

THE LOGIC OF KNOWLEDGE IN PHILIPPIANS

by

David R. Fields, BSc Natural Resource Management

A thesis submitted to  
the Faculty of McMaster Divinity College  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Divinity

McMaster Divinity College,  
Hamilton, Ontario  
2007

MDiv in Biblical Studies

McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE  
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: The Logic of Knowledge in Philippians

AUTHOR: David R. Fields

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Stanley E. Porter

NUMBER OF PAGES: v, 88



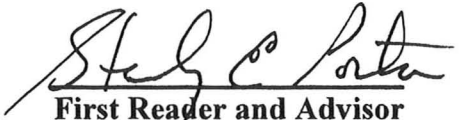
**McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE**

**Upon the recommendation of an oral examination committee, this thesis-project by**


**David Fields**

**is hereby accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

**Master of Divinity**

  
**First Reader and Advisor**

  
**Second Reader**

  
**Dean**

**Date:** *March 26, 2007*

## Abstract

### The Logic of Knowledge in Philippians

David R. Fields  
McMaster Divinity College  
Master of Divinity, 2007

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul seeks to equip the church with moral and intellectual abilities to exercise their knowledge of the gospel in the difficult circumstances in which they find themselves. He does this by providing Christ (Phil 2:5-11), as the paradigm for Christian behaviour and community life. Though Käsemann (1950) and Martin (1967) challenged the view that Christ acts as a moral example in this passage, this study argues that a paradigmatic reading of Phil 2:5-11 best suits the context of the passage and Paul's overarching purposes throughout the letter. Paul also provides three concrete examples of those who have learned to narrate their lives in Christ, namely, Timothy, Epaphroditus and himself. Paul uses these people as examples for the church to emulate. This study further argues that the metaphor of character best describe the theological ethics that Paul employs in this letter.



## Table Of Contents

1. Introduction	1
A. The Importance of This Study	3
B. Outline of the Thesis	4
C. Methodology	4
D. A History of the Interpretation of Philippians and The Question of Ethics	5
a. Philippians Research	6
b. Theological Ethics in Paul	13
2. Jesus is Your Example, Follow Him	18
A. Paul's Petition for Abounding Love: 1:9-11	20
a. Live in a Manner Worthy of the Gospel: 1:27-2:18	22
B. Manifest a Common Pattern of Thinking and Acting: 2:1-4	24
C. Christ is Your Example, Follow Him: 2:5-11	31
D. Work Out Your Salvation, For God is at Work In You: 2:12-18	41
3. Examples of Christ-like Character	48
A. Timothy: 2:19-24	48
B. Epaphroditus: 2:25-30	50
C. Paul: 3:7-14	53
4. Display This Mature Pattern of Thinking, Feeling and Acting	64
A. Continue Toward Maturity: 3:15-4:1	64
B. Applying the Call to Unity and Christ-like Thinking: 4:1-9	72
5. Application	78
6. Conclusion	85
Bibliography	86

## Chapter One: Introduction

Paul's letter to the Philippians is marked with joy: "the sort of life-giving, heart-refreshing joy that is tangibly transforming in its effect on the mundane realities of everyday existence."<sup>1</sup> The joy Paul writes with is not confined to favourable circumstances however, but is expressed in the face of suffering and opposition. Paul's joy ultimately stems from his relationship with Christ, and the Christ-oriented mindset he has come to adopt. It has been suggested that Paul's most significant purpose in this letter is to foster a common manner of thinking, feeling and acting,<sup>2</sup> as evidenced in the frequent use of φρονέω.<sup>3</sup> Wayne Meeks describes the purpose this way:

Although Paul does not use the noun, we may say with some cogency that this letter's most comprehensive purpose is the shaping of the Christian *phronesis*, a practical moral reasoning that is "conformed to [Christ's] death" in hope of his resurrection.<sup>4</sup>

The aim of this study is to explore Paul's purpose in the shaping of Christian "practical moral reasoning" throughout the letter to the Philippians. The overarching questions that will be investigated include: What is the logic of knowledge that Paul employs in this letter? And how is the "mind" or the "manner of thinking" that Paul describes intended to shape the actions of believers? The latter is sharpened with the question: In what way are the examined passages "ethical"?

Paul's arguments and examples demonstrate his concern to equip the church with the moral and intellectual abilities to "deploy their knowledge of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC 11; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishing, 1998) 1.

<sup>2</sup> This is Stephen Fowl's translation of the word φρονέω. Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians* (THNTC; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 2005) 6.

<sup>3</sup> The verb φρονέω occurs ten times in this short letter, highlighting this theme of "practical moral reasoning," as Wayne Meeks describes it. Wayne A. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Philippians," in *The Future of Early Christianity*, ed. Birger A. Pearson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 333. See also Stephen E. Fowl, "Christology and Ethics in Philippians 2:5-11," in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2*, eds. Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998) 149.

<sup>4</sup> Meeks, 333.

gospel in the concrete situations in which they find themselves.”<sup>5</sup> Christ’s story (Phil 2:6-11) provides the paradigm of the mindset and behaviour the church needs to adopt to live as citizens of heaven, and yet Paul also uses his own life experience (3:2-11), and that of Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30), as examples of how the church is to pattern the common life.

While the majority of exegetically significant contextual issues will be addressed as they arise in the body, three brief points will first be presented. First, Philippi was the first city in the region of Macedonia to receive the gospel, which means the church was probably planted between AD 50 and 51.<sup>6</sup> Second, Paul wrote this letter from prison, most likely in Rome, at around AD 61-62.<sup>7</sup> As indicated in 1:7 and 13, Paul is in jail because of his Christianity,<sup>8</sup> likely with the charge of *maiestas* or “diminishing the ‘majesty’ of the emperor and the people of Rome.”<sup>9</sup> Third, Philippians is among the undisputed letters of the Pauline corpus, and its authenticity is no longer widely challenged.<sup>10</sup> The literary integrity has been questioned, but the evidence favours a single document view.<sup>11</sup> Philippians appears in its canonical form as a single unit, and Christian interpretation needs to take seriously the form in which it has been passed down as the means for

---

<sup>5</sup> Fowl, “*Christology*,” 145.

<sup>6</sup> Lee Martin McDonald and Stanley E. Porter, *Early Christianity and Its Sacred Literature* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000) 462, 368.

<sup>7</sup> McDonald and Porter, 470; 371. If Paul was in Rome then there would be no higher authority than that in Rome to which he could appeal the accusation against him.

<sup>8</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 9. Paul had been in prison numerous times, as he attests in 2 Corinthians 11:23, and aside from reference to the praetorian guard in 1:13 and “those of Caesar’s household” in 4:22, Paul gives no indication of the place he is writing from.

<sup>9</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 10. Paul’s reference to his “chains” throughout indicates that he was not in severe confinement, but was under guard.

<sup>10</sup> McDonald and Porter, 463.

<sup>11</sup> Jeffery Reed’s work on τὸ λοιπόν as a conventional hesitation formula, along with those studies that discuss Philippians as a friendship letter (i.e. Loveday Alexander, “Hellenistic Letter-Forms and the Structure of Philippians” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37 (1989) 99), greatly strengthens the case for reading Philippians as a single letter. Jeffery T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians*, JSNTS 136 (Sheffield England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 259-60. See Fowl, *Philippians*, 8.

theological reflection.<sup>12</sup> It is from this setting that Paul urges this beloved church to be unified and growing in character and maturity – a message as critical in the Christian community today as it was while the ink was drying on the first manuscript.

### **The Importance of This Study**

In his book, *Evangelical Landscapes*, John Stackhouse characterizes the experience of many conservative Christians during the past century as a movement from perpetual spiritual childhood under the authority of fundamentalism into perpetual spiritual adolescence in the freedom of evangelicalism.<sup>13</sup> He notes that, in many fundamentalist and conservative Christian church communities, paternal authority figures had all the knowledge. Those under their care would have to, as “good children,” do as they are told, or be stigmatized as “bad children.” Many evangelicals, happy to have escaped the constraint of fundamentalist authoritarianism, are moving from perpetual spiritual childhood into a place of freedom. Stackhouse adds that this freedom only marks the beginning of an opportunity, asking; “What are they free now to become and to do?”<sup>14</sup> He rightly observes that many evangelical Christians have moved out of spiritual childhood into a state of spiritual adolescence. Adolescence is an appropriate time of preparation for maturity, but as Stackhouse notes, there are signs that Christians are poised to conform to the broader culture’s obsession with adolescence, and remain in a state of perpetual spiritual immaturity.<sup>15</sup>

As Paul wrote to equip the church in Philippi, so the evangelical community is in need of the same encouragement to move beyond adolescence into a maturity of thinking and acting. It should be noted that Paul’s desire for the church to gain a

---

<sup>12</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 8.

<sup>13</sup> John Stackhouse Jr., *Evangelical Landscapes* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002) 13.

<sup>14</sup> Stackhouse, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Stackhouse, 14.

Christ-like perspective in their dealings with each other functioned in the context of pressure and strife, internally and externally. The manner of thinking and acting God desires from his church takes place beyond the pleasant times of life. As Paul reminds the Philippians, the Christian life is essentially cruciform (1:27-30), and it is in “the midst of the mess” that Christian character is forged. This study aims to elucidate the manner in which Paul calls the church to mature thinking and acting and to apply the findings of the research to the situation of the church today. Four major themes emerge throughout the study, including: (1) Christ-like character, (2) imitation, (3) the Christian mind and (4) “knowing Christ.” These will guide the discussion of application to the contemporary church in chapter 5.

### **Outline of the Thesis**

In the first chapter the methodology is presented, followed by a review of relevant literature. The following three chapters examine specific passages, including exegesis of the key texts. The relationship between thinking and behaviour is then traced through the letter with attention given to the examples that Paul offers, primarily in Christ Jesus, but also in himself, Timothy and Epaphroditus. As such, the three key passages include 2:1-18, 3:7-14 and 3:15-21. Several other passages are also examined briefly, including, 1:9-11; 2:19-24; 4:1-3 and 4:4-9. The fifth chapter focuses specifically on applying the information gained in the study to the modern context and offering concrete, practical applications to Christian living and the practice of ministry. The conclusion provides a brief summary of the thesis, restating the key findings of the research.

### **Methodology**

The methodology of this study includes exegesis of texts throughout the book of Philippians in which Paul appeals to ways of knowing, discernment, and reasoning,

in order to answer the question: What is the logic of knowledge that Paul is employing in Philippians? Or to further nuance the question: How is the “manner of thinking” Paul describes intended to shape the actions of believers?

For the purpose of this study, primary attention will be given to the relevant features of each text, limiting the discussion to elements of the text that are exegetically significant. The basic elements of the historical-critical method provide the broad framework for exegesis.<sup>16</sup> Each chapter will discuss the relevant contextual features and will deal with exegetically significant and appropriate issues of text-criticism, lexicography, grammar, discourse analysis<sup>17</sup> and broader biblical/theological themes.<sup>18</sup>

### **A History of the Interpretation of Philippians and the Question of Ethics**

A major question surrounding the interpretation of Philippians is in what sense Paul’s description of Christ in 2:5-11 functions as the basis for the ethical demands of 1:27ff.<sup>19</sup> The poetic narration of Christ’s story relates strongly to the overall argument and rhetorical function of the letter. As such, examining the research on this passage provides a meaningful starting place for this study.<sup>20</sup> In the following sections the biblical studies research will be discussed (Section 1), along with literature in the area of Pauline ethics (Section 2).

---

<sup>16</sup> See Gordon Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (3d ed.; Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002). Fee’s approach attempts to discover the original intent of the passage for the original audience, and in this sense, deals justly with the material at hand.

<sup>17</sup> Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994) 304.

<sup>18</sup> Fee, *Exegesis*, 6-7.

<sup>19</sup> Stephen E. Fowl, “Some Issues of Story in Moral Discourse: Reflections on Paul’s Moral Discourse and Our Own,” *Modern Theology* 4 (1998) 298.

<sup>20</sup> Bockmuehl also affirms that this passage is the most important in terms of tracking the history of interpretation of the letter as a whole. Bockmuehl, 115.

### *a. Philippians Research*

Fowl notes that virtually all scholars view Paul's exhortations of 1:27ff. as relating to the Christ story of 2:6-11, but exactly how this passage functions as a basis for the moral imperatives is highly contested.<sup>21</sup> The grammatical ambiguities of v. 5, along with the popularity of a form-critical and history-of-religions approach to the text over the past century,<sup>22</sup> have split scholarly opinion on how the so called "Christ Hymn" is to be read in relation to its context. A survey of the development of these lines of interpretation will be conducted, providing a basis for understanding the variety of issues that arise from the question of ethics in Philippians, and their implications for the hermeneutical approach for this study.

The traditional line of interpretation for 2:5-11, from the Reformers until the middle of the twentieth century, has been to view it as a piece of "ethical exhortation," whereby Christ, and his attitude, provide the example for believers to follow.<sup>23</sup> This imitative approach represents the traditional view, where Paul is urging the Philippians to have the same disposition, and therefore behaviour, among themselves that Christ had.<sup>24</sup> This view is expounded well by E. Larsson, who describes the intention of Paul as calling Christians to imitate the disposition of Christ, in his "freely willed renunciation of the heavenly power and glory that he possessed before the incarnation."<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Fowl, "Some Issues", 298.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Fowl offers a good summary of the authors who have made contributions to the form-critical and history-of-religions approach to the 'hymns' of the New Testament, including the work of R. Deichgraber and G. Schille (form critical), and J.T. Sanders (history of religious background). 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* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990) 15-16.

<sup>23</sup> Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 256.

<sup>24</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians* (NCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 91 and O'Brien, 254. This view wishes to supply the verb 'to be' in v. 5b, to the second, elliptical clause of 2:5, which is picked up in the Authorized Version, and reads, "Let this mind be in/among you which was the mind that was in Christ Jesus."

<sup>25</sup> In Martin, *Philippians*, 91.

In the early twentieth century, C.H. Dodd and A. Deissmann put forward what has been termed “the mystical approach.” This approach supplies in the verb “to have” or “to regard” to v. 5, giving a “mystical turn to Paul’s thought.”<sup>26</sup> The emphasis of this approach maintains the “ethical” emphasis of the passage, but as Dodd put it, it is an illustration of “ethics developing directly out of ‘Christ-mysticism’.”<sup>27</sup>

A major shift in Philippians studies occurred in the mid twentieth century. The first of two major landmarks was Ernst Lohmeyer’s 1928 publication, *Kyrios Jesus*. Lohmeyer employed a form-critical methodology to argue that 2:6-11 is a pre-Pauline hymn that was originally written in Aramaic.<sup>28</sup> Lohmeyer also viewed 2:6-11 as both the key to understanding the humiliation and exaltation of Christ, and the motive for Christian living.<sup>29</sup> He maintained the idea that Jesus provides the example of unity and humility that Paul is urging in the Philippian church in 2:1-4.<sup>30</sup>

The second landmark study was conducted by Ernst Käsemann, who squarely challenged the traditional, imitative interpretation of this passage in his 1950 publication, “Kritische Analyse von Phil 2,5-11.”<sup>31</sup> Käsemann’s interpretation has been termed the “kerygmatic” approach, which concludes that 2:6-11 does not serve as an ethical example, but rather as a Christological description of the salvation

---

<sup>26</sup> O’Brien, 254.

<sup>27</sup> C.H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London, 1944) 65, in O’Brien, 254.

<sup>28</sup> Colin Brown, “Ernst Lohmeyer’s *Kyrios Jesus*,” in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2*, eds. Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998) 6. Fee (*Philippians*, 193) and Fowl (*Story*, 34) offer a challenge to the categorization of this passage as a ‘hymn’.

<sup>29</sup> Brown, 6.

<sup>30</sup> Martin, *Philippians*, 91. Lohmeyer viewed the τοῦτο at the beginning of v. 5 as pointing back to the previous exhortation, and not forward to the hymn, as later critics of the ethical interpretation would. O’Brien, 204.

<sup>31</sup> Ernst Käsemann, “Kritische Analyse von Phil 2,5-11” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 47 (1950) in Fowl, *Christology*, 140.



event.<sup>32</sup> From his work onward there have been two major lines of interpretation, including the ‘ethical’ interpretation, and the kerygmatic interpretation.<sup>33</sup>

Käsemann’s work levelled several serious claims against the ethical interpretation and his perspective gained a great deal of momentum, especially as formulated later by Ralph P. Martin.<sup>34</sup> The question of why Käsemann’s interpretation so forcefully rejects the traditional reading of the passage arises as one examines his approach.

Käsemann himself credited Lohmeyer for providing the insights that laid the foundation for his work on the passage, but criticized Lohmeyer for returning to the perspective of ethical idealism.<sup>35</sup> Käsemann found ethical idealism, and the entire tradition of liberal Protestantism, to be repugnant, and it has been suggested that this disposition influenced his exegetical approach.<sup>36</sup> Käsemann was reacting to an approach to Scripture that reduces the soteriological significance of Jesus’ work on the cross to a mere moral message.<sup>37</sup>

The hermeneutical approach employed by Käsemann and Martin assumes that the hymn existed prior to its inclusion in Philippians 2, and that the interpretation of this passage must be based on the meaning of its pre-Christian background.<sup>38</sup> They think it necessary then to pull the passage from the context in which Paul places it, in order to interpret correctly.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Bockmuehl, 122.

<sup>33</sup> O’Brien, 256.

<sup>34</sup> Fowl, *Story*, 80.

<sup>35</sup> Fowl, *Story*, 80 n. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Fowl, *Story*, 80 n. 3. Fowl cites L.W. Hurtado, *Jesus as Lordly Example*, 114-16.

<sup>37</sup> David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul’s Ethics* (London, England: T&T Clark International, 2005) 208. Horrell reminds his readers to appreciate the theological convictions that drove the work of Käsemann, and others, such as Karl Barth, who were deeply opposed to the theologically liberal approach that was pervasive in their day.

<sup>38</sup> O’Brien, 256.

<sup>39</sup> Martin states this hermeneutical approach as follows: “It is of the utmost importance to isolate the meaning of the terms in the hymn from the use which is made of them by Paul in the verses which precede and follow. The text of the hymn must be taken on its own, irrespective of the application, which is made in the neighbouring verses. Once this is done, it becomes increasingly difficult to follow the “ethical” interpretation. Ralph P. Martin, *A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation & in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity

The kerygmatic approach is based on six main points, including: (1) the common technical theological formula ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ is used here by Paul to refer to the standing of believers in relation to Christ as members of his body, and not to the thoughts or attitudes of Christ. According to Käsemann, this term points to the salvation event rather than to an ethical example of Christ.<sup>40</sup>

(2) Though there is a need to insert a verb after the relative pronoun ὃ in v. 5, a second, indicative φρονεῖτε, is needed to follow the first to give a greater symmetry to the verse. The translation that results is, “adopt towards one another, in your mutual relations, the same attitude as you adopt towards Christ Jesus, in your union with him.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, as Käsemann argues, “The Philippians are admonished to conduct themselves toward one another as is fitting within the realm of Christ.”<sup>42</sup> For Paul, the hymn functions to relate how this realm was established, with Christ as “the supreme power in it.”<sup>43</sup>

(3) Paul rarely points to the earthly life of Jesus as an example. Rom 15:7 and 2 Cor 8:9 are the closest parallels, but they are short and thus not comparable with such a lengthy passage as Phil 2:5-11.<sup>44</sup>

(4) There are very few aspects of vv. 6-11 that believers could actually follow as Christ’s example of humility and self-forgetfulness. Since Christ’s Lordship over the universe, and his worthiness of adoration, are not themes for Christian imitation, then vv. 9-11 would be completely irrelevant for an ethical reading.<sup>45</sup>

---

Press, 1997) 215. Martin’s work was first published in 1967 under the title, *Carmen Christi*, and re-issued in 1983, and again here in this 1997 edition.

<sup>40</sup> O’Brien, 257.

<sup>41</sup> O’Brien, 257.

<sup>42</sup> O’Brien, 256.

<sup>43</sup> Fowl, *Story*, 81.

<sup>44</sup> O’Brien, 257.

<sup>45</sup> O’Brien, 257.

(5) Verses 5 and 11 are linked, and the centre of the hymn is Christ's Lordship over the universe, and not a piece of teaching about ethics, or even Christ's relationship with his Father.<sup>46</sup>

And (6), if the hymn has a baptismal setting, as it has been suggested,<sup>47</sup> then the exhortation that is implied in v. 5 is, according to Martin, "become what you already are," those who have entered into new life with Christ.<sup>48</sup> This view then links to 2:12, in which the Philippians are encouraged to "work out" their salvation.<sup>49</sup>

Noting the problems raised by Käsemann with a naïve oversimplification of the imitative approach, some recent scholarship has focused on refining an 'ethical' approach to best reflect the nature of Paul's argument. This more recent approach to an ethical reading has been termed "paradigmatic," reflecting the example that Paul intends Christ to be in this passage. As reflected in Martin's work,<sup>50</sup> it seems that Lohmeyer anticipated the "paradigmatic" interpretation.<sup>51</sup>

Many recent scholars have adopted a paradigmatic approach,<sup>52</sup> noting the hermeneutical problems of removing the passage from its Pauline context, and dealing with issues raised by Käsemann through rigorous exegetical analysis. The hortatory function at work throughout the letter further supports a paradigmatic

---

<sup>46</sup> O'Brien, 257.

<sup>47</sup> O'Brien notes J. Jervell's *Imago Dei*, 206-209; O'Brien, 257.

<sup>48</sup> O'Brien, 257.

<sup>49</sup> O'Brien, 257.

<sup>50</sup> Martin, *Philippians*, 91. Martin categorized C.F.D. Moule and Lohmeyer under the category of 'paradigmatic' when outlining the various approaches to Phil 2:5-11 that scholars have taken.

