order to remove any unintended sting that the Philippians might have felt from ἡδὴ ποτέ. But this is not

598 Caird (Letters, 152) states that “it is difficult to read the words ‘now at length’ without the feeling that Paul might have written more graciously and thus saved himself the trouble of correcting a possible misunderstanding in the following sentence.”; similarly Peterlin, Letter, 211. But as noted above, nothing prevented Paul from not writing or removing ἡδὴ ποτέ if this was a concern.
very satisfactory, because if Paul wanted to remove the bite of ἡδὴ ποτέ he could have removed the phrase altogether. Parenthetical ἔφ’ ὦ καὶ ἐφονεῖτε ἡκατρεῖο δὲ lessens (but does not eliminate) the disgrace intimated by ἡδὴ ποτέ.

Paul’s words are those of someone operating within the Greco-Roman framework of honor and shame. An undiluted rebuke damages relationships. Therefore it is better to shame indirectly. He allows the Philippians to maintain their honor, but without complete absolving them of any misstep. By not specifically identifying what caused the delay, he also signals to the church that this issue is no longer a major one, and that he trusts there will be no future interruptions in their involvement. This maneuver has its own persuasive force by compelling the Philippians to validate Paul’s honoring and trusting them.

Whereas the first parenthetical comment serves the fellowship by protecting the Philippians’ honor, the second (4:11–13) shields Paul’s honor and guards against the church seeing itself as his patron. Paul’s financial dealings with his churches were knotty (1 Cor 9:12; 16; 2 Cor 8–9; 12:13; 1 Thess 2:9). A major contributing factor to

Suggestions as to why the Philippians lacked opportunity include the inability of the leadership to collect from the various members (Hendricksen, Philippians, 204); the absence of someone to bring the gift (so H. C. G. Moule, Epistle, 116); inability to get to Paul (so Martin, Philippians, 175); poverty (so Gerhard Barth, Der Brief an die Philippier [ZBK 9; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1979], 75); and a previous command by Paul to cease their giving (so Bruce, Philippians, 124). Though the cause of this delay is unknown, it is possible given the overall subject of the epistle that the Philippians had doubted the wisdom of continuing to back a mission led by one in prison.

One debated issue is why Paul accepts support from the Philippians but not from the Corinthians (2 Cor 11:9). Part of the resolution is that the Philippians were supporting his mission outside Philippi, whereas the Corinthians were seeking to support him while he was with them. Paul justifies his actions in Corinth on the grounds that he does not want to be a burden to them (2 Cor 11:9), but wants to proclaim the gospel free of charge (2 Cor 11:7; 1 Cor 9:15–18). In addition, his refusal to
the difficulty in these interactions was the patron-client structure in the Greco-Roman world. The essence of a patronal relationship was that it is reciprocal and asymmetrical regarding the value of the gifts exchanged. In brief, patron and client accept aid from the Corinthians stems from their propensity to division (1 Cor 1:12). Accepting aid from the Corinthians would exacerbate the issue. Sampley (Partnership, 55) is doubtlessly correct that Paul did not need to have the same policy with every church regarding the acceptance of support. Similarly Marshall, Enmity, 233–52.


did not share an equal status because of the former’s ability to provide needed resources that the latter could not gain on his own. These resources were necessary for the client’s survival (physically or socially). They often took the form of tangible commodities, such as arable land, money, or food. But they could also be intangibles, like protection, commendation, advice, and access to influence. It was not the particular thing that was needed by the client that drove this relationship, but that the client needed the particular thing. This state of dependence, more than the actual goods exchanged, constituted one’s identity as a client.

In exchange for receiving these needed goods from the patron, the client was expected to give back to the patron. Since it was lack of resources that connected the client to the patron in the first place, a client could hardly give something from himself, and therefore typically gave of himself to the patron. This often took the form of enhancing the patron’s reputation through public honoring and praising, voting in elections, services (especially from orators and artists), and participating in the patron’s causes. Because this relationship was mutually beneficial, persons of unequal status could become strongly bound to each other for long periods of time. In brief, if the two parties were involved in a continuing reciprocal exchange of gifts of different value, one party was understood to be the patron of the other.

