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NT 637/737—Philippians: Spring 2023

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Written Assignment #1

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Please answer the following questions, remember to cite properly any sources that you use.

- A. Trace out (summarize) the logic of Paul’s argument in the Thanksgiving Period (1:2-26). What are his main propositions, section by section, and what is the relationship between propositions that went before and those that follow? English students need to pay attention to conceptual subordination of ideas, while Greek students will also consider the use of coordinate and subordinate conjunctions. *This is the most difficult part of the assignment and requires careful observations. You are not expected to duplicate Schreiner’s method perfectly, but you should be familiar enough with it that you can attempt to unpack Paul’s message.* (approximately 1 page)

In the Thanksgiving Period (1:2-26), Paul’s propositions demonstrate his reasons for joy even in the midst of imprisonment. First, in 1:3-6, as Paul expresses his gratitude to God for the Philippians, he gives the ground for praying for them with joy in verse five: “because (G) of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.” Paul proceeds to expand on his joy in their partnership in the gospel thus far by describing his confident hope into the future joy as well in verse six, that “he who began a good work in [them] will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Paul’s joy in the Philippian church on account of their co-laboring for Christ is a continuous and committed one; therefore, in 1:9-11, Paul’s prayer also features progression (P) from current thanksgiving and joy to future wish for a growing love that “may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to (Ac/Pur) help [them] determine what really matters, so that (Ac/Res) in the day of Christ [they] may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of

God.” Paul’s joy, founded in the continuing partnership with the congregation whom, according to verse seven, he “[holds] in his heart,” informs his thanksgiving and also guides his heartfelt petition for them to God.

In 1:12-14, another reason for Paul’s joy is found in the main proposition that “what has happened to [him] has actually served to advance the gospel.” This Action-Result is further explained (Id/Exp) in verses 13 and 14 in which Paul elaborates on the result of his imprisonment: the whole palace guard and everyone else have become aware that Paul is in prison for Christ and not for any crime, and most of the brothers and sisters have become more emboldened and fearless in proclaiming the gospel.

The following section of 1:15-18a portrays an action-manner (Ac/Mn) of how the brothers and sisters are increasingly preaching the gospel. Some are doing so “out of envy and rivalry” while others “out of good will.” Through the discussion of these conflicting manners, Paul arrives back at his reason for joy in verse 18, which is the fact that “Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true.”

In 18b-20, Paul proceeds to revisit his joy in the Philippians’ partnership in the gospel and gives the ground (G) for continuous rejoicing in 1:19, “*for* [he knows] that through [their] prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for his salvation.” While it may not be easily determined whether by “salvation” Paul speaks of physical release from the prison or of ultimate redemption in the Day of Christ, or both, Paul elaborates in 1:20 that by this “salvation,” he “will not be put to shame in any way *but* (-/+) that by [his] speaking with all boldness Christ will be exalted now as always in [his body] whether by life or by death.”

In 1:21-26, Paul presents his dilemma between life and death through alternatives (A) in coordinate relationship: “For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. *If* (If/Th) I am to live in

the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, *yet* I cannot say which I will choose... my desire is to depart and be with Christ, *for* (G) that is far better, *but* to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you..." Paul emphatically communicates being torn between two powerful desires to be finished in the life race of faith to eternally rest in Christ, and to continue the race in life for the sake of serving his dear congregation.

While thus far, Paul has presented the Philippians' partnership with him as a reason for his own joy, it seems reciprocally significant that in concluding his life and death dilemma in 1:25-26, Paul determines that he would continue in life and in partnership with them for the reason of "their progress and joy in the faith." And this is "*so that* (Ac/Pur), by [his] presence again with [them], their boast might abound in Christ Jesus because of [him]." For the apostle with a constant, inspirational joy in Christ, the prospect of Philippians' own growing joy and boasting in Christ in turn motivates him to continue the fruitful labor by remaining in the body.

B. Choose a key word from this section to study within the context of Paul's writings. Key Tools: An analytical concordance, Greek-based lexicon such as Louw & Nida, journal articles, etc. (approximately 1/2 page)

According to Danker, *σωτηρίαν* in 1:19 is defined as "a freeing from real or threatening harm or loss, rescue, deliverance, salvation," and considering its use in verse 19, it is taken by some to mean "a. of deliverance from physical harm," while by others, to mean "b. of deliverance relating to divine initiatives and procedures, especially in reference to the role of Jesus Christ."¹ Silva explores the possibility of both meanings and concludes that "even if *sōtēria* in verse 19 alludes in some way to deliverance from prison, [...] the primary reference is to Paul's perseverance in faith: the magnification of Christ—not his own freedom or even his life

¹ Frederick William Danker. *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), Kindle Locations 6386-6387.

—is Paul’s salvation.”² Outside of Philippians, Heb 11:7, albeit not a Pauline writing, gives another example of the use of the word according to the first meaning— it describes the role of Noah’s ark in the immediate, physical deliverance of his household. On the other hand, Rom 1:16 and Eph 1:13 are other examples of the use of the word in the latter meaning, referring to the spiritual deliverance as a result of the power of the gospel of Christ.