<sup>51</sup> C.F.D. Moule's work bears the image of the paradigmatic interpretation, and though he deals with the grammar of v. 5 differently than Lohmeyer, the main interpretative force of the verse is similar. Moule argues that the verse should include an additional τὸ φρόνημα, which is translated: "Adopt toward one another, in your mutual relations, the same attitude that was found in Christ Jesus." Moule's reading rejects the Authorized Version rendering, based on its use of the textually inferior passive form φρονέσθω, which is based on the Byzantine text. O'Brien, 254.

<sup>52</sup> Some notable examples include Stephen Fowl, Gordon Fee, Peter T. O'Brien, Wayne Meeks and Markus Bockmuehl.

interpretation of 2:5-11, as Paul is equipping the church with the ‘moral practical reasoning’ they need to “live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27). A brief summary of the main objections and counter arguments to the kerygmatic approach will now be offered.

(1) Käsemann’s argument for the Pauline formula “in Christ” misses the significance of the name “Jesus” that Paul uses in this case (“in Christ Jesus”). M.D. Hooker considers it nonsense to suggest with Käsemann that the character of the new humanity in Christ is not the character of Jesus himself, stating that it is:

...only the dogma that the Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith belong to separate compartments that leads to the belief that the appeal to a Christian character appropriate to those who are in Christ is not linked to the pattern as seen in Jesus himself.<sup>53</sup>

(2) The additional *φρονεῖτε* becomes a tautology, and assumes that Christians could adopt one attitude of mind in their relationships with each and another as those being in Christ.<sup>54</sup>

(3) Passages that appeal to Jesus as an ethical example are not as rare, or insignificant, as Käsemann and Martin claim. For example, in Rom 15:1-7 Paul offers a very similar appeal to Christ as the example of the “attitude of mind” (*φρονεῖν*) that the Roman church should have, and the passage is set in a similar literary context to that of Phil 2:6-11.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> M.D. Hooker, “Philippians 2:6-11” in *Jesus und Paulus. Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70. Geburtstag*, eds. E.E. Ellis and E. Graesser (Göttingen, 1978), in O’Brien, 258.

<sup>54</sup> O’Brien, 257. Käsemann and Martin assume a contrast between these two spheres of existence, where, in reality, Paul sets up a contrast between a given condition on the one hand (ie. being ‘in Christ’) and the implementation of it on the other hand. O’Brien, 258.

<sup>55</sup> O’Brien, 258-59. In 2 Cor 8:9 Paul also recounts, in a similar way to Phil 2:5-11, Jesus’ self-giving, using the example of Christ’s humility to make an appeal for specific behaviour that he desires to foster in the Corinthian church. These verses clearly have a similar function to Phil 2, along with other instances, such as 1 Cor 10:31-11:1 and 1 Thess 1:6 (cf. 1 Pet 2:20-21 and Phil 3:17-18). Fowl’s article on “Imitation of Paul/of Christ” in *DPL* offers a good synopsis of places that Paul offers his own life, and that of Jesus, as those to be imitated (*mimēomai/mimētes*). Stephen Fowl, “Imitation of Paul/of Christ,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993) 428-31.

(4) Even if the original setting of 2:5-11 only deals with the soteriological, the context in which Paul places it, and the intended purpose of it in the letter, set the agenda for how the Philippians were to understand it.

(5) Käsemann rightly points out that there are few aspects of 2:6-11 that a person could actually “imitate,” and as such, vv. 9-11 become particularly meaningless in the sense of “imitation.” Several alternatives, however, have been proposed to deal with this case. Philippians 2:6-8 describes Christ’s humble attitude and self-giving obedience, which sets the pattern of thought that the Philippians are to emulate (cf. 2:1-5), where 2:9-11 deals not with Christ’s attitude but with God the Father’s approval and vindication of Jesus for his obedience in 2:6-8.<sup>56</sup> The humiliation-exaltation motif (God’s exaltation of the humble) runs throughout Scripture<sup>57</sup> and is what Paul employs in vv. 9-11. In humility Jesus took on the position of a slave, even to the point of dying on a cross. It is “because of this” (v. 9a) that God “exalted him” (v. 9a). Because of God’s just vindication of Jesus, Paul can assure the church, stating that Jesus will also “transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his [Jesus’] glorious body” (3:21b TNIV).<sup>58</sup> The paradigmatic section of the narrative (vv. 6-8) would be incomplete without vv. 9-11,<sup>59</sup> as the end of Jesus’ story is not his death, but his resurrection and exaltation. Paul paints the Philippians’ suffering (1:27-30), and his own (1:12-14), within the framework of the story of Jesus in 2:6-11, and is thus able to encourage the church that God the Just will also vindicate them.

---

<sup>56</sup> O’Brien, 260.

<sup>57</sup> For example Lk 18:14; Ja 4:10.

<sup>58</sup> O’Brien, 261.

<sup>59</sup> Horrell, 210.

In summary, Käsemann's approach rightly rejects a reading of the passage that reduces it to "merely" ethical.<sup>60</sup> However, taking into account the theological significance of the events described in the narration of Christ's story, and the purpose Paul uses it for, the ethical interpretation cannot be so easily dismissed. As Horrell rightly states, 2:5-11 deals with both world-view and ethos; it is intended to shape the "beliefs, identity and behaviour of those who affirm it."<sup>61</sup> The narration of 2:6-11 describes the event that provides the means by which sinners can enter into the realm of Christ's rule, as Käsemann rightly argues, but it also provides an example of the mindset that believers must emulate.

### ***b. Theological Ethics in Paul***

Paul offers ethical exhortation throughout Philippians, but what is meant by the category of Pauline ethics? The three major questions that scholars address include: (1) On what basis does Paul offer ethical exhortation? (2), What is the relationship between the so-called "indicative and imperative" of Paul's ethics? And (3), what metaphors are most appropriate to speak of theological ethics?

Furnish describes the three basic motifs Paul employs as theological, eschatological, and christological.<sup>62</sup> The christological aspect, Furnish argues, includes: (1) the necessity for humble, selfless service, and (2) the "almost inevitable attendant need to suffer as Christ suffered in order to be obedient."<sup>63</sup> According to Furnish, it is Christ's *obedience* in Phil 2:6-11 that is paradigmatic in Paul's usage, instead of any particular features of Jesus' earthly life.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Horrell, 209.

<sup>61</sup> Horrell, 210.

<sup>62</sup> Furnish, 213.

<sup>63</sup> Furnish, 223.

<sup>64</sup> Furnish, 224.

Theological ethics has also been concerned with the tension between what Bultmann termed “the indicative and the imperative.”<sup>65</sup> Bultmann, and others who rejected ethical idealism, formulated the dialectic of imperative and indicative that can be summarized in the statement, “become in your character and conduct what God’s action in Christ has made you to be.”<sup>66</sup>

The metaphor that has been most prominent in Protestantism since Bultmann and Barth has been command and obedience, or as Hauwerwas describes it, “obedience to the law and performance of God’s will.”<sup>67</sup> For Furnish, Bultmann’s formula for the indicative and imperative, “become what you are,” fails to adequately deal with the issue, as “the imperative is not just the result of the indicative but fully integral to it.”<sup>68</sup> Furnish maintains that Paul’s exhortations are intended to invoke in believers a “deliberate response to God’s claim without which faith forfeits its distinctive character of obedience.”<sup>69</sup> In this sense, the imperative is to be taken as seriously as the indicative.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> In a conversation with Stanley Porter he made the important point that the terms “indicative and imperative” appeal to grammatical features to make a theological point, but this is an exegetically false distinction. The theological intent is obviously related to the priority of God’s grace in the economy of salvation which is stated as the “indicative,” and the secondary action in response to God’s grace, framed as the “imperative.” These terms continue to persist in the discussion of theological ethics, despite the false distinction they draw between grammar and theology (see Mott’s discussion in *DPL*, which was published in 1993). S.C. Mott, “Ethics,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993) 269-75.

<sup>66</sup> Mott, *DPL*, 269. Both Bultmann and Barth have the tendency to associate even the concept of “ethics” with humanity’s attempt to be justified before God based on their own meritorious behaviour. Though these two men come from two vastly different theological stances their reaction to the idea of ethics is based in their shared view of the priority of God’s actions in the human-divine encounter. Stanley Hauwerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press, 1985) 131.

<sup>67</sup> Hauwerwas, 2.

<sup>68</sup> Furnish, 225. While Furnish maintains the dominant metaphor of command and obedience, he states, “The metaphor of the believer as Christ’s *bride* (Rom 7:1-6; 2 Cor 11:2-3) supplies the appropriate illustration of his [Paul’s] conception of the Christian life. The Christian ‘belongs’ to his Lord in a way analogous to that in which a wife in Paul’s day belonged to her husband. The husband’s care for her and the wife’s obedience to him constitute the essence of their new life together.” 226.

<sup>69</sup> Furnish, 226.

<sup>70</sup> This is so, as the believer is not merely dragged along by the Spirit, without his or her own choices holding sway, but is actively enlisted in the struggle. Tannehill in Furnish, 227.

Furnish basically maintains the command and obedience metaphor, but Hauwerwas approaches theological ethics based on a different metaphor, that of character or journey. His study does not deny the importance of command and obedience, but Hauwerwas states that the *primary* metaphor of the Christian life is one of character.<sup>71</sup>

Hauwerwas was informed by Alasdair MacIntyre's book *After Virtue*, which confronted the problem of moral philosophy since the time of the Enlightenment. MacIntyre notes that, during this period, an attempt was made to "present an ethic freed from the narrative accounts of existence which supported the moral philosophies of Aristotle and Aquinas, and based solely on ahistorical, universal truths of reason."<sup>72</sup> The work of MacIntyre required reconsideration of how ethics are reliant upon stories to gain their intelligibility.<sup>73</sup> Hauwerwas employs the metaphor of "journey" and "character" to articulate the responsibility of Christians in terms of ethics based on a conviction that communities are formed, and moral discourse is informed, through their stories.<sup>74</sup> For Hauwerwas, the metaphor of command and obedience is too narrow to truly deal with the complexities of Christian ethics and denies the opportunity for growth.<sup>75</sup> As such, the words used to describe ethics are not "right" and "wrong," but rather "freedom" and "responsibility."<sup>76</sup> In this sense the word "responsibility" puts the stress on each person as a decision maker, and being accountable for one's actions.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Hauwerwas, xxix.

<sup>72</sup> Fowl, "Some Issues", 294.

<sup>73</sup> Fowl, "Some Issues", 294.

<sup>74</sup> Fowl, "Some Issues", 295.

<sup>75</sup> Hauwerwas, 3-4.

<sup>76</sup> Hauwerwas, 6.

<sup>77</sup> The definition that Hauwerwas employs for his discussion of Christian ethics differs from what is commonly thought of as "character," as it is often described as being the "nature" of a thing, as he states, "The idea of character as I am using it is sharply distinguished from character associated with temperament or natural trait. For the idea of character in its most paradigmatic usage indicates what a



Character can be described in terms of both “how” one acts in relation to how one has acted in the past, and how one can predictably act in the future, using the language of “integrity” or “consistency.”<sup>78</sup> In order to explain “what” a person is to become in their character, Hauwerwas deems it is necessary to place the person within the:

...context of the communities from which he draws his moral norms, values, and directions. For Christians this will mean that further specification of what it means for them to have character will be drawn from their being a people constituted in a church.<sup>79</sup>

Hauwerwas is not dealing with the doctrine of justification when he speaks about character; rather he is providing a basis on which to discuss sanctification and growth. He recognizes that there are limits to the theological appropriation of the ethics of character: “For Christian ethics...the focus is not on what man can or should do but what God has done, that is, it is first and foremost the ethics of the indicative.”<sup>80</sup> Hauwerwas argues that although the action of God is the first word in ethics, it is not the only word, as the indicative is incomplete without the imperative.<sup>81</sup> Hauwerwas recognizes the tension and risks associated with, on the one hand, making the Christian life a program to be run apart from their “arising in response to Jesus Christ,” and on the other, “a belief in certain propositions of fact with little behavioural significance.”<sup>82</sup>

In summary, the work of Hauwerwas in defining an ethic of character does not deny or supersede ethical discussion within the metaphor of command and obedience,

---

man [*sic*] can decide to be as opposed to what a man is naturally. We assume that a man chooses to have a kind of character; a man can and should be held responsible for what he is.” Hauwerwas, 12.

<sup>78</sup> For example, a thief may be consistently in his character, a thief, and thus be described as a man of “character” (i.e. of integrity/consistency with the type of person he is and will be as consistent with his past) but we would not uphold his actions as being in any way “virtuous.” Hauwerwas, 17.

<sup>79</sup> Hauwerwas, 17.

<sup>80</sup> Hauwerwas, 130.

<sup>81</sup> Hauwerwas, 130.

<sup>82</sup> Hauwerwas, 182-83. In his final chapters, Hauwerwas points to the understanding of justification and sanctification as formulated in the thoughts of Calvin and Wesley, to show how aspects of their thought point to the idea of character. 184-85.

but it supplies a perspective for viewing the ethical exhortations that Paul offers in Philippians from a vista that accounts for the narrative qualities Paul uses. It also acknowledges character growth and maturity as key elements in the Christian life and will help define what Paul is intending to accomplish in his letter to the Philippian church regarding the logic of knowledge. It should be clarified that the position that will be argued does not assume that character and maturity are the sole responsibility of the believer, but are enabled by the grace of God. God's enabling is fully in view for Paul's exhortations toward character (cf. 1:6; 2:13).

## Chapter 2: Jesus is Your Example, Follow Him

The first stage in understanding Paul's logic of knowledge in Philippians is to examine how he introduces the letter. As with many of his thanksgiving sections, Paul anticipates at least some of the major themes and content of this letter.<sup>83</sup> In this case, the introductory verses require brief attention.

Following the greeting (1:1-2), Paul pours out his heart in thanksgiving for the Philippian church and God's work in their midst (1:3-8). He thanks God for the partnership of the Philippians with him in the gospel, "from the first day until now" (1:5). Paul then asserts confidence that God will continue the "good work" he has begun in them, using a perfect participle *πεποιθώς* to emphasise his point.<sup>84</sup> In affirming God's "good work" in them, Paul is anticipating the appeal he will make to "work out their salvation," in 2:12-13, "meaning to live out in Christian community the salvation that Christ has effected, precisely because 'God is working in you, both to will and to do what pleases him.'"<sup>85</sup> That Paul used the term "good work" in 2:12 is no accident, as Paul uses it elsewhere to refer to the ethical aspect of salvation.<sup>86</sup> In using this language Paul further anticipates the content of his prayer in 1:9-11, which lays the foundation for the later exhortations, especially evident in the exhortation to "live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (1:27).

---

<sup>83</sup> McDonald and Porter, 383.

<sup>84</sup> Porter, *Idioms*, 23. Stanley Porter argues that the verbal tense system of Greek did not function on levels of time but on verbal aspect. Verbal aspect, according to Porter, is a semantic feature by which the speaker or writer gives semantic weight to the verb by choosing one 'tense' instead of another. The perfective aspect is the meaning of the aorist tense and functions as the background tense. The imperfective aspect is the meaning of the present tense and functions as the foreground tense. The stative aspect is the meaning of the perfect tense and functions as the foreground tense. The writer intends greater semantic weight to the imperfective aspect over and against the perfective aspect. The stative aspect, however, carries more weight than both the perfective and imperfective. Porter, *Idioms*, 20-23.

<sup>85</sup> Gordon Fee, *Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 87.

<sup>86</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 87. Cf. 2 Thess 2:17; 2 Cor 9:8; Rom 2:7; 13:3; Col 1:10; Tit 1:16; 3:1; 2 Tim 2:21; 3:17. This list of references is from Fee, *Philippians*, 87 n. 73.

Verse 7 is the first place that Paul uses the word φρονέω<sup>87</sup> in this letter, which, though infrequent in the rest of the Pauline corpus, plays a major role in Philippians.<sup>88</sup> The verb is used ten times in Philippians, and these instances occur at critical junctures in Paul's argument. It occurs only thirteen other times in the Pauline corpus, eight of these in Rom 12-15, and then only in Acts 28:22, Rom 8:5, Col 3:2, 2 Cor 13:11 and Gal 5:10.<sup>89</sup> It is crucial to examine this word and how Paul uses it, as it plays a significant role in the argument of Philippians.

The verb φρονέω is uncommon in the New Testament (NT), but is quite common in Greek, especially in discussion of the moral life.<sup>90</sup> The English phrase 'practical reasoning' is often used in scholarly literature, particularly in reference to ancient moral philosophy, but Paul's usage is broader than "practical reasoning."<sup>91</sup> The word is often translated "think" in the NT, which is not incorrect, but as Fowl notes, is not sufficient to communicate Paul's intention.<sup>92</sup> Its range of meaning includes four semantic domains within Louw and Nida's schema, three of which Paul uses in Philippians:<sup>93</sup>

- a) 26.16 "have attitude"; (domain 26 "psychological faculties") to employ ones faculty for thoughtful planning, with emphasis upon the underlying disposition or attitude – translated; "to have an attitude, to think in a particular manner."<sup>94</sup>
- b) 30.20 "ponder"; (domain 30, "think"); to keep on giving serious consideration to something – translated, "to ponder, to let ones mind dwell on, to keep thinking about, to fix ones attention on."<sup>95</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> In v. 7 its form is infinitive.

<sup>88</sup> Meeks, 332.

<sup>89</sup> Meeks, 332.

<sup>90</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 28.

<sup>91</sup> Wayne Meeks picks up on this usage in his work. See Meeks, 333.

<sup>92</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 6.

<sup>93</sup> Of four possible – 87.12 "honour" is used in 1 Thess 5:12 but not in Philippians.

<sup>94</sup> Johannes E. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, Second Edition, eds. Ronald B. Smith and Karol A. Munson (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989) s.v. φρονέω 26.16.

<sup>95</sup> Louw and Nida, s.v. φρονέω 30.20.

- c) 31.1, “hold a view”; (domain 30, “think”); to hold a view or have an opinion with regard to something – “to hold a view, to have an opinion, to consider, to regard.”<sup>96</sup>

When Paul uses this verb he is not simply referring to an intellectual activity, but to a particular pattern of thinking and feeling that in turn leads to action.<sup>97</sup> Paul uses the word to urge the Philippians to employ discernment about their own thoughts, feelings and actions, and to shore these up within the pattern and example found in Christ and demonstrated in himself, Timothy and Epaphroditus. Paul’s exercising of “judgement” in v. 7 demonstrates, by his own example, what he will urge the Philippians to do throughout the letter in their “thinking, feeling and acting,” beginning in 1:9-11.<sup>98</sup>

### **Paul’s Petition for Abounding Love: 1:9-11**

And this is my prayer for you: that your love might abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you might be able to discern what is best and that you might be pure and blameless in the Day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Paul begins this prayer section with parataxis signifying a strong connection to the preceding section.<sup>99</sup> Paul uses ἐπίγνωσις and αἴσθησις in v. 9 to describe the “knowledge” and “discernment” in which he desires the Philippians’ love to “abound more and more.” In v. 10, the idea of discernment is also reflected in the use of δοκιμάζειν. The repetition of words relating to “knowledge” in this section expresses

<sup>96</sup> Louw and Nida, s.v. φρονέω 31.1.

<sup>97</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 6.

<sup>98</sup> In v. 7 the NIV and NASB translate φρονέω as “feel”, but Stephen Fowl’s translation reflects the element of “thinking” or “exercising judgement” as he renders the verse; “It is right for me to exercise this judgement about you all”. Fowl, *Philippians*, 21. Paul is not only “feeling” something toward the Philippians, but is exercising his discernment about how God has been at work in them, and stating his confidence in God’s continuing work in their midst. Later in the verse we do see Paul’s expressed affection for the Philippians (“I have you in my heart”, “I long for you with the affection of Christ Jesus”), and the solidarity that is shared, both in suffering (cf. 1:27-30; 4:14) and in the cause of the gospel (cf. 1:5; 4:3). In this sense they share in God’s grace together. The three-way relationship of Paul to the Philippians, Paul to Christ, and the Philippians to Christ, which Fee describes, is key to Paul’s message as seen in this verse, and throughout the letter. Fee, *Philippians*, 13.

<sup>99</sup> Fee, *Philippians* 98. Translated “And”.

Paul's deepest desire for the Philippians. This is not "knowledge-for-the-sake-of-knowledge": the kind of intellectual arrogance the Corinthians were guilty of boasting in (cf. 1 Cor 8:2), but similar to the thinking Paul urges the Corinthians to when he wrote, "Brothers and sister, do not be children in your thinking. Regarding evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature" (1 Cor 14:20). It is love, discerned through mature thinking, feeling and acting, not intellectual assent, that drives Paul's desire for the church. As Fee reminds us, it is easy to overlook "love", and yet it is foremost in Paul's prayer, as it first of all points to the character of God, and "his actions toward people based on that character."<sup>100</sup> It is this character of love, as demonstrated in the life and death of Jesus, that Paul will later urge the Philippians to adopt as their way of thinking, feeling, and acting toward one another.

In v. 10, as in v. 6, Paul places the ethical dimension of Christian life in an eschatological context. "Paul's prayer is not for religious perfection in this world but for the sort of purity and uprightness which will count in the presence of the returning exalted Lord (cf. Col. 1:28; Jude 24 ff.)."<sup>101</sup> With their growth in mind, Paul prays that the Philippians would be equipped with the capacity to discern what is truly important, over and above those things which are secondary, or of no eternal value.<sup>102</sup> Paul later uses his own life as an example of "pressing on toward the goal" in 3:7-14; a manner of thinking which he will call the Philippians to adopt for themselves (3:15).<sup>103</sup> It is for the sake of true Christian love, pure living, and the bearing of moral fruit as a result of their righteousness,<sup>104</sup> which "comes

---

<sup>100</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 98-99.

<sup>101</sup> Bockmuehl, 68.

<sup>102</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 101; Bockmuehl, 68. Therrien takes this idea so far as to say that "discerning what really matters" is the key to NT ethics. G. Therrien, *Le discernement dans les écrits pauliniens* (1973), 166-86 in Bockmuehl, 68.

