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NT 637/737—Philippians: Spring 2023
Professor Shawn Craigmiles
Written Assignment
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a. Trace out (summarize) the logic of Paul's statements/argument in the Philippians 1:2-26.

In Philippians 1:2-26, Paul thanks God for the church in Philippi and shares his heart and desire for them.

Beginning in Philippians 1:2-11, Paul gives propositions that express his reasons for thanks and the purpose of his prayers for the church. The first major proposition is found between verses 4 and 5. Paul expresses that he always prays with joy "because" (ἐπί - ground) of his partnership in the gospel with the Philippians. Verse 4 serves as the main proposition while verse 5 serves as the subordinate. "Because" links the clauses in a ground manner, helping the readers see that Paul's joy is due to their fellowship and shared life in the gospel.[1] Also significant in this section is the "because" (διά - ground) which links verses 6 and 7.[2] In verse 6, Paul expresses his confidence that "he who began a good work in you will carry it to completion." The "because" in verse 7 then gives the reason - "I have you in my heart." The last major propositions in this section are linked by "so that" (εἰς - action-purpose) in verse 10.[3] Paul's prayer for his readers in verse 9 serves as the action and the "so that" reveals the purpose, that the church would be able to "discern what is best."

[1] Thomas Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 102.
[2] Schreiner, *Interpreting,* 100.
[3] Schreiner, *Interpreting,* 103.

In Philippians 1:12-18, Paul shares how his present circumstances have spread the gospel. Paul reports in verse 12-14 that his imprisonment has actually served to advance the gospel. The "so that" (ὥστε - action-result) informs the reader the twofold result, how the palace guard now know that Christ is the reason for Paul's imprisonment, and also how the brothers now preach with greater boldness.[4] What follows is verse 15, where Paul compares the motives of two groups who preach Christ. The "but" (δέ - negative-positive) shows the contrast - one group preaches "out of envy and rivalry *but* the other out of goodwill."

In Philippians 19-26, Paul shares his attitude and disposition toward his present circumstances. The "but" (ἀλλά - negative-positive) in verse 20 presents two alternatives.[5] "In no way be ashamed" serves as the negative statement while "will have sufficient courage" serves as the positive. Then in verse 21, Paul describes two possible outcomes of his present circumstances with "and" (καί - progression) in coordinate progression .[6] "To live is Christ" is the first statement while the second statement, "to die is gain," moves toward a climax. Paul elaborates further in verse 22 in a conditional statement with "if" (εἰ - Conditional).[7] "If I am to go on living in the body" serves as the condition, while a life of "fruitful labor" is the result. In verses 23-24, Paul shares his final conclusion on the matter with alternative statements using the conjunction "but" (δέ - alternative).[8] The first proposition expresses Paul's desire to be with Christ, but the δέ makes clear that the second proposition is ultimately what is preferable to him, to remain alive for the sake of the church. Finally, in verse 25-26, Paul reports his intention is to remain "and"

[4] Schreiner, *Interpreting,* 104.
[5] Schreiner, *Interpreting,* 102.
[6] Schreiner, *Interpreting,* 99.
[7] Schreiner, *Interpreting,* 105.
[8] Schreiner, *Interpreting,* 100.

(καί - progression)[9] continue living "so that" (ἵνα - action-result) the Philippians would boast all the more in Christ Jesus on account of Paul.[10]

b. Choose a key word from this section to study within the context of Paul's writings.

"Boasting" (καύχημα) is a significant word in Paul's letters. Hawthorne observes that of the fifty times "boasting" and its cognates appears in the New Testament, only four of them are found outside his letters.[11] Louw and Nida suggest that the word is used by Paul to "express an unusually high degree of confidence in someone or something."[12]

While καύχημα shares some similarities in meaning to the English word "boast," there are nuances that help us understand Paul more deeply. Hawthorne and Martin contend that one way of understanding καύχημα is that it "is the antithesis of 'shame' in the well known ancient contrast between honor and shame."[13] When understood in this sense, "boasting" is not necessarily linked to vanity or sinful pride. Paul's usage, as Hawthorne puts it, expresses more often "a deep exultation or proper pride."[14]