To avoid having the Philippians determine that their relationship had become patronal (with him as the client), Paul emphatically denies in 4:11 that he was constrained by dire physical straights. He is trying to walk a very delicate path. He does have physical needs (1:19; 2:20), and he does accept aid. But he does not want their gift to be seen as an offering of goods to one in need, as if to a client. Philippians
4:11–13 is his attempt to show that the Philippians are not meeting the needs of someone who is desperate for their assistance. He has needs, but he is not in need (οὐχ ὃτι καθ’ ὅστερον λέγω, 4:11a). He does not depend on them; therefore there can be no patronage.

Paul justifies his position in 4:11b–13. He has learned to be self-sufficient (αὐτάρκης, 4:11b). Again in 4:12 he declares that he has learned the secret of being content in any and every situation (ἐν παντὶ καὶ ἐν πάσιν μεμόημαι). Indeed, several studies have noted the similarities between Paul’s statements in this passage and ancient philosophies, especially Stoicism.602 But when Paul speaks of learning the secret of self-sufficiency, he is referring to the divine revelation he has received.603 He depicts his contentment as a divine work in his life (πάντα ἵσχὺ ἐν τῷ ἑνδυναμοῦντί με, 4:13). It is not the Philippians who are sustaining Paul, but God. Therefore the place of 4:13 in Paul’s overall argument is not to be minimized. He makes this statement in

---


603 In Philippians, knowledge is considered a gift from God. In 1:9–10, Paul prays that the Philippians’ love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight (ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει) so that they may discern what is best (εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα) regarding their pursuit of holiness. Paul understands this knowledge to be something that God bestows. In 1:16, those who are supporters of Paul support him out of knowledge that his incarceration was by God’s design to advance the gospel (εἰδότες ὅτι εἰς ἀπολογίαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου κείμαι). Philippians 1:12 indicates that this knowledge must be of God’s giving. Philippians 3:4–11 contrasts the fleshly way that enemies of the cross see things and the way the faithful know by revelation: that the power of salvation is Christ’s death and resurrection. In 3:15, Paul calls on the faithful in Philippi to see things as he does, but with the qualification that only God can reveal the truth of his teaching (δόσοι οὐν τέλειοι, τούτο φρονώμεν· καὶ εἰ τι ἐτέρως φρονεῖτε, καὶ τούτο ὁ θεός ύμῖν ἀποκάλυψει).
the context of his joy at receiving the gift from the church. The entire reciprocal process that governs Paul’s and the church’s relationship is of God’s doing. Paul views the Philippians’ desire to give to him as part of God’s will to see him strengthened. He rejoices that the church has remained part of this divine endeavor. In other words, God’s sovereign plan to strengthen his church and advance his gospel includes the mutuality between Paul and the Philippians.\(^6\)

Philippians 4:13 furthers this idea. In his opening thanksgiving, Paul declared his confidence that God will complete the eschatological good work that he began in that church (πεποιθὼς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ὅτι ὁ ἑναρξάμενος ἐν ὑμῖν ἔργον ἂγαθὸν ἐπιτελέσει ἄχρι ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, 1:6). In 1:25, Paul has remarkably similar language in presenting the necessity of his continued ministry with the Philippians towards this end (καὶ τοῦτο πεποιθῶς οἶδα ὅτι μενῶ καὶ παραμενῶ πᾶσιν ὑμῖν εἰς τὴν ὑμῶν προκοπὴν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως). He sees his service to them as something that is God’s work.

This same pattern occurs in 2:12–13. In 2:12, Paul exhorts the church to sustain their obedience to him as evidence of their salvation (ὦστε, ἀγαπητοί μου, καθὼς πάντοτε ὑπηκοόσατε . . . τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζομεν). Next, he pairs this with his insistence in 2:13 that it is God who directs the whole of their faith (Θεὸς γὰρ ἐστιν ὁ ἑνεργῶν ἐν ὑμῖν τὸ θέλειν καὶ τὸ ἑνεργεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας). A possible paraphrase of

\(^6\) Abraham J. Malherbe (“Paul’s Self-Sufficiency [Philippians 4:11],” in Fitzgerald, Friendship, 138) suggests that Paul’s self-sufficiency is presupposed in his discussion of the friendship that exists between him and the Philippians. Paul desires to “raise the matter of their gift to a higher plane, that of friendship” (138), and introduces his self-sufficiency to make the act of giving a relational act rather than the meeting of a need.
4:13 is as follows: “I am able to do the work of the gospel in every circumstance because I can trust God to give me strength, as he has just now through your fellowship and support.”