<sup>103</sup> Bockmuehl, 68.

<sup>104</sup> Bockmuehl, 69; Bockmuehl notes that commentators have taken the phrase καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης in three ways, as a genitive (1) of apposition (righteousness is the fruit); (2) of attribute

through Christ Jesus, to the Glory of God,” that Paul urges the Philippians to grow in “knowledge and depth of insight.”

Paul’s next move in this letter is to describe his own circumstance, and how, in spite of his imprisonment and hardships, the progress of the gospel is in no way hindered (cf. 1:12ff.). Paul’s thinking is so thoroughly saturated with an eschatological perspective that he is able to see his life or death simply as an opportunity to glorify God (1:20-26). As the Philippian church partners with Paul in grace, they need to learn to view their lives in the same way.<sup>105</sup> Paul then turns his attention from his attitude toward suffering, to the Philippians, and how they need to view their lives, relationships and circumstances.

### ***Live in a Manner Worthy of the Gospel: 1:27-2:18***

The next discourse unit in the letter, 1:27-2:18, is rhetorically and logically the centrepiece of Paul’s entire argument as it spells out the progress of the gospel in Philippi.<sup>106</sup> Though Paul’s relationship with the church is positive, he still has encouragement and exhortation for the community.<sup>107</sup> He is concerned to see them mature in character in order that they might, “as citizens of heaven, live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27).<sup>108</sup> The verb Paul chooses here, πολιτεύομαι, means “to live as a citizen” or “to participate in the government.”<sup>109</sup> By using this

---

(‘righteous fruit’); or of origin (moral fruit as the result of righteousness). The NLT provides a helpful gloss to capture the genitive of origin by translating: “May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation -- the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ -- for this will bring much glory and praise to God.”

<sup>105</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 30.

<sup>106</sup> Bockmuehl, 96.

<sup>107</sup> Bockmuehl, 96.

<sup>108</sup> In v. 27 the imperative πολιτεύεσθε is difficult to capture in translation as it contains the sense of “living as a citizen”, and is not the usual “walk” as in Eph 4:1 (περιπατῆσαι). The sense of “citizenship” is captured in the TNIV, “as citizens of heaven, live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ,” but the NIV and NAS simply translate with “conduct yourselves in a manner...” In this case Fowl translates with the sense of the new *polis* of heaven with “order your common life together” (Fowl, *Philippians*, 59). Bockmuehl translates “live as worthy citizens of the gospel of Christ”. These three translations take seriously the reference to citizenship that is used here and in 3:20 (Bockmuehl, 97).

<sup>109</sup> Gerald F. Hawthorne, “Philippians”, in *DPL*, 708; Louw and Nida, s.v. πολιτεύομαι 41.34.

word, which carries both political and behavioural connotations, Paul challenges their pride as Roman citizens, and calls them to view their lives based on a new understanding.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, 1:27 sets the agenda for the following exhortation that Paul makes, contextually triggering the reader to view what follows as ethical. It calls them to not merely act as ‘good citizens’ of Philippi, but, as we will see later in 3:20, as good citizens of their heavenly home.

Paul desires that the Philippians “read” their story in the same manner that Paul has “read” his in 1:12-26.<sup>111</sup> Throughout the previous section, Paul argued that despite his struggles, the gospel is advancing. Further, through his conviction of God’s providential ordering of his situation, he had come to adopt a certain set of dispositions and practices in his imprisonment (1:19-26), dispositions and practices that he now calls the Philippians to adopt.<sup>112</sup>

Paul begins this discourse unit by calling the Philippians to fortitude in their experience of suffering (1:27-30), and to unity in their common life together (2:1-4).<sup>113</sup> He then draws on the narration of Jesus’ humble obedience and subsequent vindication (2:5-11), as the example they are to follow and as the content of their hope (cf. 3:21). Next, Paul calls the Philippians to faithful living in their relationship and mission to the broader world (2:12-18). In the logic of Paul’s argument each of these exhortations draws its theological and rhetorical *Zeitgeist* from the story of Christ.

Instead of starting with Christ’s story, however, Paul first offers a set of specific exhortations he wants the Philippians to internalize. He follows this with Jesus’ story, providing the means and reason for the Philippians to act out the dispositions outlined in 2:1-4.

---

<sup>110</sup> Hawthorne, *DPL*, 708.

<sup>111</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 70.

<sup>112</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 70.

<sup>113</sup> Bockmuhl, 96.



### Manifest a Common Pattern of Thinking and Acting: 2:1-4

Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any compassion and mercy as, of course, there is, then make my joy complete by manifesting a common pattern of thinking and acting,<sup>114</sup> having the same love and being united in this orientation of mind and heart. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or arrogance. Instead, with humility of mind consider others above yourselves,<sup>115</sup> not looking out for your own interests, but rather, each of you for the interests of the others.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>114</sup> This translation of φρονῆτε is borrowed from Fowl (*Philippians*, 77) who best captures the sense of “pattern” of thinking and acting that Paul is encouraging throughout this letter with the use of this word and the context it is set in here.

<sup>115</sup> Fowl translating ὑπερέχω in terms of status (i.e. “considers others as your superior”) rather than the sense of value, as the term “better than” (NIV, NRSV) suggests (*Philippians*, 77). In his conclusion on the matter, Barth also views ὑπερέχω as ultimately referring to viewing the “other” as one’s “superior.” Karl Barth, *Epistle to the Philippians* (trans. J. Leitch; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1962) 57. Louw and Nida place ὑπερέχω (“surpass in value”) under the domain of “value” not “status.” The common translation “better than” (NRSV, NIV) may not be as accurate as the sense of “surpassing,” or as I translated “above.” Fee notes that although ὑπερέχω can mean “better,” it is used adjectivally in 3:8 and 4:7 to mean “surpassing,” that is, going far beyond anything (Fee, *Philippians*, 189 n. 78). Fowl’s translation is attractive in that it relates to Paul’s emphasis on “citizenship” in 1:27 (and 3:20), and that it is more specific in answering the question, “in what sense better than?” In light of the preceding political language (1:27), and the historical situation of Philippi as a Roman city, perhaps the ordering of status is what Paul intends. The sense of ‘status’ may also fit well with Jesus’ teaching about how his disciples are to order their interactions (Mk 10:43-45; Lk 14:9; Jn 13).

Against the translation “your superior,” Paul warns his audience in Rom 14:4 not to judge someone else’s servant (δῆκονος), as each person is accountable to his own master, Jesus Christ. However, in Rom 15:8 Paul mentions that Christ became a servant (δῆκονος) of the Jews, and in 16:1, he calls Phoebe a servant (δῆκονος) of the church in Cenchreae. Reading ‘your superior’ is also made difficult by the grammar of Phil 2:3, which better suggests the reading I have adopted: “consider others above yourselves.” The next clause (2:4) helps define what that means, as it is placing the needs of others “above” one’s own needs. Further, Carolyn Osiek rightly warns against reading twentieth-century psychology over this first century, Mediterranean document, as our concern with the value of the individual may cause us to read this text from an individualist perspective. Carolyn Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000) 54-5. The text, however, does deal with how individuals treat one another, but of course, in the context of community.

Lastly, Paul calls Christ Jesus one who took on the form of a slave (δοῦλος) in Phil 2:7. This element of the context may support the idea of “status,” as Paul is likely drawing this exhortation from the story of Christ, which he will tell in the next breath. In terms of a linear ‘hearing’ of the text, if the readers did not pick up what might have been ambiguous in 2:3, the sense of service to others would certainly come through in 2:4 and a sense of superiority might “click” when hearing that Jesus became a slave. It seems that reading ‘your superior’ may suit the context and logic of this passage, but the grammar makes it difficult for me to go as far as Fowl. My translation, “consider others above yourself” better suits the grammar but does not eliminate the possibility that ‘status’ may be factoring into Paul’s argument.

<sup>116</sup> There is a textual variant in 2:4. The [καὶ] is bracketed in the UBS fourth ed., as it is omitted in the Western mss. The best textual evidence supports its inclusion, however. As noted by Fowl, most translators feel the need to balance the sentence, and translate as the NIV does, “look not *only* to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (see Fee, *Philippians*, 175). As Fowl notes, a recent study by Engberg-Pedersen, “Radical Altruism in Philippians 2:4”, has convincingly argued that: “Clearly the force of *alla kai* is to turn attention *away from* A and *instead* toward B.” Fowl, *Philippians*, 85, n. 22.

Paul recognizes that this is a church where God is indeed at work (cf. 1:6), but in order for the gospel to progress in Philippi, the church must also progress in their understanding of how to view their interpersonal relationships and act as a united body. The argument begins with a first class conditional clause that “makes an assertion for the sake of an argument,”<sup>117</sup> and yet it is in “ironic understatement: ‘if Christ means any encouragement at all...[as of course he does].’”<sup>118</sup> Paul begins by stating the experience of the Philippians ‘in Christ,’ outlined by the fourfold protasis.<sup>119</sup> He then appeals to his own joy in the apodosis, and explains the manner in which the Philippians can “make complete” his joy; namely, by manifesting a common pattern of thinking and acting. This means sharing the same love and being united in their “orientation of mind and heart.” In the pattern of “not A but B,”<sup>120</sup> Paul further defines his exhortation in negative terms (vices), and then in positive terms (virtues).

Therefore,

(protasis) <sup>121</sup>	if	there is any encouragement in Christ,
	if	any comfort of love,
	if	any fellowship of the Spirit,
	if	any compassion and mercy
		as, of course, there is,
(apodosis)	then	make my joy complete
	by	
(explanation)		<u>manifesting a common pattern of thinking and acting</u> <sup>122</sup>
(elaboration)		<u>having the same love,</u>
	and	<u>being united in this orientation of mind and heart.</u>
		Do nothing out of
		<i>selfish ambition</i>
		or <i>arrogance.</i>
		Instead,

<sup>117</sup> Porter, *Idioms*, 256.

<sup>118</sup> Bockmuehl, 105.

<sup>119</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 177.

<sup>120</sup> Bockmuehl, 109.

<sup>121</sup> This flow of the passage is my own, but the description of protasis, apodosis, explanation and elaboration are borrowed from Fee, *Philippians* 176.

<sup>122</sup> Underlined words represent all the verbal glosses and their clauses that relate to “disposition” or “thinking.” The italicised words are nouns that also relate to “disposition.”

with *humility of mind*  
consider others above yourselves,  
 not looking out for your own interests,  
 but rather  
 each of you for the interests of the others.

**2:1-2a** The use of οὖν at the beginning of the passage<sup>123</sup> is inferential, linking this section with what preceded and maintaining Paul's exhortation of 1:27 as guiding this argument.<sup>124</sup> Paul uses the four verb-less "if"-clauses as an appeal to emotions and to the common life of the church, as the vocabulary is both affective and relational. As Fowl notes, "the combination of these aims speak of a single comprehensive effect rather than four sharply distinguishable attributes."<sup>125</sup> In the apodosis, Paul makes a personal appeal, using the only imperative in the section when he states, "make my joy complete." Adding a deep sense of mutuality, Paul gives them the opportunity to serve in his joy as he has given himself to serving them: "...I will continue with all of you for your progress and *joy* in faith" (1:25). This section is about *their* progress, but now Paul invites them to contribute to *his* joy.

Although Paul bases his exhortation on the appeal to fill up his joy, the ethical appeals ultimately rest on what the community has experienced "in Christ."<sup>126</sup> By appealing to his own joy, Paul leverages his pastoral longing to see the church mature in character. Until they become united in their common manner of thinking and acting, his joy will be incomplete.<sup>127</sup>

**2:2b-4** In vv. 2-4 Paul uses specific language to describe what it 'looks like' to think, feel and act in a "manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (1:27). The thrust of

<sup>123</sup> 2:1-4 forms a single, long sentence.

<sup>124</sup> Bockmuehl, 104.

<sup>125</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 79.

<sup>126</sup> Fee rightly notes that as a first class conditional the clause is presuppositional rather than suppositional, and the apodosis takes on the form of an imperative based on the presuppositions. Fee, *Philippians*, 177.

<sup>127</sup> The clause, ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε, in v. 2a, presents a grammatical issue. Based on Paul's argument, the ἵνα clause is best described as providing an exegetical limitation on the verb πληρώσατε, with the clause describing the means by which Paul's joy is to be "filled up". The best way to capture Paul's argument is to translate the ἵνα clause in this way: "make my joy complete *by*..."

this section is concerned with appropriate thoughts, attitudes, feelings and behaviors, as reflected in the frequent appeals to words relating broadly to ‘disposition’. As such, this section deals with ethics, appealing to the character of each individual (2:4) and of the community (cf. 2:14-15).

The verb φρονέω is used twice in v. 2, first as a subjunctive and second as a present participle, and again as an imperative in 2:5. The repetition of this meaningful word leaves no room to doubt Paul’s purpose: he wants the Philippians to have a disposition of harmony with the one purpose of “striving together as one person for the faith of the gospel” (1:27b). By using φρονέω with τὸ αὐτό and ἓν, Paul is not asking the Philippians to mindlessly repeat the same set of cognitions, but to have the same ‘movement of the will’, as φρονέω describes both “interest and decision at the same time.”<sup>128</sup> Within the same realm of “thinking/having an attitude,” the verb ἡγέομαι<sup>129</sup> is used in v. 3, and σκοπέω<sup>130</sup> is used in v. 4. Following the first subjunctive form of φρονέω, the rest of these verbs form a string of present participles, emphasizing the theme of “thinking/considering,”<sup>131</sup> and forming a semantic chain indicating disposition as the “big idea” of this passage.<sup>132</sup> Paul specifies the disposition that the community is to adopt using a series of vice and virtue related nouns, including: ἐριθεία, κεινοδοξία, and ταπεινοφροσύνη. These will be considered in more detail to define the patterns of thinking, feeling and acting that are (and are not), “worthy of the gospel of Christ.”

Paul’s appeal to manifest “a common pattern of thinking and acting, having the same love and being united in this orientation of mind and heart” (2:3) is

<sup>128</sup> J. Goetzmann, 617 in O’Brien, 178.

<sup>129</sup> “to think/consider/regard.”

<sup>130</sup> “look out for/consider/think about.”

<sup>131</sup> Porter, *Idioms*, 23.

<sup>132</sup> Cynthia Westfall, “Blessed be the Ties that Bind: Semantic Domains in Hebrews 1:1-4:16,” Theological Research Seminar, McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton Ontario, Nov.1, 2005.

juxtaposed with the imperatival sense of “[Do] nothing from...” Paul then pairs ἐριθεία and κενοδοξία together to nuance the negative aspect of his command. The noun ἐριθεία was introduced in 1:17 where Paul described his opponents in Rome as those who “proclaim Christ out of *selfish ambition*, not sincerely.” As Louw and Nida note, ἐριθεία relates to “a feeling of resentfulness based upon jealousy and implying rivalry,”<sup>133</sup> and can be translated as either “rivalry” or “selfish ambition.”<sup>134</sup> Given the context of this verse, both meanings could be intended. The meaning of rivalry may best be described as “wanting to be better than someone else” or “wanting to make people think they are better,” and the meaning of selfish ambition may best be rendered “making yourselves look bigger.”<sup>135</sup> It is not hard to imagine why Paul was concerned about this “feeling of resentfulness,” as it could quickly erode relationships and contribute to disunity.

Paul furthers his point by adding the word κενοδοξία to his exhortation. The word can be rendered “conceit,” “arrogance,” or “vainglory,” as it refers to “a state of pride which is without basis or justification.”<sup>136</sup> This is the only place in the NT that this word is used, but it was commonly understood in Hellenistic Greek as “referring to people with an inflated sense of themselves, projecting an image but lacking in substance.”<sup>137</sup> Paul conveys that selfish competitiveness, arrogance, and pride are not fitting attitudes for Christians, as κενοδοξία is juxtaposed with ταπεινοφροσύνη, an attitude of humility, or “lowliness of mind.”<sup>138</sup> Bockmuehl makes the important point that in recent years the “notion of competition seems in public discourse to have lost

<sup>133</sup> Louw and Nida, s.v. ἐριθεία 88.167.

<sup>134</sup> Louw and Nida, s.v. ἐριθεία 88.167.

<sup>135</sup> Louw and Nida, s.v. ἐριθεία 88.167.

<sup>136</sup> Louw and Nida, s.v. κενοδοξία 88.221.

<sup>137</sup> Bockmuehl, 110. Paul uses the corresponding adjective κενόδοξοι (conceited) in Gal 5:26 in conjunction with the competitive sense of “challenging one another” and “envying each other”, which suggest why these two words are connected here.

<sup>138</sup> Bockmuehl, 110.

any undesirable connotations as a motto for human interaction.”<sup>139</sup> The NT writers, in contrast, sharply distinguished between competition for virtuous ends or selfish ends.<sup>140</sup>

In opposition to these attitudes of selfish ambition and arrogance, Paul states in positive terms the type of attitude and action the Philippians must adopt. One is to “consider others above” oneself, in “humility.” This is the exact opposite of the negative qualities previously mentioned. Louw and Nida define the meaning of ταπεινοφροσύνη as “the quality of humility,” which can be rendered “humble attitude, humility, or without arrogance.”<sup>141</sup> An attitude of humility, rather than κενοδοξία, views others preferentially, considering the “interests” (τὰ = ‘things/interests’) of the other person “above” one’s own interests (2:4). This is the characteristic manner of being that Paul longs to see the Philippians develop.

Humility is a highly regarded virtue throughout both testaments of Scripture. In the Old Testament, God shows a distinct concern for those of a humble disposition,<sup>142</sup> and likewise, the NT writers inherited this positive understanding of humility, as demonstrated by Paul here, as in other passages.<sup>143</sup> Bockmuehl well-describes a biblical perspective on humility:

The biblical view of humility is precisely *not* feigned or groveling, nor a sanctimonious or pathetic lack of self-esteem, but rather a mark of moral strength and integrity. It involves an unadorned acknowledgement of one’s own creaturely inadequacies, and entrusting one’s fortunes to God rather than to one’s own abilities or resources.... Humility in this sense has an ‘ex-centric’ orientation, taking its force outside oneself, and finding its power in the power of God....[it] creates corporate identity, community and solidarity.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>139</sup> Bockmuehl, 110.

<sup>140</sup> See Mark 9:35; Rom 12:10; 1 Thess 4:18; 1 Cor 14:12; Heb 10:24; Bockmuehl, 110.

<sup>141</sup> Louw and Nida, s.v. ταπεινοφροσύνη 88.53.

<sup>142</sup> E.g. Pss 17:27; 33:18; 101:17; Prov 3:34; Zeph 2:3 [LXX]; Isa 57:15; Fowl, *Philippians*,

84.

<sup>143</sup> E.g. Eph 4:2; Col. 3:12.

<sup>144</sup> Bockmuehl, 110-11.

This understanding of humility runs in sharp contrast to that of dominating first-century secular Greek culture, which spoke of humility rarely, and only in a derogatory sense to “denote servile weakness, obsequious groveling or on the other hand mean-spiritedness.”<sup>145</sup> Humility was reserved to describe the disposition appropriate to slaves.<sup>146</sup> According to the political wisdom of the day, one would know one’s status as superior or inferior, and treat others appropriately in relation to this status.<sup>147</sup> In a society where political concord was based on this type of social posturing, Paul’s appeal would have been, viewed as at the least, completely inappropriate to those of higher status, and at worst, “socially destabilizing.”<sup>148</sup> Paul is arguing, however, that regarding the “other” above oneself is exactly the type of logic necessary for political concord in Jesus’ kingdom.<sup>149</sup> Jesus models the way that relationships are to be ordered in his kingdom when he washed his disciples’ feet (John 13). In this case there is no doubt who is morally “better,” but the posture that Jesus took in this act – and the act that was to follow shortly – was that of servant.<sup>150</sup> Later in the text Paul offers examples that help define what it means to look out for the interest of others.

Paul further defines the meaning of v. 3 when he states in v. 4, “...not looking out for your own interests, but rather for the interests of others.” Paul is not proposing self-hatred or self-neglect by this statement. It is Paul’s starting place to say, “Christ loved me” and “loved us” (Gal 2:20; Rom 8:37),<sup>151</sup> and in this sense he is not suggesting a low self-esteem; rather he is promoting a high other-esteem. Christians

---

<sup>145</sup> Bockmuehl, 110.

<sup>146</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 84.

<sup>147</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 84.

<sup>148</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 84.

<sup>149</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 84.

<sup>150</sup> Fowl argues that “superiority” refers to “status” and not “morality.” I agree that Paul’s reference to viewing the other as “superior” does not mean viewing them as morally better, but as Paul specifies in the next phrase, it is placing the other interests ahead of one’s own interests.

<sup>151</sup> Bockmuehl, 114.

need to take the focus off of “me” and put it on the “other” in genuine “investment of ourselves for the good of other people.”<sup>152</sup>

Throughout the letter to the Philippians, Paul offers several concrete examples of how this disposition “works.”<sup>153</sup> The main paradigm of humble self-giving is displayed in the narration of Jesus’ own humility in the verses immediately following. This is not the first or only example mentioned though. Paul has already stated that it would be far better for him to “depart and be with Christ” than to remain in the flesh. However, in recognizing the need to benefit the Philippians (1:24; 1:21ff.), he has “decided” to remain “in the flesh,” for their joy and progress (cf. 1:25). In this case Paul provides the example of how he has arranged his decisions around this logic of “other regard,” putting what is best for the Philippians above what would be best for him. As will be described in chapter three, Paul will also provide examples of how the Philippians are to orient their thoughts, attitudes and actions by drawing on the examples of Timothy, Epaphroditus, and himself.