Hawthorne's analysis fits well within the context of Philippians 1, where Paul expresses his hope that the church's boasting in Christ Jesus would abound. Closely co-located is Paul's rejoicing and exultation (v. 18) and also his encouragement to not be ashamed (v. 20). Understood in this way, the boasting of the church is about having joyful pride in the work of Jesus Christ in their

[9] Schreiner, *Interpreting,* 99.
[10] Schreiner, *Interpreting,* 104.
[11] Gerald Hawthorne and Ralph Martin, *Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 146.
[12] Johannes P. Louw. *Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*. 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Fortress Press, 1988), 431.
[13] Hawthorne, *Philippians,* 63.
[14] Hawthorne, *Philippians,* 146.

lives.

c. Articulate five (5) strategic questions raised from this biblical passage that you consider worth investigating further, *and give your reasons why you chose these questions* (e.g., the theological implications of the answer will affect the kind of disposition one has toward suffering)

- Question 1 - What is Paul's understanding of God's sovereignty over the spread of the gospel?
    - Why? Paul remarks that regardless of the motivation of his rivals, Christ is preached. How are we to apply this understanding to our current day when prominent church leaders are rightfully removed because of abuse and scandal? What are the limits?
- Question 2 -What does it mean to "boast" in Christ?
    - Why? How we understand "boasting" has implications for how Christians are to present and posture themselves in everyday life. How is boasting in Christ different from sinful pride? How do we understand boasting in light of the greater message of humility in the letter?
- Question 3 - Paul rejoices in the midst of suffering (v.18). In Paul's view, what role does suffering play in the life of the believer?
    - Why? How believers view suffering has implications on how they face and go through difficulty. What kind of suffering is Paul referring to? Should Christians expect to suffer?

- Question 4 - Why does Paul write that he is confident about how God's work in the life of the Philippians will carry on to completion, while simultaneously seeing the need to pray for them (v. 6)?
    - Why? How we read Paul's prayer has implications for how we understand the role of prayer in sanctification and salvation.
- Question 5 - How does Paul's perspective of his purpose in life and death challenge and inform how we are to live today (v.21)?
    - Why? Paul views theprolonging of his life as an opportunity to serve Christ and the church. How is this to shape our life priorities and goals today? Paul views death as the opportunity to be with Christ. How does this put into perspective our pursuits in life and death?

d. Draw out the significance for today of one of Paul's theological positions.

i. What are the practical or ethical implications of Paul's position for your particular faith communities?

One of the challenges for my faith community in New York City is the potential for negative perception and consequences when co-workers, classmates, or neighbors discover we are Christian. Over the past 10 years, the prevailing culture in our workplaces and campuses has become increasingly opposed and resistant to the gospel. The caricature of Christianity reinforced by the media that many New Yorkers may have has also not helped.

While I hesitate to call what we experience "suffering" in the same sense that Paul experienced suffering, I am aware that those in my community weekly have to navigate difficult conversations and expectations put on by a city that prides itself on LGBTQ, hustle culture, corporate greed, and power. To read then how Paul believes there is purpose, meaning, and fruit for the hardship he experiences for the sake of the gospel is deeply encouraging.

One powerful implication for my faith community is that as Christians we should expect discomfort and opposition in our daily lives. We don't need to unnecessarily look for trouble, but we can wisely anticipate and pray through the difficult challenges we may face.

Another implication is that as we faithfully navigate the difficulties we can expect to bear fruit. As we truthfully yet lovingly navigate the culture, we can be like Paul and expect the gospel to bear fruit in our ministries and churches. The church that Paul imagines can serve as a powerful and attractive testimony to our city, even in the face of opposition.

ii. What steps would you take to help your faith community become spiritually formed in this area?

One step for my faith community is to grow in love and wisdom so that they can face difficulties with greater grace and maturity. As an example, those in my church frequently have to navigate conversations about LGBTQ issues and many of our coworkers identify as queer. My encouragement to my church is that we must with great effort demonstrate to our LGBTQ coworkers that we care about them (which doesn't necessarily mean we are affirming their

lifestyle). So when the time comes when we have to choose to not participate in LGBTQ affirming events, we are not mistaken as bigoted or narrow minded.

Also important for my faith community is to know there are different reasons why we suffer. When Paul speaks about suffering for Christ he is not referring to suffering that is a result of sin and foolishness. Neither is Paul promoting unnecessary suffering. As Christians we anticipate suffering but we do not need to actively seek it out for the sake of suffering.