7.4.2.3. Philippians 4:14

To prevent his statements in 4:11–13 from demoralizing the Philippians, in 4:14 Paul reaffirms the worth of the Philippians’ offering. Now ἀνεθάλετε τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν (4:10) becomes συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει. This phrase brings to mind several passages earlier in epistle, most notably 1:7 (συγκοινωνούς μου τῆς χάριτος πάντας ὑμᾶς ὄντας). The parallelism between 1:7 and 4:14, along with 1:30 (τὸν αὐτὸν ἁγῶνα ἔχοντες, οἷον εἶδες ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε ἐν ἐμοί), suggests that Paul considers his affliction and suffering for the gospel to be a gift from God (1:29; 3:10).

But συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει here is not just a reference to the Philippians having shared in the general struggle for the gospel, nor is it a reference to the similarities that exist between the sufferings that Paul endures and those of the Philippians. Though θλίψεις can refer to eschatological struggle, the contextual specificity would seem to limit it to Paul’s current affliction. Paul is not commending them for their general support, but for the specific linking of their interest with his

---

605 Πλήν in 4:14 reveals that 4:11–13 indicates that he thought the actions of the Philippians generous, but not necessary for his physical well-being. Further, it breaks off the discussion, and so allows Paul to return to the rightness of the Philippians’ actions, not Paul’s contentment. “In any case” is the most suitable gloss (see similarly 1 Cor 11:11).
struggle during his incarceration at Ephesus. His statements regarding his circumstances when Epaphroditus arrived, therefore, determine the meaning of συγκοινωνήσαντες μου τῇ θλήσει. There, in 1:17, Paul describes the actions and motivations of his rivals, who sought to gain advantage from his imprisonment. He writes that their selfish ambition and impure motives drove them to increase his distress (θλίψις). This is the only other occurrence of θλίψις in Philippians. And there it was his rivals’ attempts, and not his chains, that were the true cause of his suffering.

It is in this context that 4:14 finds its significance. Their gift not only strengthened his body, but even more it lifted his spirits — he had not been laboring in vain (2:16; see also Gal 2:2; 1 Thess 1:2; 3:5). They made known their allegiance to him publicly. The Philippians may not have considered their gift as a display of public loyalty, but Paul did. Accordingly, his letter to them consistently bears the marks of this struggle through its displays of loyalty and the denigration of his rivals for their ambition. The church was assisting Paul to bear the hardship of competing gospel missions.

7.4.3. Philippians 4:15–20

Philippians 4:15–20 is the final section of Paul’s sustained treatment of the Philippians’ gift. In 4:10–14, Paul has addressed the church’s support in the specific context of his incarceration. Now in 4:15–20, he places this act in its wider context.

---

606 Fee (Philippians, 439) notes that the grammar is difficult because if Paul had intended “sharers together with me in the affliction,” one would have expected μοι τῆς θλήσεως. Additionally, Fee remarks that “nonetheless, this is probably what Paul in fact intended . . . bringing the ‘my’ forward for emphasis (a rare ‘vernacular possessive’).”
The lines of thought are clear. Philippians 4:15–16 contains the grounds for Paul’s argument in 4:14. In 4:17, Paul again discloses how he regards every delivery of support he received from the Philippians. In 4:18, he makes his final statement about the most recent act of support: He confirms that their act is sufficient and well given. Paul then closes the body of the letter in 4:19–20 by correlating their acts with their relationship with God.

Though this passage ostensibly addresses past (both remote and recent) acts of financial support, the intent of 4:15–20 is to encourage the Philippians to take similar action in the future. Paul aims to achieve this by conveying the following: (1) that their financial support was an agreed-upon aspect of their partnership; (2) that this support is eschatologically beneficial; and (3) that these acts are part of the reciprocal relationship that exists between them and God. Paul’s final words, therefore, use the church’s past giving as a means of securing their future fellowship in the gospel.