The thoughts and attitudes Paul describes in 2:1-4 are not universal, moral truths hovering somewhere in the sky,<sup>154</sup> but are concrete descriptions of worthy behavior for heavenly citizens precisely because they are the manner of thinking, feeling and acting displayed by the King of the heavenly city, Jesus Christ (cf. 2:5-11). These moral attributes gain their intelligibility as Paul relates them to the larger story of Christ’s life, death and vindication in the remainder of this one argument, to which we will now turn.

### **Christ is Your Example, Follow Him: 2:5-11**

Let your pattern of thinking, feeling and acting be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be

---

<sup>152</sup> Bockmuehl, 113.

<sup>153</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 85.

<sup>154</sup> MacIntyre described Enlightenment ethics as disconnected from stories. Here, however, the ethics that Paul is encouraging are linked to Jesus’ story. Fowl, “Some Issues,” 294.



used for his own advantage. Instead, he emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave, and being born in human form. And being found in appearance as a human, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. For this reason God exalted him to the highest place and gave to him the name that is above every other name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in the heavenly realm and on the earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In 2:1-4 Paul argued for a particular pattern of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that is to characterize God's people, and now he offers the Philippians the reason, means and concrete example of how to accomplish this. They must adopt the mindset of Christ Jesus because he provides the pattern of the new person God, in Christ, intends to make each believer.<sup>155</sup>

The narration of Christ's story is best understood as having two parts, with vv. 6-8 representing Christ's humiliation, and vv. 9-11 indicating both the divine recognition of Christ's "equality with God," and his vindication.<sup>156</sup> Because of its interpretative importance, v. 5 will be examined to set up the discussions vv. 6-8 and vv. 9-11.

2:5 Verse 5 is incredibly important for interpreting 2:6-11 because it acts as a transition between the poetic narration of Christ's humility and the commands of 1:27ff. As the verse is elliptical, any English rendering of it will be an amplification,<sup>157</sup> thus, the most faithful translations will best account for the context.

The first grammatical issue is with the demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο. It could point back, summarizing Paul's commands in 1:27ff.,<sup>158</sup> or forward to vv. 6-11.

Τοῦτο is best seen as referring to the preceding commands based on: (a) Paul's usage

---

<sup>155</sup> Though form-critical studies have sought to elucidate the provenance and meaning of 2:6-11 as a so-called pre-Pauline (or pre-Christian) "hymn," the present study employs a different approach. Taking seriously the providence of God in overseeing the formation of the Christian canon, this study is more interested to discover what Paul meant by using (or creating) this narration of Christ's story, and what this means for subsequent generations of Christians. As such the present study will examine what Paul intended to accomplish with the story rhetorically and theologically above concerns with the strophes and lines of the narration. See also O'Brien, 193; Bockmuehl, 125.

<sup>156</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 194.

<sup>157</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 89.

<sup>158</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 89.

of it throughout this letter (esp. 1:7; 1:22, 25; 3:7, 15);<sup>159</sup> (b) Paul's usage of it in general; and (c), that "pointing back" best fits with Paul's argument.<sup>160</sup> In referring to 2:2-4, the imperative φρονεῖτε resonates with the use of φρονέω in 2:2, and acts to summarize Paul's argument: "This manner of thinking, feeling, and acting that I have just described, you must adopt among yourselves."<sup>161</sup>

The next grammatical issue is the lack of a verb in the second clause of v. 5, which the translator must supply.<sup>162</sup> The keys to this issue are context and the interaction of the pronoun and its adjectival modifier ("which also").<sup>163</sup> We have already established that τοῦτο refers to vv. 2-4, and thus ὃ καὶ means that the content of the mindset described in vv. 3-4 is that which was in Jesus Christ.<sup>164</sup> The presence of ὃ καὶ creates a natural parallel between ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ and ἐν ὑμῖν.<sup>165</sup> The rendering provided here takes into account the most common use of τοῦτο, and the cohesion afforded by the use of φρονεῖτε with v. 2; it also takes seriously the adjectival modifier, ὃ καὶ, and its relationship to the pronoun, notes the parallel presented by ἐν ὑμῖν and ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, and maintains the argument Paul is making throughout this discourse unit (1:27-2:18). It is best to interpret the narration of Christ in the paradigmatic sense: "Let your pattern of thinking, feeling and acting be the same as that of Christ Jesus..." The following verses elaborate on the patterns

<sup>159</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 89-90, n. 2.

<sup>160</sup> See Fee, *Philippians*, 199, n. 25.

<sup>161</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 200.

<sup>162</sup> As mentioned previously, the kerygmatic interpretation views the passage as referring to the soteriological actions of Christ and not to a paradigm of attitudes to be emulated. Proponents of this approach essentially translate this verse as, "Have this attitude among yourselves which *you have* in Christ Jesus". In this view, the "attitude" is not that of Christ, but of the community who are "in Christ". Proponents of the paradigmatic interpretation, however, translate with something like, "Have this attitude among yourselves which *was also* in Christ Jesus." Bockmuehl, 122.

<sup>163</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 200. Fee makes this point, but he states that the modifier "which also" is "adverbial," not adjectival as stated here. Adjectival may be a better description of the grammar in this case as the pronoun τοῦτο is the antecedent of ὃ καὶ and is an adjectival. If the verbal phrase (τοῦτο φρονεῖτε) is taken as the antecedent, then "adverbial" may be the better description, but this is not the best description of the grammar here.

<sup>164</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 200.

<sup>165</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 200.

of thinking, feeling and acting that the Philippians, and all Christ-followers, are enjoined to emulate.

**2:6-8** The story of Christ presented in 2:6-11 can be described, at a simplistic level, as a “down/up” movement. The biblical humiliation-exaltation motif is active in this passage, with vv. 6-8 describing the “humiliation” aspect, and vv. 9-11 describing the “exaltation” aspect. Verses 6-8 forms a compound sentence with two clauses joined by “and” that share the same form and demonstrate how Christ’s “mindset” expressed itself first as God and second as “humanity.”<sup>166</sup>

Christ Jesus is maintained as the subject from v. 5, as the masculine singular relative pronoun ὅς indicates. The meaning of Christ being in the μορφῇ of God has received an abundance of scholarly attention, as this word only appears twice in the NT.<sup>167</sup> Fee concludes that what it means for Christ to be in the form of God is “to be equal with God,”<sup>168</sup> which presupposes his prior existence as God.<sup>169</sup> What is particularly important from v. 6<sup>170</sup> is that Christ Jesus did not consider equality with God as ἀρπαγμὸν, “something to be used for his own advantage.”<sup>171</sup> Although the meaning of ἀρπαγμός has been substantially debated, there is growing scholarly consensus on the meaning of the word in this context.<sup>172</sup> As Bockmuehl summarizes, “Christ did not consider his existing divine status as a possession to be exploited for

<sup>166</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 195. Both descriptions begin with a participial phrase indicating the *mode* of Christ’s being (God/“human”), followed by the main clause that indicates what Christ *did* in the respective mode of existence (i.e. emptied himself, humbled himself). Christ’s actions are modified by a further participle, specifying *how* he accomplished what he did in the main clause (i.e. took on the form of a slave, died on a cross). Fee, *Philippians*, 195-6. Fee maintains “man” in his translation in order to maintain the poetry, but notes in n. 1, p. 214 he describes that he means a generic “man,” meaning humanity.

<sup>167</sup> With the other occurrence in Mark’s textually tenuous longer ending.

<sup>168</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 207.

<sup>169</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 203.

<sup>170</sup> In addition to the important christological description of Christ’s pre-incarnate state present in the phrase “in the form of God”.

<sup>171</sup> Bockmuehl, 129. Fee notes that the point that describes Jesus’ “equality” with God, not as something he was trying to grasp, but that which he did not use for his own advantage, is among the strongest expressions of Christ’s deity in the NT, contra Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (London, 1980). Fee, *Philippians*, 208.

<sup>172</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 94.

selfish interests.”<sup>173</sup> Paul uses this word to state negatively (...did *not*) what the main verbs in vv. 7-8 state positively,<sup>174</sup> namely that Jesus “emptied himself” and “humbled himself.” This is the attitude that Paul describes in v. 3 when he uses the same verb, ἡγήομαι: “with humility of mind *consider* others above yourselves.”<sup>175</sup>

In vv. 6-8 Paul uses a “not/but” contrast that parallels vv. 3-4,<sup>176</sup> providing a linguistic link between the two sections and further evidence for an “ethical” interpretation of 2:6-11. Instead of using his equal status with God to his own selfish advantage, Paul writes, “he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, and being born in human form...” (v. 7). Paul demonstrates how Jesus did “nothing from selfish ambition or arrogance” (v. 3) but “with humility of mind” (v. 3) he took the form of a slave/servant (v. 7), and was not looking out for his own interests (cf. v. 4) when he became “obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross” (v. 8).

Scholarly debate has also raged over the meaning of ἐκένωσεν in this verse, questioning what Jesus “emptied himself” of. Fee argues that these debates are created by an incorrect understanding of ἀρπαγμός, and on the incorrect assumption that “the verb requires a genitive qualifier – that he must have ‘emptied himself’ of *something*.”<sup>177</sup> Fee rightly argues that ἀρπαγμός does not require any object for Christ to “seize,” but rather “he simply ‘emptied *himself*,’ poured himself out.”<sup>178</sup> Paul provides the needed modifier in the following clause, “taking on the form of a slave, and being born in human form.”<sup>179</sup> This verse serves not merely to describe the event

---

<sup>173</sup> Bockmuehl, 130.

<sup>174</sup> Bockmuehl, 130.

<sup>175</sup> Bockmuehl, 131.

<sup>176</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 199.

<sup>177</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 210.

<sup>178</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 210. This is a metaphor, but one that demands Christ’s pre-existence as part of the schema. n. 78.

<sup>179</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 210.

of the incarnation, but the character of God – as the one who pours himself out.<sup>180</sup>

N.T. Wright puts it well: “The real humiliation of the incarnation and the cross is that one who was himself God, and who never during the whole process stopped being God, could embrace such a vocation.”<sup>181</sup>

The first modifying clause of v. 7, “taking on the form of a slave,” is concerned with the “quality” of Christ’s incarnation, whereas the second clause, “being born in human form,” describes the “factual” details of the incarnation.<sup>182</sup> The first clause, “form of a slave,” stands in rhetorical contrast to Jesus’ “being in the form of God,” and is further specified as Jesus “being born in human likeness.”<sup>183</sup> God has demonstrated his nature and character in Christ Jesus by pouring himself out for the sake of others, taking on the form of a slave.<sup>184</sup> In so doing, he reveals what it means for us to be “made in his image, to bear his likeness and have his “mindset.” It means taking the role of a slave for the sake of others.”<sup>185</sup> This attribute informs the ethic of character God seeks to form in his people (cf. Rom 8:29).

Where the “emptying” of Christ Jesus was described from the perspective of his “being in the form of God,” v. 8 now describes his “humility” from the perspective of “being found in appearance as a human.” It is significant that Jesus “humbled himself,” stated actively with the reflexive pronoun, ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν, rather than passively, “suggesting a voluntary historical act of self-humbling.”<sup>186</sup>

In discerning the ethical implications of this section, Paul grounds Jesus’ acts of self-giving in an historical frame of reference: Christ appeared as a human, and he

<sup>180</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 211.

<sup>181</sup> N.T. Wright, “ἁρπαγμός and the Meaning of Philippians 2:5-11” *Journal of Theological Studies* 37 no 2 (1986): 346, in Fee, *Philippians*, 211.

<sup>182</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 213.

<sup>183</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 213.

<sup>184</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 214.

<sup>185</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 214.

<sup>186</sup> Bockmuehl, 138.

humbled himself by becoming obedient all the way to death – even on a cross (v. 8). Paul roots his description of Christ Jesus, and his mindset, in the real-life events of his obedience and suffering, which meets the Philippians in their real-life situation of opposition and internal disunity.<sup>187</sup> As Jesus was “obedient” in his humble self-giving, so too the Philippians must obediently adopt the same manner of viewing their situation. After all, they have the privilege not only to trust in Christ, “but also to suffer for him” (1:29b).

Understanding the manner in which Jesus was obedient is essential to grasp the hortatory purpose that Paul has in mind. Christ Jesus was not obedient *a priori*, but as a human being, he also had to “learn” obedience.<sup>188</sup> He was obedient in taking up his position as a servant in his everyday decisions and moral behaviour.<sup>189</sup> In order for Jesus to be a moral example, it is essential that his humility and obedience were voluntary rather than enforced or automatic.<sup>190</sup> Jesus makes this aspect of his voluntary self-giving clear himself in John 10:18, stating: “No one takes it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own initiative.” As Chrysostom comments, “He is lowly minded who humbles himself, not he who is lowly by necessity.”<sup>191</sup> Jesus’ obedience went as far as it could, being both unconditional and unlimited in his act of service to humanity: “even to the point of death”.<sup>192</sup>

In sharp contrast to the noble death of a zealot, which may have included suicide or death in battle,<sup>193</sup> Paul brings the poetic nature of the section to a startling halt, adding, with descriptive redundancy, “even death on a cross.” Cicero called

---

<sup>187</sup> Bockmuehl, 138.

<sup>188</sup> Bockmuehl, 138. As the writer of Hebrews makes clear, Jesus “learned obedience from what he suffered.” Heb 5:8; cf. Luke 2:52, Rom 5:19.

<sup>189</sup> Bockmuehl, 138.

<sup>190</sup> Bockmuehl, 138.

<sup>191</sup> Chrysostom in Bockmuehl, 138.

<sup>192</sup> In its canonical context, the reality of Jesus’ obedience to the point of death is best demonstrated by his prayer in the garden of Gethsemane: “He said, ‘Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want’” (Mark 14:36, NRSV).

<sup>193</sup> Bockmuehl, 139.

crucifixion “the most cruel and abominable form of punishment.”<sup>194</sup> Crucifixion was reserved for rebels and slaves,<sup>195</sup> and, from Rome’s perspective, those who were crucified were not only humiliated, but humiliated by Roman power.<sup>196</sup> Crucifixion served as a public display of Rome’s power over all bodies.<sup>197</sup> The voluntary obedience of Jesus, to the point of death on a cross, stands as a symbol against the power of Rome: though Rome could kill the body, it could not make Christ its victim.<sup>198</sup> Rome actually participates in God’s economy of salvation, making the cross the site of God’s victory over Roman pretension<sup>199</sup> and over evil itself. Recognizing this, Paul is able to honestly view his own imprisonment not as victimization but as an occasion to advance the gospel and allow Christ to be honoured in his body.<sup>200</sup>

The cross is the climax of Christ’s humility and the ultimate purpose of the incarnation. It is in the cross that the “unique significance for the Christian message lies: Christ died not a noble death or for a good person, but a scandalous death for the ungodly (Rom 5:7-8; 1 Cor 1:23).”<sup>201</sup> It should be noted at this point that Paul is using Christ’s death on the cross as the analogy of the type of obedience and humble self-giving that the Philippians need to adopt in their common life, not imitation of him in an isomorphic way.<sup>202</sup> The cross speaks of the ultimate expression of “humble obedience and service to others.”<sup>203</sup>

**2:9-11** The dramatic climax of the story from vv. 6-8 brought Jesus from the place of equality with God to the humility of entering human history with the posture

---

<sup>194</sup> Bockmuehl, 139.

<sup>195</sup> Bockmuehl, 140.

<sup>196</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 99.

<sup>197</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 99.

<sup>198</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 99.

<sup>199</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 99.

<sup>200</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 99.

<sup>201</sup> Bockmuehl, 140.

<sup>202</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 106.

<sup>203</sup> Bockmuehl, 140.

of a slave, and then in obedience that resulted in his death on a cross. In vv. 9-11 the scene shifts from Jesus' ultimate humility to his vindication.<sup>204</sup> Though Käsemann has argued that vv. 9-11 eliminate any possibility of the passage having an exemplary quality, these verses are essential to complete the story of Christ both theologically and paradigmatically.

Theologically these verses are significant, as vindication (not reward)<sup>205</sup> is the "moral counterbalance to the acceptance of suffering."<sup>206</sup> God's justice is intact only if he vindicates innocent suffering. Further, Paul underscores elsewhere that Christ's death alone is not sufficient for providing salvation: "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain" (1 Cor 15:17; cf. Rom 4:25).<sup>207</sup> As Bockmuehl notes, "no theologically meaningful appeal to Christ's example can be based on his death alone."<sup>208</sup>

Christ's vindication safeguards the paradigmatic thrust of the passage first by affirming the justice and sovereignty of God, and second by providing believers the assurance that as a result of being "in Christ," they will share in the heavenly life.<sup>209</sup> Believers are assured that God will also vindicate them in their suffering.<sup>210</sup>

Verse 9 begins with the double conjunctions διό καί,<sup>211</sup> creating a causal link from Christ's obedience to God's actions of exalting him. Verses 9-11 form one sentence, with ὁ θεός acting as the subject of the two verbs in this verse. The verb ὑπερύψωσεν<sup>212</sup> is only used here in the NT, and it is most woodenly translated "super-

---

<sup>204</sup> Bockmuehl, 140.

<sup>205</sup> Fowl discusses the nature of vindication as opposed to "reward" that considers the dynamic of giving within the Trinity. See Fowl, *Philippians*, 101.

<sup>206</sup> Bockmuehl, 140.

<sup>207</sup> Bockmuehl, 141.

<sup>208</sup> Bockmuehl, 141.

<sup>209</sup> Bockmuehl, 141.

<sup>210</sup> Bockmuehl, 141.

<sup>211</sup> "For this reason."

<sup>212</sup> The rendering adopted here is "highly exalted."



exalted.”<sup>213</sup> The syntax of the verse further focuses the exaltation on Jesus himself, as αὐτόν is ‘fronted’ in the emphatic position.<sup>214</sup> The next verb, ἐχαρίσατο, states that God “gave” Jesus the name that is “above every other name,” which seems to imply that Jesus was lacking something before the exaltation he received. Fowl points out the two interpretations that Aquinas offers for this issue: (1) that God brings Christ’s distinct, human nature in line with the divine nature;<sup>215</sup> and (2) that the granting of the “name above all names” in the presence of all creation reveals to creation what has always been eternally true.<sup>216</sup>

The result of God’s exaltation of Jesus (ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ) is expressed in two coordinate clauses taken from the LXX of Isa 45:23.<sup>217</sup> Paul substitutes “at the name of Jesus” in place of “to me” in the LXX, which refers to YHWH, Israel’s God himself.<sup>218</sup> In this passage it is not clear if all creation will bow and confess the authority of Jesus over all things because Jesus *is* the name or because Jesus *has* that name.<sup>219</sup>

What is clear is that it is *Jesus* who receives this name, that to his name all creatures are subject, and that he is *kurios*: ‘Lord’, *YHWH*. There can be no greater or more powerful name than that: God’s own name is exalted above everything (cf. Pss 8:1; 138:2; 148:13).<sup>220</sup>

Ultimately it is “God the Father” who is glorified as a result of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, to whom all creation will bow and confess as “Lord.” In the context of the Roman Empire, the naming of Jesus as “Lord” stands in direct subversion of Caesar’s claim to be “Lord.” The scope of Christ’s dominion, as described in these verses, makes it impossible to acknowledge Caesar’s claim to dominion. In addition,

<sup>213</sup> Bockmuehl, 141.

<sup>214</sup> Bockmuehl, 141.

<sup>215</sup> Aquinas attributes this view to Ambrose. Fowl, *Philippians*, 104.

<sup>216</sup> Aquinas attributes this view to Augustine. Fowl, *Philippians*, 104.

<sup>217</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 223.

<sup>218</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 224.

<sup>219</sup> Bockmuehl, 142.

<sup>220</sup> Bockmuehl, 142.

these verses “lay the foundation for the counter-politics that Paul desires the Philippians to embody in their common life.”<sup>221</sup>

In narrating the story of Christ, Paul describes the character attributes that Christ displayed in his life in vv. 6-8, particularly the humble pattern of thinking, feeling and acting, as well as the obedience that ultimately resulted in his shameful death on a cross. Verse 5 joins the Christ-story to the hortatory section of vv. 1-4, calling the Philippians to adopt the same mindset as that of Christ Jesus. As Käsemann rightly points out, vv. 9-11 pose a serious problem for isomorphic imitation, and, as Fowl notes, many commentators do not take this problem into consideration.<sup>222</sup> This problem has been sufficiently dealt with here in three basic ways: (1) vv. 6-8 are meant to provide the analogy of Christ’s mindset, not a set of “actions” to be imitated; (2) vv. 9-11 are a necessary theological aspect of Christ’s story, and must be present to maintain the balance of scorn and exaltation; and (3) as God’s just character is revealed in the vindication of Jesus, his character then becomes the guarantee for believers that, in following Jesus’ example of humble self-giving and obedience, they too will be vindicated. Paul’s next move is to lovingly call the Philippians to work out this Christ-modelled lifestyle in their community and as a witness to their world.

### **Work Out Your Salvation, For God is at Work In You: 2:12-18**

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not only when I was with you but now all the more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for God is working in you, enabling you both to will and to do what pleases him. Do everything without complaining and arguing, in order that you might become blameless and pure, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine as stars in the world, holding out the word of life, that in the Day of Christ I may boast because I did not run in vain or labour for nothing. But even if I am poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service

---

<sup>221</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 105.

<sup>222</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 106.

of your faith, I am glad and I rejoice with all of you. In the same way, you too should rejoice and rejoice together with me.

Paul has encouraged the community at Philippi to orient their thinking, feeling and behaviour around the example of Christ in vv. 5-11. Now, in vv. 12-18, he provides a general appeal to continued obedience, specific warnings against factionalism, and encouragements to stand firm in the hostile world, both for the sake of the world and for Paul himself.<sup>223</sup>

**2:12-13** On the basis of what Paul has just said about Christ (ὥστε), he continues his appeal, encouraging the Philippians to harmony and a Christ-centred disposition.<sup>224</sup> Paul repeats the word “salvation” from 1:28, and here urges the community to “flesh it out” in their life together.<sup>225</sup> This exhortation challenges “each of them” and “all of them” as evidenced respectively by (1) the reflexive pronoun ἐαυτῶν in v. 12, and (2) the plural forms in vv. 3-4 and the plural “lights” in v. 15.<sup>226</sup> As Fee notes, this text is not soteriological as it is not concerned with how people “get saved” or how “saved people persevere.”<sup>227</sup> Rather, it is ethical, and is concerned with the question, “how do saved people act out their salvation in a hostile environment?”<sup>228</sup>

Paul makes clear that disobedience is not the issue for this community, as they have “always obeyed” both in Paul’s presence and now “all the more” in his absence. The imperative verb κατεργάζεσθε, “work out,” guides the theme of this single sentence (vv. 12-13),<sup>229</sup> tying together Paul’s intent with the entire discourse (1:27-

<sup>223</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 240; Fowl, *Philippians*, 107.

<sup>224</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 230; Fowl, *Philippians*, 118.

<sup>225</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 231.

<sup>226</sup> Bockmuehl, 151. This is in keeping with the nature of salvation presented throughout the NT. Bockmuehl notes the common elements of salvation as: freedom from the oppression of evil, affecting individuals and the community of God, and the work of God, involving salvation in the present, and the future consummation of that salvation.

<sup>227</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 235.

<sup>228</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 235.

<sup>229</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 230.

2:18); that is, the *shape* of the Philippians' obedience to God. The verb κατεργάζεσθε is in the second person plural, indicating that this action is directed at the common life of the community. Paul is offering a general command to the church to continue to obey, and thus "work out" what their salvation means in the hostile environment of Philippi. Christ is their example of one who obeyed God, even to the point of death (v. 8), and they too are called to the costly vocation of obedience to God.<sup>230</sup>

They are further to "work out" their salvation with "fear and trembling." The phrase μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου could mean, as Barth argues, that "fear and trembling" is the necessary attitude of believers to one another, as the three other cases where Paul uses the phrase seems to suggest (1 Cor 2:3, 2 Cor 7:15 and Eph 6:5).<sup>231</sup> Porter argues, however, that "salvation" is not "spiritual health"<sup>232</sup> in this context (as Hawthorne),<sup>233</sup> but refers in the normal Pauline sense to the soteriological.<sup>234</sup> As such, fear and trembling here is in reference to God, and not people.<sup>235</sup> Porter is right that "fear and trembling" here refers to God, but not because "salvation" is soteriological in this context: it is best understood as ethical.<sup>236</sup> As "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" is the guiding clause of the household code<sup>237</sup> in Eph 5:21-6:9 (containing the command to slaves in Eph 6:5), so "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" is ultimately done out of reverence for Christ.<sup>238</sup>

---

<sup>230</sup> Though there is debate about who the Philippians are to obey, it is clear that God is ultimately the one to whom all obedience is due. As Fowl notes, there is a close parallel between obeying God and obeying Paul. Paul is calling the Philippians to 'obey' the exhortations that he brings them, and the view of God's economy of salvation. See Fowl, *Philippians*, 119.

<sup>231</sup> Barth, 71-2.

<sup>232</sup> Stanley E. Porter, "Fear, Reverence" in *DPL*, 293.

<sup>233</sup> Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 43: Philippians* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983) 98.

<sup>234</sup> Porter, *DPL*, 293.

<sup>235</sup> Porter, *DPL*, 293.

<sup>236</sup> See the pervious argument about "work out your salvation", especially Fee's statement about the meaning of "salvation" in 2:12.

<sup>237</sup> I take the code to continue from 5:21 through to 6:9 with "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" as the guiding command of the entire section.

<sup>238</sup> Bockmuehl rightly notes that Paul's other references to "fear and trembling" could ultimately be references to God or Christ. Bockmuehl, 153.

As Porter notes, “Christian submission exists in the realm of fear of Christ.”<sup>239</sup> For the community at Philippi to “work out their salvation,” they must obediently emulate Jesus’ example in vv. 5-11, with “fear and trembling” toward God.<sup>240</sup> Living out the gospel, therefore, requires nothing less than due reverence and awe to the God that all of creation will acknowledge with bent knee and confessing tongue (cf. vv. 9-11).

Though Bornkamm calls the second clause (v. 13) “an oddly paradoxical sentence,”<sup>241</sup> it is actually a main point of Paul’s argument.<sup>242</sup> Verse 13 is not providing a “balance back toward grace,” as if v. 12 were suggesting a “salvation” based on something other than grace, but it functions to state theologically *who* is ultimately “working” out the whole program. The exhortation to “work out” their salvation is here grounded in its theological reality,<sup>243</sup> as Paul is essentially saying: “This is, of course, God’s work, and he is the one who is providing the desire and empowerment for you to carry out his good plans.” Fitting ethical behaviour corresponds to what God has “enabled them to be through Christ’s sacrifice.”<sup>244</sup>

**2:14-18** Paul now shifts without pause to specify further what it means for the Philippians to “work out” their salvation in Philippi, tying it to the preceding section with asyndeton and the present imperative verb.<sup>245</sup> The imperative “Do everything without complaining (=grumbling) or arguing” alludes to Israel’s grumbling against God and Moses.<sup>246</sup> There is no indication in this letter that the Philippians are

<sup>239</sup> Porter, *DPL*, 292.

<sup>240</sup> Osiek rightly points out that “working out your salvation” is the appropriate and necessary response to God’s grace in one’s life. Osiek, 74.

<sup>241</sup> Bornkamm in Fowl, *The Story of Christ*, 97.

<sup>242</sup> Fowl, *The Story of Christ*, 97.

<sup>243</sup> Bockmuehl, 153.

<sup>244</sup> Mott, *DPL*, 269.

<sup>245</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 243.

<sup>246</sup> The LXX uses the word γογγυσμός repeatedly in Exod 16:12ff. and in many other instances. The only other time Paul uses the cognate verb (γογγύζετε) is in 1 Cor 10:10, in reference to the grumbling of the Israelites in the desert. See Num 14:2-3; 20:2ff.; 21:5; Deut 1:27; Ps 106:25. Bockmuehl, 155.

“complaining” against God or Paul,<sup>247</sup> but Paul adds διαλογισμῶν to the warning, which focuses on the Philippian context (cf. 4:2-3).<sup>248</sup> Louw and Nida show that in the negative sense this noun means, “to argue about differences of opinion.”<sup>249</sup> Fowl points out that the Israelites misread God’s economy of salvation and the resulting disposition of “foolish reasoning,” as he puts it, led them to unfaithful actions.<sup>250</sup> Appropriate reasoning requires that the Philippians “do nothing” with complaining or arguing. This verse states negatively Paul’s positive exhortation in 2:2.<sup>251</sup>

The ἵνα clause at the beginning of v. 15 demonstrates the positive purpose of the preceding imperative, and, ultimately, of the disposition he has been encouraging them toward. By doing everything “without complaining and arguing”, Paul states that believers will “become blameless and pure, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine as stars in the world.” The content of Paul’s prayer in 1:9-11 becomes the content of the exhortation in vv. 15-16a.<sup>252</sup> They will finally be “pure and blameless” in the “Day of Christ” (1:10; cf. 1:6), but they are ‘already’ to display the type of behaviour that will show the world that they are God’s children as they “shine as stars in the world.”

Though Paul borrows the phrase “crooked and depraved generation” from Deut 32:5, it is highly unlikely that he intends the church as the replacement of Israel with this verse,<sup>253</sup> rather, he is contrasting the church with the broader culture among whom they are to “shine as stars in the world, holding out the word of life.” There is an explicit evangelistic emphasis in this phrase. Parallels with this vocation can be drawn to Israel as they are to be “a light to lighten the Gentiles” (Isa 42:6; 49:6), to

<sup>247</sup> As Paul would be the logical parallel to Moses in this context.

<sup>248</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 244.

<sup>249</sup> Louw and Nida, s.v. διαλογισμός 30.10.

<sup>250</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 123.

<sup>251</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 244.

<sup>252</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 244.

<sup>253</sup> See Bockmuehl, 156-57.

Jesus in Luke 2:32, and to the Pauline mission in Acts 13:47.<sup>254</sup> The verse that is likely foremost in Paul's mind here, however, is Dan 12:3,<sup>255</sup> which states that, "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever" (NIV).

Paul is also concerned with the legacy of his own work in the eschatological context, when he states, "...that in the Day of Christ I may boast because I did not run in vain or labour for nothing." Paul sees his mission to the Gentiles as successful if the churches he has planted mature and act with character, holding out the word of life; a message confirmed by their lives.

Paul concludes the discourse unit by using the analogy of a drink offering for his own life.<sup>256</sup> In this way, Paul refers again to his own life as an example of the disposition he is calling the Philippians to adopt, both in self-giving and in rejoicing. Paul does not view himself as a victim of his circumstances, but in the midst of suffering for Christ he makes the bold statement that "I am glad and rejoice with all of you." In addition, Paul also views the Philippians' faith as a "sacrifice and service."<sup>257</sup> It is not clear if Paul is appealing to his impending martyrdom or his suffering here, but the sacrificial metaphor is used by Paul elsewhere in reference to believers giving of themselves back to God for God's purposes (cf. Rom 12:1-3).<sup>258</sup> To conclude this section, Paul uses a pair of imperatives, χαίρετε καὶ συγχαίρετε,<sup>259</sup> urging the Philippians to adopt his disposition of rejoicing, both in their own

---

<sup>254</sup> Bockmuehl, 158.

<sup>255</sup> Bockmuehl, 158.

<sup>256</sup> See Exod 29:38-42 and Num 28:18-24.

<sup>257</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 128.

<sup>258</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 129.

<sup>259</sup> "rejoice and rejoice together with me."

circumstances, and in solidarity with him as he is in prison (1:12-26; cf. 4:4, 10, 11).<sup>260</sup>

The ethical example of Christ provides the theological rationale and model for Paul's discussion of what it means for the Philippians to "live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ." This includes the need to "stand firm in one spirit" (1:27b), suffering "for Christ" (1:29), having a common disposition of humility (2:2-5), obediently working out of their salvation (2:12), and adopting a disposition free of complaining and arguing (2:14). This is necessary so that the world will know that they are God's children (2:15), as they hold out the word of life in evangelistic mission to those around them (2:16). Just as Paul has come to read his story in light of the story of Christ (2:6-11), who gave everything in obedience to God, so too the Philippians must see their sacrifice as a reason for rejoicing (2:18). Paul now adds further examples of what a life worthy of the gospel looks like.

---

<sup>260</sup> Bonnie B. Thurston and Judith M. Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005) 97.



### Chapter 3: Examples of Christ-like Character

In Phil 2:19-30 Paul discusses his plans of sending Timothy and Epaphroditus, offering his commendation.<sup>261</sup> In addition, Paul uses their lives as examples of those who display the disposition he has been encouraging the Philippians to adopt. Following this, Paul offers a warning against “those dogs” (3:2), and describes the way he has come to view his life “in Christ” (3:3-11). Paul then sets his personal narrative in the eschatological context by appealing to his favourite sports analogy: racing (3:12-14).<sup>262</sup>

The present section will include a discussion of how Paul describes Timothy and Epaphroditus to further his main purpose of shaping the Christian mind and character (2:19-30), and will offer a closer examination of how Paul came to view his own life in Christ (3:7-14).

#### Timothy: 2:19-24

Paul expresses his hopes to send Timothy so that he too may be “encouraged to learn about the circumstances” of the Philippians. Paul then describes Timothy as unique in that no one else is “like-minded,”<sup>263</sup> who will genuinely be “concerned”<sup>264</sup> about the interests of the Philippians. What Paul means in calling Timothy unique in being like-minded is somewhat ambiguous. It is clear from the next clause that, along with Paul, Timothy shares a genuine concern for the Philippians, but Paul may also mean that Timothy shares the same fundamental commitments as he does.<sup>265</sup> To make his understanding clearer, Fowl extends his translation with the gloss, “who

<sup>261</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 131. Commendation was a common practice for Paul. See Rom 16:1-2; 1 Cor 16:15-18; 2 Cor 8:8, 16-24; 1 Thess 3:2-3, 9.

<sup>262</sup> Cf. Gal 2:2; 5:7; 1 Cor 9:24-27.

<sup>263</sup> Louw and Nida, s.v. ὁμόψυχος 26.5

<sup>264</sup> The verb μεριμνάω that Paul uses here is the same as he uses in 4:6 when he commands the church to not be “anxious” about anything.

<sup>265</sup> Bockmuehl, 165.

shares my loves and desire.”<sup>266</sup> In this commendation of Timothy, Paul is offering the further point that Timothy is a concrete example of a life lived worthy of the gospel.<sup>267</sup> Timothy reflects the manner of thinking and acting that Paul offers in 2:4: he is *genuinely* looking out for the interests of the Philippians.

Paul goes on to commend Timothy for his “proven character” in v. 22, but not before contrasting his concern for the Philippians with “the whole lot”<sup>268</sup> who “seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus” (v. 22). Verse 21 poses the problem of exactly who οἱ πάντες refers to.<sup>269</sup> Paul is probably pointing in two directions: (1) to those in Rome that Paul mentioned in 1:15, 17, who preach Christ, but not “sincerely”, and (2) in commending Timothy as one who shares the manner of thinking of Christ, to those in the community in Philippi who are “otherwise-minded” (cf. 2:3-4).<sup>270</sup> The rhetorical function in this comment serves to exemplify the Christ-like mindset described in 1:27-2:18, with Paul using Timothy as the positive example. This allows his hearers to decide which manner of thinking, feeling and acting they will adopt: will it be like Timothy, who reflects the very mindset of their Lord, or those who look out for their own interests?

Paul moves back to commending Timothy in v. 22, for his “proven character.” Paul does not describe Timothy’s character in general, but states that he has “proven” it by serving with Paul “in the work of the gospel.”<sup>271</sup>

Having commended Timothy to the Philippians, and setting him up as a concrete example of one who is living a life worthy of the gospel, Paul then turns to

---

<sup>266</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 130.

<sup>267</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 132.

<sup>268</sup> Fee points out that Paul is not saying “everyone” by οἱ πάντες, but is referring to “the whole lot of them”. The problem is, “who is them?”

<sup>269</sup> It is not likely that Paul would speak of his co-workers in this way, as he regards his traveling companions with respect, as well as the “saints” who are with him in Rome (cf. 4:22).

<sup>270</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 268.

<sup>271</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 268.

commend Epaphroditus in a similar manner: another example of one who puts the needs of others first.

### **Epaphroditus: 2:25-30**

Awaiting the results of his trial before sending Timothy with the news, Paul sees it as “necessary” to send Epaphroditus to Philippi immediately. Epaphroditus was the bearer of the Philippians’ financial gift to Paul (4:18), and likely the messenger who delivered this letter to the Philippians.<sup>272</sup>

Paul begins by commending Epaphroditus to the Philippians, first in relation to himself as “my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier,” and then to them as their “messenger” and “minister” to Paul’s needs on their behalf (cf. 2:30). Paul uses these five epithets to describe Epaphroditus as one who has given himself to the mission of the gospel, both in Philippi, and now with Paul in Rome. In caring for Paul’s needs, Epaphroditus serves as a further example of humble self-giving.

Paul explains that Epaphroditus is eager to return to his home congregation in Philippi, stating that he “longs for all of you” and “was distressed because you heard that he was sick” (v. 26). Some commentators have assumed that Epaphroditus was “homesick,” and thus was a failure in his mission of caring for Paul.<sup>273</sup> Those who “mirror read” these aspects into Paul commendation view this section as an attempt to soften the blow for Epaphroditus as he returns from his “failed mission.”<sup>274</sup> There is nothing in the passage to suggest that Epaphroditus has “failed,” but rather Paul is showing that he is indeed fully committed to the task God has given him, and is living a life worthy of the gospel in such a manner that Paul can commend him as an example. Epaphroditus was not “homesick,” but rather his longing showed his depth

---

<sup>272</sup> Bockmuehl, 168.

<sup>273</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 272.

<sup>274</sup> Hawthorne argues that Paul’s purpose in writing here is to exhort the Philippians to be glad rather than “angry with him over the fact that he apparently failed in his mission”. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 119.

of concern and love for the Philippian church.<sup>275</sup> In the NT, ἀδελφονῶν is only used here and in reference to Jesus' anxiety in Gethsemane before his death (Mark 14:33; Matt 26:37).<sup>276</sup> Paul is describing and commending the depth of emotion that Epaphroditus feels for his church.<sup>277</sup>

Paul substantiates the seriousness of the sickness, stating he was "sick nearly to the point of death," but then focuses primarily on the mercy that God had toward Epaphroditus and also himself.<sup>278</sup> Paul is eager to send Epaphroditus back so the concern of the Philippians can be alleviated, and Paul himself can rest easier knowing that the reunion will bring a sense of relief for all parties.

Regarding Epaphroditus' return Paul says to the church, "Receive him in the Lord with all joy, and hold such people as him in high regard" (v. 29). Two important points arise from this. First, by using the plural τοὺς τοιούτους ἐντίμους Paul is placing Epaphroditus in a particular grouping of people who are to be "highly honoured."<sup>279</sup> He is to be honoured, not simply because he is a part of the Philippian congregation, but because he fulfills "exemplary Christian duties, even putting his life in danger, and his reception should befit that."<sup>280</sup> Second, in the honour-shame culture there were firm codes about the giving and receiving of honour, but the types of behaviours Christians should consider worthy of honour include: (a) giving attention to the needs of others above one's own needs (2:25; cf. 2:3-4), and (b) doing the "work of Christ" (2:30).<sup>281</sup> These criteria run counter to the mainstream Greco-

---

<sup>275</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 136.

<sup>276</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 136.

<sup>277</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 136.

<sup>278</sup> It should be noted that Paul's expression of the sorrow he would face if Epaphroditus had died nuances his view toward death in this letter. Paul is not a masochist, nor does he suffer from a martyr complex (as one might mistakenly infer from 1:21-24), but he acknowledges grief as a real aspect of Christian life. In God's mercy, he allowed Epaphroditus to remain for the sake of those left behind, including Paul (cf. 1:24).

<sup>279</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 138.

<sup>280</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 138.

<sup>281</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 138.

Roman culture, which granted honour based on such things as civic contributions, success in battle, and personal patronage.<sup>282</sup> Fowl rightly notes that, “any extent to which Christians today think about the dispensing and acquiring of honour must be done on a scale that reflects the christological calibrations that Paul uses rather than any other cultural scale.”<sup>283</sup>

By using the examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus, Paul is able to further describe what it means to embody the disposition set forth in the example of Christ Jesus. These men are two different examples of how, in serving Christ, they have come to employ his mindset.<sup>284</sup> Using two different examples of people who embody Christ-like attitudes and behaviors (3:17) safeguards against modern misunderstandings of “imitation,” including the view that the imitation “should be like the original in as many respects as possible,” essentially “mirroring” the original.<sup>285</sup> The idea of being an example may also be criticized as intensely arrogant,<sup>286</sup> however, moral exemplars were common in the ancient world.<sup>287</sup> For Paul’s moral discourse it would not suffice to simply supply the church with an abstract command such as, “Live a cruciform life.”<sup>288</sup> In Timothy and Epaphroditus, Paul offers concrete examples as to what Christ’s manner of thinking, feeling and acting in 2:5-11 actually looks like in the lives of ordinary believers.

Paul offers his own story to further define the perspective he has been encouraging the Philippians to adopt. The “set of lenses” through which he has come to view his life and relationship with God reflects a perspective that “the mature” will

---

<sup>282</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 138.

<sup>283</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 138.

<sup>284</sup> Bockmuehl, 175.

<sup>285</sup> Fowl, *DPL*, 430. This seems to be, at least in part, the issue that Käsemann applies to viewing the story of Christ (2:6-11) as paradigmatic.

<sup>286</sup> Fowl, *DPL*, 430.

<sup>287</sup> Fowl, *DPL*, 430.

<sup>288</sup> Fowl, *DPL*, 430.

certainly agree with (3:15ff.), and also one that all must “put into practice” (4:9). This example pertains to: (1) the identity of believers,<sup>289</sup> (2) the true “goal” of a believer’s life, and (3) the appropriate eschatological perspective that calls believers to continual forward motion.

Though this section deals with 3:7-14, the discourse unit includes 3:15-21, with concrete applications of this section described in 4:1-9. Chapter 4, therefore, will be a continuation of the logic of Paul’s argument, exploring how Paul ‘points back’ to the examples mentioned throughout the letter (3:15-21). It will also examine how Paul applies the examples of Christ-like thinking, feeling and acting to the struggles of the community and the mundane realities of life (4:1-9).<sup>290</sup> The present study will also demonstrate how the main purpose of the letter is consistently echoed throughout the present section, logically tying it to what preceded.<sup>291</sup>

### **Paul: 3:7-14**

But<sup>292</sup> whatever was profit to me, these things I consider loss for the sake of Christ. Not only this, but what is more, I consider all these things to be loss compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I lost all things, and now consider them garbage in order that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ – the righteousness derived from God on the basis of faith. My aim here is to know Christ – that is, the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, being conformed to his death, in order that I might somehow attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already become perfect. Instead I press on to take hold of that for which Christ took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not think of myself as having taken hold of this; but one thing I do,

<sup>289</sup> In contrast to those whose trust is in their pedigree and law-keeping as the basis of righteousness, see esp. 3:3; cf. 3:7-9.

<sup>290</sup> It should be noted that scholars have viewed this next section (3:1ff.) as evidence of a multiple document hypothesis, as though Paul were closing his letter with the words “Finally my brothers” (Fowl, *Philippians*, 143). The work of Jeffery Reed on 3:1-2 offers a persuasive account for the unity of the letter and the difficulties with these verses. See Reed, 259-60; Fee, *Philippians*, 285-86.

<sup>291</sup> Fee gives a good account of how the language of chaps. 1-2 is echoed throughout chaps. 3-4. Fee, *Philippians*, 285-86.