7.4.3.1. Philippians 4:15–16

Paul remarks in 4:15–16 on the Philippians’ unprecedented support and the unique role the church plays in the gospel mission. With οἶδατε δὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς Φιλιππήσιοι he points out that the Philippians are aware that their partnership with Paul has involved financial contributions from its outset (1:5). Indeed, the phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ ἐυαγγελίου, ὡς ἐξήλθον ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας (4:15) specifies the time when this partnership began. The sense is that the Philippians formally agreed to be in

---

607 The intensive ὑμεῖς and the vocative Φιλιππήσιοι show the attention that Paul gives to this statement.
partnership with him by sending funds and supplies to him upon his departure from Macedonia. In fact, his statement in 4:16, ὅτι καὶ ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ καὶ ἀπαξ καὶ δίς εἰς τὴν χρείαν μοι ἐπέμψατε, indicates that their eagerness to support him led them to send aid even before he had left Macedonia.

The Philippians’ role in supporting his post-Macedonia mission went beyond providing him with seed money to assist in his travels. “Sending one on his way” was the terminology for this type of aid. But εἰς λόγον δόσεως καὶ λήμψεως is Hellenistic commercial terminology for the “settlement of an account of debt and credit.” This phraseology (“giving and receiving”) is used by Philo, Seneca, Plutarch, Epictetus, and others in non-financial relationships, such as friendship. Social reciprocity easily allows for such non-commercial uses of financial transaction language. But because Paul thanks them for past aid (4:15–16) and acknowledges that the supply he received from Epaphroditus is sufficient (4:17–18), the financial coloring of εἰς λόγον δόσεως καὶ λήμψεως is not to be abandoned.

The Philippians’ financial support is consequently a distinct expression of their fellowship in the gospel. It is a mistake to see the mutuality between Paul and the Philippian church as John Chrysostom does, when he gives his assessment that “the principle by which they [Philippian church] entered their partnership was: Give useful gifts and receive back spiritual gifts . . . there is nothing, nothing at all more profitable

608 Witherington, Philippians, 267. See also 1 Cor 16:6b.

609 BDAG, s.v. λόγος 2.b (p. 601); Hansen, Philippians, 318

610 Peterman, Gift, 51–89. Peterman argues that this expression has more to do with mutual obligations than financial transactions. See further Marshall, Enmity, 157–64.
than this sort of buying and selling. It begins on earth but ends in heaven.”

Hawthorne rightly sees a problem with Chrysostom’s statement, in that it alters the meaning of δόσις and λήμψις by forcing the expression to mix two different things, material goods from the Philippians and spiritual goods from Paul. This difficulty is of course resolved when we see that for Paul the material goods from the Philippians are themselves spiritual goods (4:17–18).

Paul honors the Philippians by reminding them that they are the only church with which he has had a partnership of this sort (οὐδεμία μοι ἐκκλησία ἐκοινώνησεν . . . εἰ μὴ ὑμεῖς μόνοι, 4:15; contrast 1 Cor 9:3–12). This commendation of the Philippians resembles Paul’s words about Timothy (οὐδένα γὰρ ἔχω ἰσόψυχον . . . οἱ πάντες γὰρ τὰ ἔαυτῶν ζητοῦσιν, οὐ τὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, 2:20). The Philippians, like Timothy, stand out because of their commitment to Paul and his mission. This likeness is even more pronounced since both Timothy and the Philippians are the only ones who have shown loyalty to Paul while he is incarcerated in Ephesus.

By reminding the Philippians that their past giving to him was part of their agreed-upon partnership, and that he considers it a distinct honor that they exclusively receive, Paul pressures the church to continue this process. To slacken again would be a mark of shame and a disruption of this honorable fellowship. His reference to their zeal for giving while he was in Thessalonica keeps present the slight chastisement of ἥδη ποτὲ. Though he does not draw attention to any current absence of zeal, the contrast between the church’s giving before they were expected to give with the delay

611 Chrysostom, Hom. Phil. 16.4.15.

612 Hawthorne, Philippians, 204.
in their expected giving is hard to miss. The rightness of their past action (4:8–9) provokes their continuance of it.

7.4.3.2. Philippians 4:17–20

In Phil 4:17–18, Paul articulates why he considers the Philippians’ steadfast commitment to meeting their financial obligations paramount. He reiterates that he does not value their loyalty to his mission because it adds to his welfare (οὐχ ὅτι ἐπιζητῶ τὸ δόμα). Rather, their gift represents their progress in faith. In 1:9–11, Paul has prayed for the growth of the Philippians’ faith so that they will be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Paul returns to this type of expression in 4:18, saying that he desires their support because he seeks the fruit that increases to “your” credit (ἀλλὰ ἐπιζητῶ τὸν καρπὸν τὸν πλεονάζοντα εἰς λόγον ὑμῶν). Reading 4:18 within the conceptual framework of 1:9–11 means that their δόσις καὶ λήμψις is one of these fruits (evidences) that they are truly in Christ, and that God is completing the good work that he began in them.

Paul indicates that he is not trying to manipulate them into sending more money immediately (ἀπέχω δὲ πάντα καὶ περισσεύω πεπλήρωμαι δεξάμενος παρὰ Ἐπαφροδίτου τὰ παρ’ ὑμῶν). 613 Rather, he is stating what their motivation is to be. In the same manner just as he sees their gift as a spiritual fruit, so he desires that they see it as an acceptable and fragrant sacrificial offering, pleasing to God (ὁσιὰν εὐωδίας θυσίαν δεκτὴν, εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ, 4:18). Paul depicts their giving to him as a sacrificial offering.

613 Malina and Pilch (Commentary, 318) suggest that his statement amounts to giving them a receipt for the goods received.
offering as he sees his own actions for their benefit as a libation (2:17). 614

The demands of reciprocity are not primarily between the Philippians and Paul. On the contrary, since the Philippians’ support of Paul is an offering to God, it is God who responds by meeting their needs (4:19), and they in turn are to reciprocate by praising him (4:20). 615 As I have already argued at length, Paul avoids any patronal relationships with the Philippians (with himself either as client or as patron) by establishing God as the divine patron who meets all their needs and who receives all their honors. 616 Since God is their patron, Paul can trust that the church’s needs will be met (4:6–7).

Philippians 4:17–20 therefore provides the final urging that the Philippians keep secure their relationship with Paul and remain steadfast in the mission (1:27–30). 617 If they perceive it as an offering to God, they can walk confidently, knowing that their continued support of the Pauline mission means that they remain part of God’s people.

614 Peterman, Gift, 157.

615 The doxology of 4:20 forms a strong parallel with 1:11, thus confirming the eschatological character of Paul’s exhortations.

616 Paul similarly presents the churches as clients of God in 2 Cor 8–9. Even if some of the terms are to be understood metaphorically, the things that Paul says God gives the churches are those very commodities (money, food, aid) that a client typically requests from a patron. Paul describes God’s or Christ’s gifts to the churches as “riches” (2 Cor 8:9; 9:11), “all things at all times” (2 Cor 9:8), “need” (2 Cor 9:8), “seed / food / store of seed / harvest” (2 Cor 9:10). Not surprisingly, in 2 Cor 8–9 the offerings that the churches give to God are the same as those intangibles that a patron receives from a client. God receives evidence of “sincerity of love” (2 Cor 8:8, 24), “honor” (2 Cor 8:20), “thanksgiving” (2 Cor 9:11, 12, 15), service in a project (2 Cor 8:4; 9:1, 13), and “praise” (2 Cor 9:13). These terms that describe the exchange between God and the Corinthian church place his discussion of the collection within a patronal transactional context.

617 So already Geoffrion, Purpose, 214.
Their perseverance in giving is a token that bears witness to their being prepared for the Day of Christ (1:6, 10; 2:15; 3:13–16). Paul rejoices in their gift because it is an act of faithful obedience, one that God will undoubtedly honor and receive. It is also proof that he has not run in vain in his task of preparing them for that Day.

7.5. Summary

The gentleness of Paul’s appeal in 4:2–3 to Euodia and Syntyche to resolve their dispute (most likely over supporting Paul or not) demonstrates that Paul did not consider the church to be in danger of becoming divided over this. Further, his handling of the matter shows that he was not going to issue a heavy rebuke over the temporary pause in their support. Finally, how the church handled this dispute would bear witness to the validity of the trust he has placed in them to receive his instruction and the leadership of Epaphroditus.

Philippians 4:4–9 is the peroratio that both sums up his epistle and exhorts the

---

618 Thomas R. Schreiner (Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001], 274) can therefore state that “their [Philippian church] partnership was symbolized by their financial support of the Pauline ministry (Phil 4:10–19), though the partnership was more than financial assistance. Such fruit in their lives persuaded Paul that God was truly at work.”