<sup>292</sup> The external textual evidence is in favour of omission of this ἀλλά, however, the context cries for what Barth calls “the great ‘But!’”, Barth, 96. As Fee notes, those later scribes who included the ἀλλά are correct in reading the context which requires this contrast, though it is not original. Fee, *Philippians*, 311. n. 1. On a rather disappointing note, the UBS 4<sup>th</sup> and the corresponding 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Metzger’s Textual commentary do not include any textual notes on this particular issue.

forgetting what lies behind I strain toward what lies ahead, I press on toward the finish line to win the prize which pertains to the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul moves from his commendation of Timothy and Epaphroditus with the exhortation, “rejoice in the Lord,” to a warning against “those dogs, those evil workers, those mutilators of the flesh” (3:2). The Philippians are almost certainly not capitulating to false teaching of Judaizers, but Paul has “no trouble” warning them again about the dangers of false views of faithfulness that Judaizers are presenting (cf. 3:1bff.). Paul may be warning the Philippians about a message proposed by the Judaizers where conformity to Torah observance would bring Christians reprieve from persecution.<sup>293</sup> Another possible threat is that the Philippians would adopt a view that Torah observance might somehow “add” to their spiritual status, and give them reason for “boasting.” In v. 3 Paul sets the believers of Philippi, and himself, in contrast to those just mentioned.

Paul then demonstrates how he really does have reason to “put confidence in the flesh,” offering a sevenfold description of his qualifications as a Jew.<sup>294</sup> Throughout the following verses Paul shows that, as Fee puts it, “there is no future to the past” (3:4b-6), in fact, “the future lies with the present,” in knowing Christ (3:7-11), and that, “the future lies with the future,” that is, “attaining Christ.”<sup>295</sup>

**3:7-11** All that which Paul once considered “gain” he now “considers loss.” Paul demonstrates how he has come to think about his own life in relation to Christ, assessing the value of what he once saw as “profit” against what is truly valuable now: knowing Christ. Paul strengthens this contrastive point by using the stative

---

<sup>293</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 332.

<sup>294</sup> First, he mentions those as a result of his birth, including: (1) “circumcised on the eighth day”, (2) “of the people of Israel”, (3) “the Tribe of Benjamin”, and the “swing term” (Fee, 397) between the first and last three, (4) “a Hebrew of Hebrews”. Second, he mentions those as a result of his own work: (5) “in regards to the law, a Pharisee” (6) “as for zeal, persecuting the church” and (7) “as for righteousness based on the law, flawless” (3:5b, 6 TNIV). See Fee, *Philippians*, 307.

<sup>295</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 305, 311, 337.

aspect of the verb ἡγήμην.<sup>296</sup> The centrality of Paul's new viewpoint is further evidenced by the repetition of the word "consider" twice in v. 8, this time using the imperfective aspect.

In vv. 7-8 Paul makes use of financial language by speaking of "loss" and "profit."<sup>297</sup> In doing this Paul is not rejecting the qualities and achievements related to his former life, but the *value* he attached to it.<sup>298</sup> As Bockmuehl notes, "the value of assets is always assessed in light of business objectives,"<sup>299</sup> and in this case it is clear that Paul's *objective* has been completely reoriented. In fact, that which was once "profit" is actually a liability in light of God's economy of salvation in Christ.<sup>300</sup> As Fowl points out, this view of "liability and asset" is not at all self-evident, but is a perspective Paul has had to learn to "consider" in this way.<sup>301</sup> Paul has formed a habit of seeing things in light of Christ,<sup>302</sup> and this is the perceptual habit he is trying to form in the Philippians throughout the letter.<sup>303</sup> This is the logic of knowledge in Philippians.

Verse 8 begins a long and complex sentence that extends through to v. 11. Paul's financial metaphor continues as he states that compared to "the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord," all "these things" (= former values of vv. 4b-6) are "loss." In addition, it is for Christ's sake that he has "lost all things," and he counts them as "garbage." Anything that others might consider a benefit in this

---

<sup>296</sup> Porter, *Idioms*, 22-23.

<sup>297</sup> Moises Silva, *Philippians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005) 157; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 135; Bockmuehl, 204. Cf. 1:21, "to die is *gain*".

<sup>298</sup> Bockmuehl, 204. This point emphasizes that Paul is not advocating an anti-Semitic perspective, as if being an Israelite was equated with a heap of garbage (see v. 8b). With his new objective in mind (knowing Christ) these former things have no value; they offer no advantage, and placing value in them will actually count as a liability.

<sup>299</sup> Bockmuehl, 204.

<sup>300</sup> Bockmuehl, 204.

<sup>301</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 152.

<sup>302</sup> Modeling this perspective is a main point of 1:12-26.

<sup>303</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 152.



present life, religious advantage, material benefits, honour, status and comforts (cf. 3:5, 6; 1 Cor 4:8-13),<sup>304</sup> Paul views as σκύβαλα,<sup>305</sup> as trash to be taken out to the curb with the rest of the garbage. Knowing Christ has become the one aim in Paul's life that relativizes all others.

The question of what Paul means by "knowing Christ" requires attention. The word γινῶσις was loaded with religious and philosophical connotations in the Greco-Roman world. It was "rapidly becoming one of the buzzwords for access to desirable religious 'insider information,' partly intellectual and partly mystical."<sup>306</sup> Louw and Nida note that "esoteric knowledge"<sup>307</sup> is described as contrary to the gospel in 1 Tim 6:20, but include in the semantic range of γινῶσις: (a) acquaintance 28.1,<sup>308</sup> (b) knowledge 28.17,<sup>309</sup> and (c) understanding 32.16.<sup>310</sup> As a former Pharisee (3:5,6) Paul's understanding of "knowing Christ" would likely be in keeping with the Jewish tradition of knowing God, which includes "close relationship with God on the part of his people (e.g. Jer 31:34; Hos 2:20) and of individuals within it (1 Sam 3:7)."<sup>311</sup>

For Paul, knowing Christ is a personal participation with him, as he calls Christ "my Lord," and being "in him" includes sharing his cruciform lifestyle (v. 10).<sup>312</sup> This includes a measure of cognitive understanding and relationship. Paul's knowledge of Christ must also be seen against the narration of Christ's story in 2:6-

<sup>304</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 317. This list is derived from Paul's own words.

<sup>305</sup> This is the only usage of σκύβαλα in the NT.

<sup>306</sup> Bockmuehl, 205. By the second century Gnosticism became a full-blown religious worldview, and yet even in the NT era there were elements of proto-Gnosticism that Paul may have been addressing among Christians in Corinth (1 Cor 8:1-2, 7, 10-11), and Ephesus (1 Tim 6:20-21). Bockmuehl, 205.

<sup>307</sup> This is defined as "false knowledge" or "so-called knowledge". Louw and Nida, s.v. γινῶσις.

<sup>308</sup> "Possessing information about."

<sup>309</sup> "The content of what is known."

<sup>310</sup> "To come to an understanding as a result of ability to experience and learn."

<sup>311</sup> Bockmuehl, 205. This relationship consists of, from God's side, grace and election (e.g. Exod 33:12; Isa 43:1) and, on the human side, love for God and obedience to his commands (Hos 4:1-2; 6:6). Bockmuehl, 205.

<sup>312</sup> Bockmuehl, 206.

11,<sup>313</sup> where the pre-existent Christ took on the form of a servant, became obedient all the way to death on a cross, and is exalted to the place of highest honor. Paul's relationship with Christ is no less than an intimate participation with the one who bears the divine name YHWH, and this includes his longing to participate in Christ's redemptive sufferings and resurrection (cf. vv. 9-11, 21).<sup>314</sup> To summarize, knowing Christ Jesus "describes the fundamental reality of Paul's life, the relationship which suffuses, empowers and motivates all that he is and does."<sup>315</sup>

In v. 9 Paul abandons the financial metaphor of "gain" and "loss," as maintaining it might risk making Christ into "a commodity," allowing Paul "to remain the subject of this narrative of transformation."<sup>316</sup> As Fowl aptly states, "Christ is no longer a commodity to be gained but a place, a home where the lost Paul is found."<sup>317</sup> To drive this point home, being "found in him" is described with the passive form εὑρεθῶ, indicating that Paul has not "found Christ," but rather is found by him.<sup>318</sup>

Paul then describes his new *telos* from the perspective of being "found in him." Formerly (cf. 3:6) Paul had sought a righteousness of his own, but now he is able to see the fundamental misconception of the *telos* of the Law that he once held onto.<sup>319</sup> Referring back to his previous means of boasting (v. 6) and confidence in the flesh (v. 3), Paul no longer sees his righteousness as "my own that comes from the law," but rather "that which is through the faithfulness of Christ – the righteousness derived from God on the basis of faith."<sup>320</sup> The translation used here demonstrates

---

<sup>313</sup> Bockmuehl, 206.

<sup>314</sup> Bockmuehl, 206.

<sup>315</sup> Bockmuehl, 206.

<sup>316</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 153.

<sup>317</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 153.

<sup>318</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 154.

<sup>319</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 154.

<sup>320</sup> There has been a great deal of debate over the type of genitive that πιστεύω Χριστοῦ represents (Fowl, *Philippians*, 154). If taken as a subjective genitive, it refers to the faith or faithfulness of Christ, and as an objective genitive it refers to a response of faith to Christ. In the case

that the righteousness from God is revealed and established by the faithfulness of Christ,<sup>321</sup> to which a believer responds in faith.<sup>322</sup>

In vv. 10-11 Paul states that his “aim is to know Christ.” He has learned to view his life with a new set of lenses, and this includes conforming his pattern of life to that of Jesus.<sup>323</sup> Paul likely intends the first καὶ to be epexegetic, so that the phrases “explain, or give content to, what knowing Christ means.”<sup>324</sup> This is expressed by translating: “My aim here is to know Christ – that is, the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, being conformed to his death, in order that I might somehow attain to the resurrection from the dead” (vv. 10-11). Knowing Christ, therefore, includes these four elements, which will now be discussed.

First, knowing Christ means to know “the power of his resurrection,” to experience the effects and power of Christ’s resurrection. As Paul outlines in 1 Corinthians 15, Christ’s resurrection is the *raison d’être* of the Christian faith, but it is also a means of *power* that is at work in “jars of clay” (2 Cor 4:7-17).<sup>325</sup>

Next, Paul recognizes that knowing Christ involves “participation in his sufferings” (cf. 1:29-30). If Judaizers were preaching Torah observance as a way to dodge persecution, then Paul’s words here would relate to his previous warning in v. 2. It is likely that Paul is also addressing the reality that, in following Christ, and his way of being (cf. 1:27ff.), Christians would suffer the hatred of others.<sup>326</sup> This is not “general suffering” that every person who lives on this fallen planet experiences, but

---

of this study it is unnecessary to solve the issue on a large scale (as Fowl, *Philippians*, 154), as in the next clause it is clear that a believer’s response is certainly indicated.

<sup>321</sup> Possibly referring to Jesus’ obedience to death in 2:8.

<sup>322</sup> Fowl and Bockmuehl also take this line of translation, with Fee maintaining an objective genitive. Fowl, *Philippians*, 154; Bockmuehl, 209; Fee, *Philippians*, 325, n. 44.

<sup>323</sup> Bockmuehl, 214.

<sup>324</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 328.

<sup>325</sup> The final reference I owe to Fee, *Philippians*, 330.

<sup>326</sup> Cf. John 15:20; also Mark 13:13 and parallels.

rather, with eyes wide open, Paul states that he longs to participate with Christ, and thus, the work of the gospel and the very real troubles that this will entail. In the face of their likely persecution (1:29-30), Paul is offering the Philippians assurance that suffering for Christ is truly part of the “surpassing value” of knowing him.

Paul’s twofold desire to “know Christ” is defined further with the next clause, “being conformed to his death,” and its corresponding phrase, “in order that I might somehow attain to the resurrection from the dead.”<sup>327</sup> Fee rightly notes that the phrase “being conformed to his death” does not refer to martyrdom, but is the present reality of carrying around “in our body the death of Jesus” (2 Cor 4:10a). Of course for Paul following Christ will mean martyrdom,<sup>328</sup> but the rhetorical intent of this clause is to demonstrate to the Philippians the manner of thinking that Paul has gladly come to adopt, and which they too must adopt (cf. 4:9).

There are three interrelated characteristics in Christ’s story that led to his death and inform us as to what Paul means by “conformed to his death”: (1) it was in seeking the benefit of others that Jesus was poured out, not using his equality with God for his own advantage; (2) it was a result of his self-willed emptying; and (3) it was as a result of obedience to God.<sup>329</sup> These three characteristics are essential to Paul’s view of cruciform living. As Fowl states, “this sort of fellowship in Christ’s sufferings provides a way of ordering Paul’s life and our lives so that we seek the benefit of others in willed self-emptying and obedience to God.”<sup>330</sup> To know Christ,

---

<sup>327</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 333.

<sup>328</sup> Tradition, as accepted by Jerome and Eusebius, holds that Paul was convicted and beheaded at the third milestone on the Ostian Way, a place called Aquae Salviae. F.F. Bruce, “Paul in Acts and Letters” in *DPL*, 687. Fowl makes the comment that Paul did not die on a cross and neither will we, to emphasize the point that we cannot be “conformed to Christ’s death” in any literal sense. Fowl, *Philippians*, 156.

<sup>329</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 156.

<sup>330</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 156-57; Brian J. Dodd argues that Paul is not simply “lining up ‘like behaviors’; Christ models the Christian life, Paul mirrors Christ’s example, and the Philippians are to follow suit.” Instead, he argues that Paul’s example in chapter 3 is grounded in the soteriological implications of 2:5-11, and the posture of humility that motivated Christ is to be paradigmatic in the

for Paul, is to be in relationship with him, and to think and live by his standards of humanity.

The final clause, “in order that I might somehow attain to the resurrection from the dead,” poses some problems, as Paul appears to be in doubt about his future. In short, given Paul’s rather sure accounts of God’s work in the midst of the church in 1:6 and 2:13, and his confidence that Christ will transform “our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (v. 21), he is not doubting a share in the resurrection. Bockmuehl nuances what resurrection is for believers as being no “doubtful and uncertain desire but the sure hope for what God in Christ has promised.”<sup>331</sup> The only road to it, however, is “the race-track of the expectant, Christ-oriented ‘mind’ that Paul himself exemplifies: forgetting the pride of his own status and achievements and reaching forward to the heavenly prize of fellowship with Christ (vv. 13ff.).”<sup>332</sup>

**3:12-14** Paul, in narrating his own story for the benefit of the Philippians, demonstrates the way in which his perspective has been re-oriented “in Christ,” undermining his past standards and affections in comparison with “knowing Christ.”<sup>333</sup> Paul’s next argument shows that he has not obtained “all this,” referring to what he has described about knowing Christ, and that he has not “already become perfect” (v. 12). Now he further defines how this life in Christ has placed him on a

---

lives of believers. It seems fair to agree with Dodd on the point that Paul is not simply showing how his story parallels Christ’s, but in relating his cruciform lifestyle, Paul certainly models how his mindset has been conformed to that of Christ’s in desiring to ‘know’ and ‘participate’ in him. Brian J. Dodd, “The Story of Christ in the Imitation of Paul,” in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2*, eds. Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998) 160.

<sup>331</sup> Bockmuehl, 218.

<sup>332</sup> Bockmuehl, 218. There is a measure of contingency here however that should not be overlooked. As Bockmuehl rightly states, “...salvation for Paul is not some metaphysical drama whose palpable reality or unreality in daily life is more or less irrelevant....instead, it is the sovereign gift of God in Christ which is accepted by faith alone and then concretely *embodied* (cf. 2 Cor 4:10ff.; Rom 8:11) in the banal, sublime and excruciating realities of the believer’s life, by “the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings.” Bockmuehl, 217.

<sup>333</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 158.

journey that is not yet complete, but requires him to keep pressing on to what lies ahead. The Christ-oriented convictions he has cultivated lead to a new vision of his future – indeed a new end-point entirely.<sup>334</sup> This future-orientation has firm implications for the present, as Paul describes in the next section (3:15ff.; 4:9).

Paul may have been combating the views of opponents who had an overrealized eschatology, or dealing with “perfectionism,” inside or outside the community.<sup>335</sup> These approaches involve some speculation, but may offer some insight into Paul’s motive for his mention of not being perfect.<sup>336</sup> Judaizers may have been trying to convince the Philippians to a view of “perfectionism” based on Torah observance. Contrary to what Paul might have once thought of himself (3:6), he now understands that he has not been perfected, and sets this as a contrastive example.

Instead of viewing his spiritual status as “perfect,” Paul must “press on” to “take hold of that for which Christ took hold” of him. Paul does not articulate any further the nature of his goal beyond vv. 9-11, but what he makes clear is that Christ has taken hold of him, and that he must press on to reach his goal.<sup>337</sup> Paul uses the verb διώκω with the present tense, emphasizing that he, and by implication, the Philippians, must “press on.” It is repeated in v. 14, again in the present tense, forming an *inclusio* and emphasizing Paul’s point: the race is not over. Forward momentum is essential.

The verb “take hold of” is repeated three times in this section, and in combination with “press on,” it parallels the athletic imagery in the related context of

<sup>334</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 159.

<sup>335</sup> See Fee, *Philippians*, 341. n. 15.

<sup>336</sup> Bockmuehl, 221. The Qumran sect viewed themselves as ‘perfect’ (1QS 1:8; 2:2; 4:20ff.) with regards to their observance of Torah.

<sup>337</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 160. In the causal sense, ἐφ’ ᾧ could mean, “because of the fact that Christ took hold of me”. Fee, Bockmuehl and Fowl argue, based on Fitzmyer’s 1993 publication, it is best to see this as ‘consecutive’: “for which Christ took hold of me”. Hawthorne (152) and Silva (176), however, are among the majority who maintain the causal sense. As Bockmuehl points out, “At the point of coming to faith, Paul was drastically apprehended for the service of Christ (cf. Act 9:1ff.; 22:1ff.; 26:12ff.).” Bockmuehl, 221.

Rom 9:30-31, where Israel “stumbles in pursuing (*dioko*) God’s righteousness as if “it were based on works,” while the Gentiles in fact apprehend it (*katalambano*).”<sup>338</sup>

In v. 13 Paul begins with “brothers [and sisters],” which acts to bring a personal note, but also “shows that his own experience is relevant for them.”<sup>339</sup> Paul does not “consider” to have “taken hold of it,” but as an athlete who is focused on the “finish line,” he is “forgetting” what is behind and instead he “strains toward what lies ahead.” Paul does not mean that he literally “forgets” his past,<sup>340</sup> as his narration of his past life indicates (3:4-11). Rather, Paul does not allow any aspect of his past, good or bad, to encumber his progress in the future, as “forgetting” is set in opposition to “straining ahead.”<sup>341</sup>

Verse 14 is grammatically difficult, especially in discerning the type of genitive in the final clause. The subjective genitive squares best with Paul’s usual use of ‘calling.’ As such, the calling is not the prize, but instead the prize *pertains* to God’s heavenly calling in Christ Jesus.<sup>342</sup> As Bockmuehl states: “It is God who calls Paul in Christ, and who has already ‘apprehended’ Paul and made him his own. Paul’s task is to reach out and grasp the prize for which he is already appointed.”<sup>343</sup> Though Paul certainly claims to “pursue” the prize with the intent to *win* it, he leaves a sense of ambiguity as to whether or not he will ever fully *apprehend* it, especially if, as the case may be, the prize is Christ himself.<sup>344</sup> Fowl presses the theological implications of the “straining ahead” that Paul describes, pointing out that patristic authors stressed the importance of “continually stretching out toward God, even after

---

<sup>338</sup> Bockmuehl, 221.

<sup>339</sup> Bockmuehl, 222.

<sup>340</sup> This is in contrast to the usage of ἐπιλανθάνομαι to mean “forgetting” in a straightforward way as in Matt 16:5; Mark 8:14; Luke 12:6; and James 1:24. Fowl, *Philippians*, 161.

<sup>341</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 161.

<sup>342</sup> Bockmuehl, 223.

<sup>343</sup> Bockmuehl, 223.

<sup>344</sup> As Fee, *Philippians*, 349.

the *eschaton*.<sup>345</sup> In this case the “finish line” may be the consummation of the *eschaton*, but the prize may include ever-pursuing Christ and a deeper communion with the Triune God that is never satiated, but always growing.<sup>346</sup>

Based on the narration of his Christ-oriented perspective, Paul’s next move in the letter (3:15ff.) is to explicitly state the purpose of the examples he has used. Chapter 4 will now examine how Paul returns to the intellectual language he used to describe Christ’s mindset,<sup>347</sup> “tying together” what he has been writing up to this point in specific application for the Philippians.

---

<sup>345</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 163.

<sup>346</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 163. Developing themes originally found in Origen, Gregory of Nyssa described the proper end of a believer’s life as not attaining to a particular state, but continual growth in virtue and desire for God. Fowl, *Philippians*, 163. Paul’s message stands to counter the self-deception that one can live on “spiritual cruise-control,” and is an alarm bell in the case that a Christian is smugly content with no further pursuit of “the prize.”

<sup>347</sup> Bockmuehl, 224.



## Chapter Four: Display This Mature Pattern of Thinking, Feeling and Acting

In narrating his own story, as well as providing the example of Timothy and Epaphroditus, Paul has offered the Philippians several concrete examples of what it means to adopt Christ's mindset. He now explicitly enjoins the Philippians to mature in character by following his example (3:17) and putting into practice what he has taught them (4:9).

### Continue Toward Maturity: 3:15-4:1

Therefore, all of us who are mature should display this manner of thinking, feeling and acting. If in any way you are inclined to adopt a different pattern of thinking, feeling and acting, God will reveal to you the proper mindset to adopt. In any case, let us continue to live according to the standard we have already attained. Join together, brothers and sisters, in becoming imitators of me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For, as I have often told you and say again now with tears, many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly and their glory is in their shameful behavior. Their pattern of thinking, feeling and acting is guided by earthly considerations.<sup>348</sup> For our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform our humble bodies into a form like his glorious body, according to the great power that enables him to subject all things to himself.