619 Gordon D. Fee (“To What End Exegesis? Reflections on Exegesis and Spirituality in Philippians 4:10–20,” BBR 8 [1998]: 87) posits that “it seems hardly imaginable that Paul intended them only to hear his own praise of God in this doxology and not to enter into it themselves. . . . Doxology is seldom, if ever, for its own sake. The implied imperative of doxology is rooted in the indicative of v. 19, which, I would offer, reflects the theological basis for everything else said in the letter.” Fee’s suggestion parallels my reading: Paul writes to the Philippians out of a desire to see the church join him in glorifying God for their fellowship in the gospel (1:27), not only in the present but even more as part of the eschatological choir singing songs of praise to God.
Philippians to see that all that is virtuous is visible in Paul, the follower of Christ par excellence. It also gives weight to Paul’s final words about their giving by reminding them of his authority in matters of faith.

Paul ends his epistle by addressing at some length the specific gift brought to him by Epaphroditus on behalf of the Philippian church. Philippians 4:10–20 testifies to the necessity of the church’s support of Paul. By refraining from discussing the gift until the end, he is able to establish it firmly within the call for perseverance that has given shape and energy to the entire epistle. It is this very thing that prevents reducing Philippians to a fundraising letter. The church’s support is not a mundane matter. As the terminology common to 4:10–20 and 1:3–11 show: The church’s continual loyalty to Paul will be counted as part of the righteous fruit that characterizes the pure and blameless on the Day of Christ, when the wicked are destroyed and the people of God come into glory.

\(^{620}\) Contra Peterlin (Letter, 216), who holds that 4:10–20 shows Paul’s unease in requesting money because of a “significant anti-Pauline lobby” that was dividing the church against him.
CONCLUSIONS

I began with the following observation about Philippians from Thomas Aquinas:

From these words we can gather the subject matter of this letter. For the Philippians were on Christ’s narrow way, enduring many tribulations for Christ. They were enlightened by faith: “Among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15). Furthermore, they were making progress, as is clear from the entire letter. Therefore after the letter to the Ephesians, in which an instruction was given on preserving Church unity, it was fitting that those who best preserved it should be held up as an example of preserving the unity of the Church.\(^{621}\)

In many respects, my study has followed Aquinas’s view of the “subject matter” of Philippians as suffering, discernment, progress, and unity. I have argued that Paul writes to the church at Philippi solely to exhort them to “preserve the unity of the Church” (in Aquinas’s words), that is, to persuade the church to maintain its fellowship exclusively with him and his apostolic mission. I have attempted to show that he seeks to accomplish this by dispelling any doubt about the legitimacy of his apostleship, by pointing to the inauthenticity of competing gospel missions, by drawing upon their mutuality, and by giving prominence to the eschatological promise of their continued fidelity. Contrary to the consensus opinion that there is no discernable, single purpose that governs the entire epistle, I have maintained that every section contributes to fulfilling this one objective.

In Chapter One, I surveyed the scholarship on Philippians as it pertains to the integrity of the epistle, its rhetoric, its dating and occasion, and the topics of gospel mission, perseverance, and unity. In light of this survey, I suggested that my interpretation can sufficiently account for these subjects occurring together in one

\(^{621}\) Aquinas, Commentary, 1.
communication. Further, I proposed that Paul’s argument is rooted in three fundamental tenets: κοινωνία matters; rivals matter; and finances matter.

In Chapter Two, I briefly examined Phil 1:1–11. On the basis of the ancient rhetorical convention that the *exordium* prefaces what is to follow, I argued that Paul in these first verses introduces his view of the Philippians’ fellowship with him in his mission. He gives thanks because he sees that the church has not abandoned him. Implicit in this offering of praise and thanksgiving are the matters that will govern much of the epistle: the sending of aid, divine oversight, eschatological blessing, sacrifici al mutuality, rivals, and so on.