In 3:2-14 Paul presents himself as one whose perspective has been transformed through his knowledge of Christ.<sup>349</sup> Now he makes it clear that the same transformed perspective is exemplary for the Philippians: they must also come to narrate their lives from this "mature" manner of thinking, feeling, and acting. In the difficult circumstances that the Philippians face (1:29), the whole community must adopt a common, mature manner of viewing themselves and the world, for at least two reasons: (1) the perspective that Paul displayed in 3:2-14 provides the required "ironic distances needed to view both 'fleshly' achievements and temporal suffering

---

<sup>348</sup> The translation offered here is taken from Fowl, *Philippians*, 159, who captures well Paul's intent both lexically and syntactically.

<sup>349</sup> Stephen Fowl, "Learning to Narrate Our Lives in Christ," in *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honour of Brevard S. Childs*, eds. Christopher Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 350.

as insignificant in light of the glory that awaits them”<sup>350</sup> (cf. 3:21), and (2) in order to live as citizens worthy of the gospel of Christ their Savior (cf. 1:27; 3:20-21), and accomplish their missional purpose (1:5, 18; 2:12-16), the Philippians must adopt the same manner of thinking, feeling and acting that Christ Jesus displayed (cf. 2:2-11).

**3:15-21** The conjunction οὖν links this section to what preceded, particularly in reference to the racing imagery, but also to the mindset Paul has been describing throughout the letter, as the strong verbal ties of φρονέω to 2:2-5 show. In v. 15, Paul states that all in the community should adopt this mindset. Those who are “mature” should already think this way, and those who do not, whether they considered themselves mature or not, will “get it” because God will make it clear. My translation reflects a view that “what” God reveals here is in reference to the appropriate φρονέω that Paul has been encouraging them to all along. It could also be translated to mean something like: “God will reveal that you think differently on some point, if in fact you do.” To translate this way is grammatically probable, but less likely given the context, as Paul is arguing that they adopt a particular manner of thinking. Granted that some already share this pattern of thought (i.e. the mature), some either do not or have forgotten how to practice it.

Paul designates this particular manner of thinking as “mature,” aligning himself with “all the rest” who are mature. Paul is not using τέλειος as “ironic” polemic against Gnostic tendencies in the community, as some have suggested (cf. 3:12),<sup>351</sup> but is using it inclusively, simply meaning the spiritually grown-up, himself included. For those in the community who consider themselves mature (perhaps Euodia and Syntyche), this verse seems to ask the rhetorical question; “If you really are mature, then this is already the way you think, right?” If they do not think this

<sup>350</sup> Fowl, “Learning to Narrate,” 350.

<sup>351</sup> See Fee, *Philippians*, 343, n. 23 for a list.

way, Paul does not worry about the power of his rhetoric, but is confident that God is at work in the community (cf. 1:6; 2:13) and will reveal the appropriate manner of thinking.<sup>352</sup>

“In any case,” Paul states, “let us continue to live according to the standard we have already attained” (v. 16). Taking into account that the community may not all be ‘on-board’ with him,<sup>353</sup> Paul stresses that the community continue to live up to the standard they together have already attained.<sup>354</sup> The word *στοιχεῖν* that Paul uses here was originally a military term meaning, “advance in a line” or “keep in step,” but it is used figuratively here in reference to a manner of living.<sup>355</sup> The point is that they are consistent with the progress they have made thus far (cf. 1:25).

Paul’s hortatory purposes become particularly clear here in v. 17, as he employs two imperatives, both in the present tense, providing the link to his use of exemplars throughout the letter: (1) “become fellow imitators of me,”<sup>356</sup> and (2) “keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.”<sup>357</sup> It is not arrogance to say, “become imitators of me,” but is common both in the Jewish practice of discipleship, and in the broader Greco-Roman culture.<sup>358</sup> Paul’s call to “become an imitator” of him, however, is always predicated on the fact that he is following Christ (cf. 1 Cor 11:1).<sup>359</sup>

---

<sup>352</sup> Fowl offers a discussion about concord in friendships at this point, noting that Paul is able to place his confidence in God’s providence, and so he does not have to “be anxious” about maintaining concord. Fowl, *Philippians*, 164-65.

<sup>353</sup> They are not all “on board” as evidenced by the word *πλὴν* = “only”/“in any case.”

<sup>354</sup> Note the first person plural of *ἐφθάσαμεν*, from the second person plural he ended v. 15 with.

<sup>355</sup> Similarly in Gal 5:25; 6:16. Fee, *Philippians*, 360.

<sup>356</sup> Συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε.

<sup>357</sup> καὶ σκοπεῖτε τοὺς οὕτω περιπατοῦντας καθὼς ἔχετε τύπον ἡμῶς,

<sup>358</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 364; Fowl, *DPL*, 430.

<sup>359</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 364. Paul is able to make this claim because Christ is at work in him, as his Savior (3:9 via 2:6-11), and also in shaping his thoughts, feelings and actions; both essential aspects of “being found in him”.

The imperative he offers is to “*become/be* imitators of me,” not to simply “imitate me.”<sup>360</sup> Paul always uses the noun μιμητής “imitator”<sup>361</sup> instead of other verbal options, such as μιμέομαι.<sup>362</sup> This perhaps indicates a nuance toward character – the characteristic manner of one’s person, their *being*, rather than merely the repetition of certain actions, or cognitions. Hauwerwas notes that Calvin, Wesley and Edwards share as one of their interdependent themes that sanctification “involves the determination of a man’s [*sic*] ‘person,’ his most basic being.”<sup>363</sup> Paul’s invitation requires the Philippians to become ‘thinking people,’ who are shaped by Christ’s story, just as he is.<sup>364</sup> This perhaps reflects the journey Paul himself has taken and recognizes for those in Philippi. After all, he has not arrived yet (cf. 3:12).

Of course “*being* imitators” focuses on “imitating” Paul, as his example is necessary for the Gentile church to grasp what it means to follow Christ (cf. 1 Cor 11:1). They could not simply open their New Testaments to find out what Jesus would have done;<sup>365</sup> they needed concrete examples of what it meant to live a cruciform life. Fowl puts this well: “As with any complex practice we can only hope to acquire these skills, disciplines, and habits to the extent that we submit ourselves to the example of those more advanced in the practice.”<sup>366</sup> For example, if a luthier apprentice hopes to become skillful in his craft of building quality guitars, he must

---

<sup>360</sup> Most translations do not pick up this nuance, and perhaps it is overstated here. See NIV, NRSV, NASB.

<sup>361</sup> Only here the compound version συμμιμητάι.

<sup>362</sup> The author of Hebrews uses the imperative μιμεῖσθε “imitate” (their faith) in Heb 13:7.

<sup>363</sup> Hauwerwas, 201.

<sup>364</sup> In Eph 5:1 Paul says to the church, “Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children”. This is obviously not encouraging the church to “replicate” certain aspects of God’s nature, such as now believing themselves to be divine, but it does mean, “as beloved children of God, your characteristic manner of being should reflect that of your Father”. In that context it means being compassionate and forgiving as is characteristic of God, in contrast to the list of vices mentioned (Eph 4:17-31).

<sup>365</sup> Fowl makes this rather obvious, but incredibly important point. Fowl, *Philippians*, 167.

<sup>366</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 167.

attend to the experience and skill of his master. Fowl makes the further, significant point that,

For Paul, and for all Christians, the only arrogance surrounding the language of imitation would be the arrogance of those so formed by the ethos of individualism that they think they can walk the path of discipleship without observing, learning from, and imitating those who are already farther down that path.<sup>367</sup>

The choice of the compound version συμμιμηταί, “fellow-imitators,” further evidences Paul’s desire for unity among the believers, echoing the injunctions from 2:2-4, and setting up his further plea for unity in 4:2, 3.

In the second phrase of v. 17, Paul broadens his exhortation; the congregation is to keep their eyes “on those who walk according to the example you have in us.” To do this, the congregation must exercise discernment, in order to know who are living Christ-patterned lifestyles, and who are really enemies of the cross.<sup>368</sup> Paul is likely referring to members of the Philippian congregation who, like Epaphroditus, have patterned their lives in a particular manner (cf. 2:29, “honor people *like him*”).

In v. 18 Paul sets up a contrast between ‘earthly’ and ‘heavenly’ patterns of thinking by juxtaposing the ‘enemies of the cross,’ whose minds can only consider things related to the earth, and those whose ‘citizenship is in the heavens.’ Paul uses the subordinate conjunction γὰρ to indicate that he is offering the previous, positive example in opposition to the negative example of the many who walk as “enemies of the cross of Christ.” Paul repeats the verb περιπατέω to highlight the contrast between Christ-centered reasoning demonstrated in his own example and those who “walk” in the same manner (type), and those whose pattern of life reflects “earthly reasoning” (antitype).<sup>369</sup>

---

<sup>367</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 167.

<sup>368</sup> Cf. 2 Thess 3:9; Rom 6:17; 1 Thess 1:7, Bockmuehl, 229.

<sup>369</sup> Bockmuehl, 229.

In v. 19 Paul is more specific about the lifestyle of the enemies of the cross: “Their end is destruction, their god is their belly and their glory is in their shameful behavior.” The presence of this description raises the question of who these people are. Identifying the “enemies of the cross” has been the source of much speculation,<sup>370</sup> but a full treatment is beyond the scope of this study.<sup>371</sup> It seems that Fee’s work stays within the bounds of the information that the text provides. He notes that Paul is picking up on the major concern of his personal narrative in 3:4-14 by mentioning the “enemies.”<sup>372</sup> Here Paul reminds the Philippians again of those “who have left his way of the cross and ‘have set their minds’ on present, earthly concerns.”<sup>373</sup> He is probably referring to some itinerant preachers whose view of faith allows them “a great deal of undisciplined self-indulgence.”<sup>374</sup> They are “insiders” (in that they view themselves as Christians, despite how Paul views them),<sup>375</sup> but are enemies of the cross, as evidenced by the way they live and how they think. As Fowl states:

Through a set of decisions and actions unknown to us, which probably seems benign (if not good) to them, they now find themselves in a position where they are no longer capable of rightly recognizing God or God’s purposes for them.<sup>376</sup>

This group has not appeared before in the letter, and will not again.<sup>377</sup> Their purpose in the letter is to stand in contrast to Paul’s own “walk” and heavenly pursuit (cf. 3:7-14).<sup>378</sup>

---

<sup>370</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 367.

<sup>371</sup> The issues in identifying these people, as Fee outlines, include: (1) how, or whether these people are related to the “dogs” of 3:2; (2) how, or whether they are related to Paul’s disclaimer in 3:12-13; (3) how, or whether they are related to any of the previous mentions of alleged “opponents” in the letter (1:15-16, 28; 2:21); (4) whether they are internal or external to the Philippian community; and (5) whether Paul considers them to be believers at all, or former “believers” who are now headed for perdition. Fee, *Philippians*, 367.

<sup>372</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 375.

<sup>373</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 375.

<sup>374</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 375. Contra Hawthorne who believes that Paul is referring to this group as Jews. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 170.

<sup>375</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 374.

<sup>376</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 172.

By fronting the word ἡμῶν in v. 20, Paul emphasizes the fact that “our citizenship is in heaven,” as opposed to those whose loyalties are “to their own appetites and to earthly ambitions.”<sup>379</sup> This word order creates a contrast with vv. 18-19.<sup>380</sup> The γάρ that follows ἡμῶν in v. 20, however, raises a grammatical issue, as γάρ is not contrastive but explanatory.<sup>381</sup> This issue caused the oldest Greek authors to substitute δέ in the place of γάρ, and most modern translations to use “but” instead of “for”.<sup>382</sup> As vv. 18-19 are intended as a *contrast* to reinforce the exhortation of v. 17, and as vv. 20-21 further support the apostolic command, Silva states that, “what better *reason* is available than the reminder that their true citizenship is a heavenly one?”<sup>383</sup> As such, Paul’s argument provides the needed contrast, and his choice of γάρ indicates the reason for the reminder of the community’s true citizenship. The noun πολίτευμα is only used here in the NT, and is significant in terms of Paul’s argument throughout the letter. In 1:27, Paul uses the verbal form, πολιτεύομαι (only here and Acts 23:1), in his exhortation, “Only, live as citizens of the [heavenly] commonwealth in a manner that is worthy of the gospel of Christ.” Philippi enjoyed the privileged position of Italian legal status (*ius italicum*), meaning its inhabitants were considered Roman citizens and were exempt from poll and land taxation.<sup>384</sup> In return for this status, Philippi “groomed its image as a city loyal to the emperor’s authority in both government and religion.”<sup>385</sup> In a city that would have a great deal

---

<sup>377</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 375.

<sup>378</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 375.

<sup>379</sup> Bockmuehl, 233.

<sup>380</sup> Verse 18 is introduced with the same syntactical order. Verse 18 = πολλοὶ γάρ, v. 20 = ἡμῶν γάρ. In both cases the party is fronted, followed by the conjunction.

<sup>381</sup> Porter notes that the two uses of γάρ are inferential or explanatory. Porter, *Idioms*, 207.

<sup>382</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 169. Hawthorne also takes vv. 20-21 as a hymn, noting the similarities in vocabulary with 2:6-11. He argues that the γάρ is no longer an issue because the original context was different than Paul uses here. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 169. Silva notes that most scholars remain unconvinced of this approach. Silva, *Philippians*, 183.

<sup>383</sup> Silva, *Philippians*, 183.

<sup>384</sup> Bockmuehl, 4.

<sup>385</sup> Bockmuehl, 4.

of civic pride, Paul calls the Philippians to consider life through the lenses of their heavenly citizenship.

Verse 21 is eschatological, but its focus includes both the “already” along with the “not yet.” Paul’s appeal to “citizenship” has to do with how believers walk in this present situation. As those whose citizenship is loyal to another *polis*, Christians must order their lives to reflect this reality right now. Paul’s purpose here is to call the Philippians to “*forget* the human status and achievements that lie behind and to shape their lives and aspirations in keeping with the heavenly counter-commonwealth of Christ to which they now belong.”<sup>386</sup>

Of course this is not all there is. The savior they “eagerly await” will come. Paul does not focus on *when* their savior will come, but on *who* their savior is: the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>387</sup> Their Lord is not Caesar but Jesus Christ, the rightful Lord to whom all creation is ultimately in subjection (v. 21; cf. 2:11). Fowl notes well that:

The subjection spoken of here is not the imposition of a new and more powerful force upon an ultimately recalcitrant creation. Rather, this is the reconciliation of all things to their proper Lord, a reconciliation for which all creation expectantly longs (Rom 8:18-25).<sup>388</sup>

The Lord Jesus Christ is the one who will transform “our humble bodies” so that they will be “in a form like his glorious body.” For Paul, this reality gives hope to the fact that Rome has no ultimate authority over bodies,<sup>389</sup> Jesus does. The same God who vindicated Christ will also vindicate them (cf. 1:29).

In 3:15-21, Paul offers his explicit command to become fellow-imitators of himself, and those who walk in the same manner, including Timothy (2:19-24) and Epaphroditus (2:25-30). He also provides the negative example of itinerant preachers whose perspective on the faith has left them in opposition to the cross of Christ. They

---

<sup>386</sup> Bockmuehl, 234.

<sup>387</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 174.

<sup>388</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 175.

<sup>389</sup> See discussion of the cross in the section of 2:8.



are “earthly-minded,” Paul argues, but “our citizenship is in heaven, our allegiance is to the King to whom all will bow, and we must order our lives to reflect his manner of thinking, feeling and acting.” Paul’s examples and hortatory purposes are not limited to theory, but in addressing real issues in the church he next offers concrete points of application. We will now look at how Paul ties his prior arguments to the present situation at Philippi.

### **Applying the Call to Unity and Christ-like Thinking: 4:1-9**

Paul uses 4:1 to bridge the previous section of the letter to what follows, stating again his love and joy in the church, and their need to stand fast – both by imitating Paul and obeying his command to formulate Christ-like ways of thinking, feeling and acting.

**4:1-3** Just as Paul introduced the application of his argument in 2:12ff. with ὥστε, here again in 4:1 he also uses it to offer what must be done in response to what preceded.<sup>390</sup>

In v. 3, Paul appeals to two presumably leading and influential women in the church: Euodia and Syntyche.<sup>391</sup> The syntax of his appeal wisely addresses each party in a way that does not take sides: “I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche...” Paul carries into his appeal the same word he has used to encourage Christ-centered reasoning throughout the letter, here in the infinitive: τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν κυρίῳ. The text does not reveal the nature of the disagreement between these women, but it is significant enough to feature in this letter, and to require the assistance of Paul’s “true

---

<sup>390</sup> Bockmuehl, 238. In 4:1ff., Paul bridges his previous arguments, including in 3:15ff., 3:2ff., and 1:27-2:18, to what he will now say, reiterating his love for the Philippian church, and his joy over them. “So then, my dearly loved brothers and sisters whom I long for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my dear friends” (4:1). This verse rightly concludes the previous section, and could be included in the previous pericope, as the UBS 4<sup>th</sup> edition does, or it could stand at the head of Paul’s concluding exhortations, as most modern translations arrange the section.

<sup>391</sup> Bockmuehl, 238.

companion”<sup>392</sup> in resolving the matter. These leaders are jeopardizing the Christ-like example that, like Paul, they must uphold for the church.<sup>393</sup> Paul does not simply tell the women to ‘be friends again,’<sup>394</sup> but they must demonstrate in their relationship the manner of thinking, feeling and acting that was modeled by Christ himself. Paul speaks of the women warmly, as those who have struggled alongside him for the cause of the gospel, so that even in his words, Paul is still teaching, by example, what it means to display Christ-like thinking.

**4:4-9** In vv. 4-9, Paul provides a set of dispositions and actions that the Philippians must adopt in their life together.<sup>395</sup> Throughout the letter, Paul has sought to equip the Philippians with a pattern of Christ-centered reasoning, and now he assures them of God’s active role in guarding both their hearts and minds as they employ it. Fowl rightly argues that vv. 6-9 are designed to provide a two-part framework by which the Philippians can apply the virtues mentioned in v. 8 to persons, things, and actions in ways that are fundamentally different from their pagan neighbors.<sup>396</sup> In these verses, Paul provides the “conceptual, practical, and linguistic resources” for using the terms listed in v. 8 in a manner “appropriate to those who are in Christ.”<sup>397</sup> Verses 6-7 state that peace is established through prayer and supplication, which forms the first aspect of the framework. In v. 9 Paul provides the second aspect of this framework: putting into practice what they “learned, received, saw and heard” in him.

“Rejoice!” Paul says, “I will say it again, rejoice!” The tone of rejoicing hardly seems to fit the context of conflict resolution just mentioned, as the asyndetic

---

<sup>392</sup> νήσιε σύζυγε.

<sup>393</sup> Bockmuehl, 238.

<sup>394</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 178.

<sup>395</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 180.

<sup>396</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 181-88.

<sup>397</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 187.

style of 4:4-5a appears to leave these exhortations “in the air.”<sup>398</sup> These exhortations, however, act to further model the disposition that is to typify Christian community in contrast to the joy-stifling disunity just mentioned. Paul offers an unconventional vision of joy, one that stands unmoved by circumstances (cf. 2:17-18). As Fowl notes: “Joy is the appropriate response when one rightly perceives the unfolding of God’s drama of salvation even in the midst of suffering and opposition.”<sup>399</sup>

Paul then offers a second imperative; the community must let their “gentleness” be known to all people. The community’s disposition is not internal to the community or to individuals, but is outward focused; it speaks of what the Lord has done in the community, and is a witness of Christ’s own character. The rhetorical function of this command is twofold: (1) they must *display* their gentleness, and (2) they must continue to *foster* this gentle spirit in their pattern of thinking, feeling and acting.

Paul then states, “The Lord is near.” The clause seems loosely tied to the surrounding verses, but significantly states that the Philippians need to be aware of the reality that their “Savior,” whom they are eagerly awaiting, is near, both in his presence

with the community and in his expected parousia.<sup>400</sup> The nearness of the Lord calls the Philippians both to freedom from anxiety and to responsible living.<sup>401</sup>

The Stoics also pursued freedom from anxiety, but in their view this could only be achieved through self-mastery, “which rendered one indifferent to the ups and

---

<sup>398</sup> Bockmuehl, 245.

<sup>399</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 181.

<sup>400</sup> Jesus uses the word ἐγγύς in his first public announcement (Mark 1:15), stating that, “the Kingdom of God has come near”, and indicating that his presence inaugurates the coming Kingdom. John also uses ἐγγύς in reference to Jesus “coming” (Rev.1:3; 22:10). Darrel W. Johnson, *Discipleship on the Edge: An Expository Journey through the Book of Revelation* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2004) 31.

<sup>401</sup> Cf. 1 Thess 4:13-5:11.

downs of fortune.”<sup>402</sup> In sharp contrast, Paul states that freedom from anxiety was not a matter of self-mastery, but a matter of prayer.<sup>403</sup> The disposition explicit in this exhortation is of grateful reliance on God. It is a posture of humility where the supplicant is deeply aware of God’s greatness, and in confidence, can lay all anxiety at his feet.

Verse 7 is logically linked to v. 6, as the word καὶ indicates the second part of the single point. As a result of a prayerful posture, Paul asserts that the peace of God, which “surpasses all things the mind can grasp,” will guard their “hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” In the parallel lines of τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν καὶ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν,<sup>404</sup> Paul assures his hearers that both their “hearts” and “minds/thoughts” are under the protection provided by God’s peace (cf. Col. 3:15). This is set in contrast to the *pax Romana*, which can never offer the true peace that God can.<sup>405</sup>

Verse 8 begins with τὸ λοιπόν, often translated “finally,” leading many commentators to see it as unrelated to the context, or as evidence of “splicing” by later redactors who put together multiple documents.<sup>406</sup> These arguments are unnecessary, however, when these verses are taken in their context.<sup>407</sup> Paul has offered his appeal for unity in 4:2-3, and then moved to exhort the church to have a disposition of rejoicing and gentleness vv. 4-5. Assuring the church of Christ’s presence (v. 5b), their sure access to God in prayer (v. 6), and the peace of God in guarding their hearts and minds, Paul now offers the church a list of virtues (v. 8) and

---

<sup>402</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 183.