In Chapter Three, I considered Phil 1:12–26. I argued that as the *narratio*, Paul’s prison report presents four claims in preparation for the *propositio* (1:27–30). First, Paul upholds that his mission is succeeding because God’s providential choice of him to proclaim the gospel includes ordaining the means for its advance — here, his imprisonment. Second, he states that authentic brothers and sisters in Christ are being emboldened by his actions. He observes that faithful followers of Christ are uniting with him and proclaiming the gospel. Third, he suggests that false brothers and sisters will be recognizable by their self-aggrandizement and their enmity with him. Contrary to most interpretations, I argued that in 1:18a Paul is *not affirming* the theological positions of his rivals. Further, I proposed that Paul’s treatment of his rivals, when compared to his portrayals of himself, Epaphroditus, Timothy, and the Philippian church, signals that these rivals do not show the change of character that accompanies those who are in Christ. His vivid depiction of them, contrasted with the bland description of his jailors, indicates that he considers the former, not the latter, to be the
greater threat to his mission. And fourth, Paul paints both the church’s support of him in prison and his “decision” to meet their needs by remaining with them as expressions of the sacrificial mutuality that characterizes followers of Christ and authenticates their fellowship.

In Chapter Four, I analyzed Phil 1:27–2:4. According to my reading, Paul’s exhortation, πολιτεύεσθε, casts the Philippians’ response to him as an act of fidelity to the eschatological nation to which they now belong. Thus in 1:27–30 (the propositio) he portrays the Philippians’ past suffering and current steadfastness as similar (and now, eschatological) acts of corporate faithfulness. I maintained that Paul’s attention to unity in 1:27–2:4 stems not from anxiety regarding potential fractures within the Philippian church, but is instead directed towards his concern over their corporate unity with him. Further, I made the case that πληρωσατε μου την χαραν (2:2a) is a restatement of μονον αξιως τοι ευαγγελιου τοι Χριστου πολιτευσε (1:27a).

In Chapter Five, I examined Phil 2:5–18, where Paul continues the probatio he began in 2:1 by offering three pieces of evidence in support of the propositio: the pattern of Christ (2:5–11); the dichotomy between faithful and apostate Israel (2:12–16a); and his own posture of sacrificial giving (2:16b–18). To each of these Paul applies the template of eschatological vindication to promote mutuality between himself and the Philippians. Regarding the Christ-hymn, I argued for the inclusion of γαρ in 2:5, and contended that φρονετε is to be read in the indicative mood, not imperative. The Philippians’ conduct is consistent with the pattern of Christ now to be set out. Further, in 2:6–11, he draws upon a précis of the story of Christ to account for how it is that the church’s suffering and humility are an apt expression of its unity in the Lord. This is an
ideal complement to 1:27 because it encourages the Philippians to stand firm in the Pauline gospel and to look towards the Day of Christ, when those who are faithful will enjoy the bliss of Jesus’ cosmic vindication.

In 2:12–16a, Paul evokes the wilderness narrative to encourage the Philippians to persevere towards their eschatological vindication by obeying his teaching. In 2:15–16a, he conflates Dan 12:3 with Deut 32 to present the Philippians’ steadfastness as evidence of the genuineness of their faith, again in anticipation of their eschatological blessing. Finally, in 2:17–18, Paul returns to the subject of mutual, sacrificial fellowship via distinctly cultic language.

In Chapter Six, contrary to much expert opinion I proposed that 2:19–4:1 is not a digression. Instead, Paul sustains his main argument by following the rhetorical convention of introducing examples as proofs, namely, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and himself. The account of Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19–30) has two purposes: (1) to give prominence to the church’s and Paul’s mutual affection; and (2) to introduce the paradigmatic role of Paul’s faithfulness for encouraging the Philippians to stand firm in the gospel. His praise of Timothy and Epaphroditus not only enhances their credibility as his proxies; it also accentuates Paul’s sacrificial love for them because of his willingness to deprive himself of their service for the sake of the Philippians.

I also suggested that the phrasing of 3:1 introduces 3:2–11 and its accompanying commentary (3:12–16) as a continuation of the argument began in 2:19. In 3:2–16, Paul presents himself as the standard the church is to follow. First, his rhetorical synkrisis, contrasts the worst example (the Judaizers) with the best example (himself) to portray his resistance to the Judaizers as an exemplum. Paul’s autobiographical statement
prepares for his command in 3:17 that the Philippians join together in emulating him. Further, he links 3:17–21 with the epistle’s previous imperatives (1:27–30; 2:2a, 12, 14) so that to conduct oneself as a citizen in a manner worthy of the gospel ultimately means to follow his example.

Finally, in Chapter Seven I turned to Phil 4:2–20. I maintained that the gentle and measured character of Paul’s appeal to Euodia and Syntyche (4:2–3) looks forward to 4:10–20 by signaling that he does not consider the church’s temporary cessation of support to constitute a break in their fellowship. Further, his kindness towards the two women engenders a favorable hearing for his depiction of the church’s aid. This appeal ends the probatio, 4:4–9 being the peroratio. In 4:4–9, Paul summarizes the letter by adhering to the standard two-part form, in which a repetitio (4:4–7) is followed by an affectus (4:8–9). The peroratio indicates that the Philippians have both in the tradition he handed over to them and in him personally the perfect example of what constitutes a life of virtue, namely, a life committed to the gospel.

In 4:10–20, Paul now addresses directly the gift the Philippians sent to him. He has delayed discussing this because he wants the church to see their aid as he views it: as a sanctified, righteous fruit that authenticates the church’s faith because it demonstrates their fidelity to him and his gospel mission. It is this that keeps Philippians from being construed as a fundraising appeal. Paul elevates the church’s financial support from something mundane to a distinct expression of their fellowship in the ordained plan of God. Virtually the entire epistle therefore constitutes the background for interpreting 4:10–20. Paul is careful to avoid any hint that a patron-client arrangement now exists just because he accepted their gift. At the same time, he
encourages the Philippians to continue their support. Finally, I attempted to show that the terminology common to 4:10–20 and 1:3–11 indicates that the two passages are mutually explanatory, forming an inclusio that directs the letter toward the Philippians’ support of the fellowship.

In sum, I find that the consensus reading that Philippians exhibits no clear, discernable purpose may be rejected. The arrival of Epaphroditus with the church’s gift not only occasioned the writing of the epistle, it also determined its shape. Writing from Ephesus during a time when the churches in Galatia and in Corinth were threatening to sever their ties with Paul, the Philippian church has renewed its bond to him by dispatching Epaphroditus with their promised support. He responds by writing to exhort them to maintain their commitment. He had not lost this church, and his epistle demonstrates his intent to keep their fellowship with him strong. Philippians is rightly called “the epistle of joy.” And for Paul, joy means delight in the advance of his gospel mission, in which he and the Philippians are united from the first day until the last. In light of all this, and in conclusion, I beg to amend Johann Bengel’s familiar description of Philippians from summa epistolae: gaudeo, gaudete to summa epistolae: gaudeo, congaudete mecum, et semper.622

---

622 Bengel, Gnomon, 766.
Primary Sources


Kittel, Rudolf, Karl Elliger, Wilhelm Rudolph, Hans Peter Rüger, and G. E. Weil, eds. *Biblia*


Secondary Sources


Brown, Colin. “Ernst Lohmeyer’s Kyrios Jesus.” Pages 6–42 in Martin and Dodd, Christology.


___________. “πίστις, πιστεύω.” Pages 174–228 in vol. 6 of Kittel, Dictionary.


Dodd, Brian J. “The Story of Christ and the Imitation of Paul in Philippians 2–3.” Pages 154–61 in Martin and Dodd, Christology.


___________. “Christ, Adam, and Preexistence.” Pages 74–83 in Martin and Dodd, Christology.


___________. Paul’s Letter to the Philippians. New International Commentary on the New


__________. “Philippians in the Light of Some Ancient Discussions of Friendship.” Pages 141–60 in Fitzgerald, Friendship.


Foerster, W. “σωζω.” Page 993 in vol. 7 of Kittel, Dictionary.


“Philippians 1:28b, One More Time.” Pages 167–79 in Donaldson and Sailors, Greek.


Krentz, Edgar M. “Military Language and Metaphors in Philippians.” Pages 105–27 in *Origins*


Preisker, H. “ἐπιεικής.” in vol. 2 of Kittel, *Dictionary*.


Sapp, David A. “The LXX, IQIsa, and MT Versions of Isaiah 53 and the Christian Doctrine of


Thayer, Joseph H. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.* Original ed. 1889. Nashville,


__________. “Paul and Boasting.” Pages 77–100 in Sampley, *Paul*.


Wright, Gerald. “On Saints and Suffering: Reconsidering the Message and Purpose of