<sup>403</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 183.

<sup>404</sup> “The hearts of you and the minds/thoughts of you...” The word Paul uses here for “minds/thoughts”, νόημα, is only used elsewhere in 2 Cor 2:11; 3:14; 4:4; and 11:3.

<sup>405</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 184.

<sup>406</sup> Reed offers strong evidence for a single document of Philippians. As Porter notes, though Reed’s evidence does not “prove” the literary integrity of Philippians, it swings the balance of evidence to favour the letter as a single document. Stanley E. Porter, “Greek Grammar and Syntax,” in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Recent Survey of Recent Research*, eds. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004) 97.

<sup>407</sup> Reed, 259 nn. 385-86.

a further call to put into practice what he has taught them (v. 9). The final clause uses the imperative that guides the verse: “focus your attention on these things.”<sup>408</sup>

Paul’s list includes things that are true, honorable, right, pure, pleasing, and admirable.<sup>409</sup> He further qualifies these virtues with two additional clauses, “if anything is morally excellent” and “if anything is worthy of praise.” These qualities are not self-interpreting, however, and would have been viewed as essentially good qualities in the Greco-Roman context.<sup>410</sup> Though Paul could be stating that Christians must maintain the highest of their culture’s morality,<sup>411</sup> he may be offering more than virtues already present in the culture.<sup>412</sup> Paul’s purpose is to recast the language of virtue in a distinctly Christian manner and to call the Philippians to sustained discernment between what appears to be “morally excellent” and what actually is.<sup>413</sup> Paul thus calls the Philippians to discern from a new framework the “true” meaning of words such as “honorable” and “pure”.<sup>414</sup> In using the imperative of λογίζομαι<sup>415</sup> Paul commands them to “focus on” or “give their minds”<sup>416</sup> to these things. This is to be done from a different framework than the broader culture, however, a way defined by reliance on God as the source of peace (v. 7) and of practicing what they have been taught by Paul (v. 9).

<sup>408</sup> Ταῦτα λογίζεσθε. This translation is from Fowl, *Philippians*, 184.

<sup>409</sup> For further definitions of these words see Fowl, *Philippians*, 185-86; Bockmuehl, 251-54.

<sup>410</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 185.

<sup>411</sup> As Bockmuehl, 254, and Fee, *Philippians*, 416.

<sup>412</sup> Fowl argues that Paul could have used six other virtue words and made the same point. It is not that these virtues are without meaning, but Paul’s point is to point out what is “really” morally excellent, and to equip the church to see through what is ‘honourable’ to the world and what is ‘honourable’ in Christ’s kingdom. Fowl, *Philippians*, 185.

<sup>413</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 185-89.

<sup>414</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 185.

<sup>415</sup> Λογίζομαι carries the sense of “reasoning according to logical rules”, “thinking about” or “evaluating”.

<sup>416</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 415.

Paul now switches from the indefinite relative pronoun ὅσα in v. 8 to the more specific, definite relative pronoun ἃ in v. 9.<sup>417</sup> This indicates that he has not changed topics, but is more specifically defining the content of v. 8, essentially saying: “Put into practice what you have learned from me, including the manner of thinking as Christians with those set of virtues just mentioned.” In v. 9, Paul states again his exhortation to “become imitators of me” (3:17), calling the church to “practice” what they “learned and received and heard and seen in me.”

With this verse Paul essentially concludes and summarizes the letter.<sup>418</sup> Paul is now appealing to all that the Philippians know of his lifestyle and teaching, including the implicit example he offered in 1:12-26 and 3:2-14 of himself, and that which he has taught about Timothy, Epaphroditus and, of course, Christ Jesus. Paul understands his educational impact as involving his whole life. Paul now calls the Philippians to “practice” all that they have learned and received, both through his example and verbal teaching. Having examined Paul’s teaching purposes for the Philippians in the first century, we must now explore briefly how this word speaks to Christian life and ministry in the twenty-first century.

---

<sup>417</sup> Bockmuehl, 254.

<sup>418</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 419.

## Chapter 5: Application

Throughout this letter Paul demonstrates the interplay of right thinking and right behaviour. As Brian Peterson notes, “one’s view of reality necessarily affects behaviour and relationships.”<sup>419</sup> In this sense Paul’s letter equips the Philippians with a set of “lenses” through which they can re-envision reality and continue to grow in character.<sup>420</sup> As we move from the first century to the twenty-first century, we must answer the questions: How must our vision of reality, individually and corporately, be informed and shaped? What will it mean for us to embody this Christ-like manner of thinking, feeling and acting? To begin answering these questions, the following section will investigate four major themes of the thesis, and briefly describe what they entail for Christian living and the ministry of the church today. The four themes include: (1) Christ-like character, (2) imitation, (3) the Christian mind and (4) “knowing Christ”.

First, Paul focuses on describing Christ’s character and exhorting the Philippians to adopt this character.<sup>421</sup> Paul’s discussion of humility, including viewing others above oneself and rejecting arrogance, serves to offer correctives and provide cohesion in the common life of the hearers, then and now. In 2:2-4, Paul exhorts the Philippians to “consider others above yourselves,” but how does this actually work? For example, how does Jane view her relationship with Sally, a new believer who has not formed the biblical habits of appropriate behavior that, by God’s grace, Jane has? Does she now “look up” to Sally? The answer is “yes” and “no.” “Yes” in that Jane views Sally as her master to serve in love. Jane also recognizes that by journeying in mutuality, she can learn from Sally. And “no” in that Jane

---

<sup>419</sup> Brian K. Peterson, “Philippians 2:5-11”, *Interpretation* 58 no 2 (2004): 178-80 (178).

<sup>420</sup> Hauwerwas, 215.

<sup>421</sup> The metaphor of character is employed by Hauwerwas in describing Christian ethics. See Hauwerwas, 17.

understands that to best serve Sally, she must model appropriate, Christ-like dispositions, essentially ‘teaching’ Sally how to live as a Christian without capitulating to any immaturity that Sally brings to the relationship. The regard Jane has for Sally leads her to the action of genuinely putting Sally’s needs, especially her spiritual needs, at the center of her interests.<sup>422</sup>

Paul denounces the opposites of humility, including selfish ambition and arrogance, as they do not reflect Christ’s character and lead to disunity. From the “one-upmanship” of co-workers boasting the quality of their trucks around the lunchroom tables, to the academic posturing of “who-are-you-publishing-with?”, making oneself “look bigger”<sup>423</sup> is as constant a pull in the get-ahead-world of the twenty-first century as it was in the first century. These are rather benign examples, but they reflect a disposition that could very well foster a pathological form of posturing, and do not reflect the manner of being that Christ desires of his followers. In 2:2-4 Paul is essentially saying, “This kind of competitive behavior is not fitting for Christ-followers. We need to think differently about all this.”

In Christ Jesus, Paul then offers the example of thinking differently. It is in “going down,” in voluntary self-giving, that we most truly reflect the character of God in Christ Jesus. Imitating Christ means that believers must stand against the cultural-tides of upward mobility, adopting a mindset that follows the same trajectory of Jesus himself; namely, obediently serving the interests of God by being poured out for the

---

<sup>422</sup> In my experience of working with L’Arche, an international Christian community of people with intellectual challenges, I learned that a community can adopt a mindset that regards “the other” as superior. I was instructed that my partnership with a core member of the community would mean that I was the student, and they the teacher. It seems odd that the one studying at a master’s level would be the “student” and a man with intellectual challenges “the teacher.” Of course I knew that this man was not ‘intellectually superior’, and yet as I actually viewed my relationship with him as his student, I was delighted to find that I was learning lessons I would never have learned if I had viewed myself as the “superior.” This is not to say that it is only true because it “works.” “Other regard” is the manner of life under the reign of Jesus, because he both teaches and models it. This is the manner of being set forth by Jesus himself.

<sup>423</sup> “Making yourselves look bigger” is a gloss of ἐπιθεία. Louw and Nida, s.v. ἐπιθεία 88.167. See discussion on p. 28.



sake of others. In practical terms, “going down” includes being quick to listen, bringing personal agendas under the Lordship of Christ, seeking the best for the “other,” and arranging our church in such a way that attention is given to seeking equality and justice in our world and not simply maintaining the status quo.<sup>424</sup> As such, “going down” has personal, social and structural dimensions.

The voluntary humility and obedience that Jesus models in 2:6-11 raises the issue of how power is used. Following Jesus’ example is not an invitation to “roll over” to abuses or to be controlled by the use of coercive power. This is incredibly important for pastoral care, and a point that also needs to be nuanced in preaching this message. Paul is not arguing a position that says, “Just let people abuse you because that’s life, and you just need to take it.” Rather, he is affirming that as we willingly entrust our lives to God, and begin to place the interests of others above our own, it will be costly. We see this at work in Paul’s own life.<sup>425</sup> God is not blind to the cost, however, for just as Jesus was vindicated (2:9-11), those who follow him in cross-bearing discipleship will also be vindicated (3:21). As those who place their trust in Jesus’ way of being human, believers can live confidently, knowing that even in the midst of pain they live and work from Christ’s victory, not toward it,<sup>426</sup> and that on that Day, Christ will bring an end to all suffering and injustice.<sup>427</sup>

---

<sup>424</sup> Thielman makes a similar point, posing the question of church fundraising and building campaigns: “Are these efforts to see the gospel advance, or are they ways of enhancing the prestige and comfort of our own group?” Frank Thielman, *Philippians* (TNAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) 130.

<sup>425</sup> When Paul was about to be beaten by the Roman guards in Acts 22:22-29, he appealed to his Roman citizenship, and other times he is beaten senselessly as a result of preaching a message where the Kingdom of God clashed with the Kingdom of Caesar, and ultimately the Kingdom of Darkness. This example shows us that suffering harm is not an end in itself, or even a state to be pursued in self-elevating “humility,” but it was a present reality for Paul and the Philippians, and it will be a part of living out God’s purposes for believers.

<sup>426</sup> Darrel Johnson makes this point in his study of Revelations 5, but it applies equally well in this setting. Johnson, 150. It should be noted that because someone is in a “humble” position does not mean they are humble. Though we see throughout Scripture that God slants his mercy in favour of the marginalized, this does not mean that those who are downtrodden share the same humble disposition as Jesus. It means that God cares about the broken and that we also need to. We must *imitate* his

The second theme, imitation, raises another set of points for application. Paul utilizes Jesus' narrative to provide the reason and "flesh" to his point in 2:2-4, calling the Philippians to imitate Jesus' example (2:5). He also offers concrete examples of what imitating Christ will look like in the lives of believers. To do this he uses the examples of Timothy, Epaphroditus and himself, explicitly calling the community to imitate them (3:1-5-17; 4:9). The use of imitation and narrative description offers several valuable insights. First, character is revealed in narrative. Lesslie Newbigin puts it well:

...in order to know [a] person one must see how she meets situations, relates to other people, acts in times of crisis and in times of peace. It is in narrative that character is revealed, and there is no substitute for this.<sup>428</sup>

The character of Christ himself, as well as the examples of godly men mentioned in Philippians, is set in the telling of their stories. Ethical education, therefore, must be grounded in stories to demonstrate what it looks like to live in a particular way.

Two, character is demonstrated in the lives of mature believers. Paul had no qualms using his life as an example to others of Christ-centred living (e.g. 4:9). This speaks to the need for mentoring relationships and for leaders to live in ways that others could pattern their lives after. Clearly, a need for accountability and transparency is a necessary element for this to work. For Paul this meant being very honest about identifying where God's grace was operative in his life (e.g. 2 Cor 12; 1 Tim 1:15, 16), and the same must be true for Christian leaders today.

Third, fostering the Christian mind to perceive life through the "lenses" of heavenly citizenship is a major theme. That Paul uses four very different positive

---

concerns. This grows out of a character shaped after Jesus' disposition and patterns of behaviour. Timothy and Epaphroditus are examples of how this imitation takes place.

<sup>427</sup> Thielman, 126.

<sup>428</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1989) 99.

examples and at least one negative example (3:18-19) to make his point shows that the “imitation” he describes actually intensifies the need for thought rather than reducing it. People naturally imitate others. Even people who seek to be “alternative” are often conforming to others who share the same set of values and interests. What Paul calls for is *intentional* imitation of a counter-cultural lifestyle, namely, the pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting that Christ models. This requires discernment and practical reasoning, both in the life-long process of seeking to know Jesus and how he would act in various circumstances, and in aligning oneself with communities and individuals who honestly seek to emulate his ways (cf. 3:18-21).

In approaching Christian education, the life and teaching of Jesus must feature prominently in the church,<sup>429</sup> and the personal aspect of knowing Jesus in prayer and worship must be fostered (cf. 3:7-14). We can assume that the teaching of Paul, and his co-workers, would have thoroughly informed the church about the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus. Obedience to Jesus’ teaching must feature in the church today (cf. Matt 28:18-20). As G.R. Osborne notes, “the Gospels are ‘case study workbooks’ for theological truth, yielding not just theology taught but theology lived and modelled.”<sup>430</sup>

The fourth and final theme to be explored is Paul’s ultimate goal of “knowing Christ.” Paul’s narration of his own story (3:2-14) shows that his righteousness is not based on Torah observance but comes through Christ’s faithfulness and is accepted as God’s gift to him in faith. Paul further exclaims that knowing Christ is the only life goal worth pursuing. In sharing his story, Paul demonstrates how deeply his conversion affected him. This was no mere ceremonial cleansing, but a complete re-

---

<sup>429</sup> Including all elements of education. I.e. preaching, Sunday School, adult education, youth groups, small group studies etc.

<sup>430</sup> G.R. Osborne, “Redaction Criticism,” in *The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992) 668.

furnishing of his will and his mind. Paul came to adopt a completely different set of “lenses” through which he viewed the world. Gaining *these* lenses requires a “more radical kind of conversion than has often been thought,” as Lesslie Newbigin continues:

...a conversion not only of the will but of the mind, a transformation by the renewing of the mind so as not to be conformed to this world, not to see things as our culture sees them, but, with new lenses, to see things in a radically different way.<sup>431</sup>

Paul then exhorts the Philippians to adopt the same perspective that he has just described (3:15-21). Paul is not merely trying to make disciples of his point of view, but is confident that this is the mature Christian perspective. Knowing Christ *is* the beginning and goal of the Christian life. All of creation will acknowledge his Lordship at the end. What is more, knowing Christ means adopting Jesus’ manner of thinking, feeling and acting, as the link between 2:5-11 and 3:10-11 shows. Paul’s view of the cruciform lifestyle is a reflection of his transformed perspective; a perspective that the Philippians too must adopt, as 3:17 clearly shows. There are aspects of the Christian life that change from culture to culture, and denomination to denomination, but the goal of knowing Christ and sharing his cruciform lifestyle is essential. Paul cannot abide any form of triumphalism.<sup>432</sup> We must not either.<sup>433</sup>

In terms of ethics, having a perspective that seeks to “know Christ,” and participate in his way of being human, relativizes the value that one places on all other goals. This perspective equips the believer with an eternal perspective, by which he or she can make decisions based on: (a) whether they reflect the priorities of Christ, and (b) how this decision contributes to the coming of Christ’s already inaugurated kingdom. This vision of reality also relativizes painful circumstances, and

---

<sup>431</sup> Newbigin, 38.

<sup>432</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 197.

<sup>433</sup> Cf. Mark 8:34-37. Jesus’ call to cross-bearing discipleship confronts humanity’s natural tendencies for self-promotion and self-preservation.

demonstrates that as Christ was vindicated for his obedient, voluntary suffering, so too will believers be vindicated (3:21). For preaching, and other Christian education, this means painting a picture of the Christian life that seeks to know Christ, and considers in a detailed manner the transformation that this entails. This calls for a radical understanding of discipleship where learning, growth, and forward motion are not optional but necessary.

Jesus' incarnation and obedient, self-giving sacrifice, is nothing short of the most courageous act in history. Accepting the call to form one's character and orient one's thinking around Jesus' example, as Paul has issued in his letter to the Philippians, is to adopt a courageous and exciting new way of being.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

Throughout his letter to the Philippians, Paul seeks to equip the church with the moral and intellectual abilities to “deploy their knowledge of the gospel in the concrete situations in which they find themselves.”<sup>434</sup> In order for the Philippians to “live in a manner worthy of the gospel” (1:27), Paul enjoins them to emulate the pattern of thinking, feeling and acting that Christ demonstrated. Christ is the ultimate ethical paradigm, but Paul also offers himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus as concrete examples of how a cruciform lifestyle is lived out.

By using his own story, Paul demonstrates that he has learned to narrate his life story from a new, Christ-oriented perspective. This perspective allows him to see through his former boasting based on self-confidence (3:4-6), equipping him with a Christ-centred goal (vv. 7-9). In this respect, Paul’s past is not erased, but is transformed by the renewing of his mind (cf. Rom 12:1-3).<sup>435</sup> In 3:10-11 Paul offers the climactic, cruciform manner of thinking he has adopted.<sup>436</sup> He then explicitly encourages the Philippians to follow the examples he has mentioned, in order that they might cultivate a mature mindset and pattern of living (3:15-4:9).

Through his ethical exhortations, and the examples he provides, Paul encourages the church to unity in the gospel (1:27ff.), to fortitude in suffering (1:27-30), to advance the ministry of evangelism (2:14ff.), to pursue the goal of knowing Christ (3:15-17), and to think and act with maturity (3:15-4:9). Paul’s joy-filled letter to the Philippians continues to call each expression of Christ’s body to grow in maturity, adopting Christ’s manner of thinking, acting and feeling, in order to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

---

<sup>434</sup> Fowl, “Christology”, 145.

<sup>435</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 158.

<sup>436</sup> Fowl, *Philippians*, 163.

### Bibliography

- Alexander, Loveday. "Hellenistic Letter-Forms and the Structure of Philippians." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37 (1989) 87-101.
- Barth, Karl. *Epistle to the Philippians*. Translated by James W. Leitch. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1962.
- Bockmuehl, Markus. *The Epistle to the Philippians*. Black's New Testament Commentary 11. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998.
- Brown, Colin. "Ernst Lohmeyer's *Kyrios Jesus*." Pages 6-42 in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2*. Edited by Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.
- F.F. Bruce. "Paul in Acts and Letters." Pages 679-92 in *The Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Dodd, Brian J. "The Story of Christ and the Imitation of Paul in Philippians 2-3." Pages 154-61 in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2*. Edited by Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.
- Fee, Gordon D. *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*. 3d ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Fee, Gordon D. *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Fowl, Stephen E. "Christology and Ethics in Philippians 2:5-11." Pages 140-53 in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2*. Edited by Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.
- Fowl, Stephen E. "Imitation of Paul/of Christ." Pages 42-31 in *The Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Fowl, Stephen. "Learning to Narrate our Lives in Christ." Pages 339-54 in *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honour of Brevard S. Childs*. Edited by Christopher Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Fowl, Stephen E. "Some Issues of Story in Moral Discourse: Reflections on Paul's Moral Discourse and Our Own." *Modern Theology* 4 (1998): 293-308.
- Fowl, Stephen, E. *The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul: An Analysis of the Function of the Hymnic Material in the Pauline Corpus*. JSNTS 36. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990.

- Fowl, Stephen E. *Philippians*. Two Horizons New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Furnish, Victor P. *Theology and Ethics in Paul*. Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1968.
- Hauwerwas, Stanley. *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics*. San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1985.
- Hawthorne, Gerald F. "Philippians." Pages 707-13 in *The Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Hawthorne, Gerald F. *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 43: Philippians*. Waco: Word Books, 1983.
- Horrell, David G. *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics*. London: T&T Clark International, 2005.
- Johnson, Darrel W. *Discipleship on the Edge: An Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation*. Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2004.
- McDonald, Lee Martin and Stanley E. Porter. *Early Christianity and Its Sacred Literature*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000.
- Martin, Ralph P. *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*. Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1987.
- Martin, Ralph P. *A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation & in the Setting of Early Christian Worship*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997.
- Meeks, Wayne A. "The Man from Heaven in Philippians." Pages 329-36 in *The Future of Early Christianity*. Edited by Birger A. Pearson. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.
- Mott, S.C. "Ethics." Pages 269-75 in *The Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Lesslie Newbigin. *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
- O'Brien, Peter T. *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1991.
- Osborne, G.R. "Redaction Criticism." Pages 662-69 in *The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Edited by Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992.



- Osiek, Carolyn. *Philippians, Philemon*. Abingdon New Testament Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.
- Peterson, Brian K. "Philippians 2:5-11." *Interpretation* 58 no 2 (2004): 178-80.
- Porter, Stanley E. "Greek Grammar and Syntax." Pages 76-103 in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Recent Survey of Recent Research*, Edited by Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.
- Porter, Stanley E. *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*. 2d ed. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994.
- Porter, Stanley E. "Fear, Reverence." Pages 291-93 in *The Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Reed, Jeffrey T. *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity*. JSNTS 136. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.
- Silva, Moises. *Philippians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.
- Stackhouse, John Jr. *Evangelical Landscapes*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.
- Thurston, Bonnie B. and Judith M. Ryan. *Philippians and Philemon*. Sacra Pagina Series 10. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005.
- Westfall, Cynthia. "Blessed be the Ties that Bind: Semantic Domains in Hebrews 1:1-4:16." Theological Research Seminar, McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton Ontario, Nov.1, 2005.
- Wright, N.T. "ἀρπαγμός and the Meaning of Philippians 2:5-11" *Journal of Theological Studies* 37 no 2 (1986): 321-52.