C. Articulate 5 strategic questions raised from the biblical passage that you consider worth investigating further, and give your reasons why you chose these 5 (e.g. the theological implications of the answer will affect the kind of disposition one has toward suffering). (approximately 1/2 page)

1. Why does Paul link more love with “knowledge and full insight” in verse 9? Why is it important to Paul that the Philippians’ love grows in more knowledge and full insight?
 - a. The context of the church community at Philippi at the time of Paul’s writing the letter must have called for distinguishing between love and wisdom and for praying that both are present in abounding measure, not just either one at the expense of the other. Knowledge of the context would be helpful and applicable to our contemporary church life setting as well so that various issues that can rise in community may be navigated with a lot of love as well as knowledge and full insight.
2. What significance may be drawn from in Paul’s inclusive reference as “brothers and sisters” to those who “proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment (v. 17)?

² Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 71-72.

- a. As Hawthorne and Martin note, “it is more likely that Paul writes about these people who had wrong motives to make clear that such people do exist even within the Christian community and therefore the Philippian Christians should not be taken by surprise if such should arise in their midst. At the same time he wishes to show that the nature of these base motives is truly malevolent.”³ Paul seems to model living out the very prayer he prays for the Philippians in verse nine, that “[their] love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.” In love, there can still be an acknowledgement of these “opponents” as being on the same team in regards to preaching the gospel, and there can still be joy over the fact of the gospel is preached, not necessarily over how it is preached. Nevertheless, Paul models discernment in calling out the manner as less than good even in accomplishing a good goal. This tension of holding love and wisdom together may be relevant to our contemporary life in the church, as diversely different people continue to work toward the same goal of making Christ known.
3. What is “being put to shame” according to Paul (v. 20)?
- a. Paul makes it clear that he eagerly expects and hopes to not be put to shame in any way, but to have Christ be exalted. Understanding Paul’s fears and what he considers to be truly shameful would shed more light on Paul’s desires and what he considers to be truly honorable, leading to a greater appreciation for his single-minded pursuit of exalting Christ.
4. How does the context of Paul’s Jewish heritage illuminate Paul’s act of thanking God “for every remembrance” of the believers in Philippi in verse 3?”

³ Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, Revised., vol. 43, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 48.

- a. An insight into the Jewish customs of Paul's day helps in understanding Paul's remembrance of the Philippians as a formal, regular act of thanksgiving, not a haphazard thinking of them from time to time that happens to lead to thanksgiving each time. Hawthorne and Martin note that "he was giving thanks at those formal times of prayer that accorded with the customs of his Jewish heritage, to which he adhered even as a Christian. At every one (ἐπὶ πάσῃ) of these prayer times he was compelled by love to mention his Philippian friends. This means, then, not that Paul gave thanks whenever he happened to remember them but that he regularly gave thanks for them and mentioned them to God at set times of prayer."⁴
5. What is the ground for Paul's joy which does not cease but continues to inform his posture even in the midst of imprisonment?
- a. For Paul whose mission and purpose was to proclaim the gospel, the situation of being imprisoned and held back must have felt like the opposite of divine opportunity and provision. And yet, Paul continues to exhibit joy and shares how the unlikely situation actually has served to help his mission. This is an encouragement to every believer as what we see as an obstacle and hindrance may actually be the channel through which God is at work to further His kingdom. The joy, obedience, and expectant hope of Paul serve as an inspiration regardless of the difference in the types of trials we may face as believers.

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

1. What are the practical or ethical implications of Paul's position for your particular faith communities? (approximately 1/2-3/4 page)

⁴ Ibid., 19.

In 1:9-10, Paul specifies in his prayer for the Philippians that their “love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help [them] determine what really matters,” in order that they may be pure and blameless in the day of Christ. The implication that their love ought to be accompanied by growth in discerning knowledge and insight seems to be an important principle for Paul that he desires upon a community that is dear to his heart. Similarly, the principle seems important for our own church to remember. “Love” seems to take on many shapes and forms in our contemporary society, and in the name of “love” as the ultimate value, regardless of how each of us may interpret it, various thoughts and actions may be considered permissible. A communal love that lacks discernment may be warm and caring, but it will lack momentum for moving in the same direction as the Holy Spirit leads. It may not withstand hardship over a long period of time because there is no anchoring insight to see “what really matters.” Love that is to be transformational and directed toward bearing fruit of righteousness ought to be growing deeper in knowledge and insight into what God is like and increasingly discerning what He desires, so that as a community, we may be able to move together in the same direction in step with the Holy Spirit to the glory of God.

2. What steps would you take to help your faith community become spiritually formed in this area? (approximately 1/2-3/4 page)

Becoming spiritually formed in knowledge and discernment would foremost require being equipped not in our own respective wisdoms but in God’s word. Being equipped in God’s word would mean knowing how to approach God’s word, understanding more and more of God’s character and desires as revealed in the word,

and through the process, coming to appreciate it as the foundation of our collective faith. A loving church that is equipped with such knowledge and ability to discern will be able to keep steadfast, progress and love more deeply, widely, continuously and obediently in greater alignment to God's values and desires. A system of Bible study and fellowship that prioritizes obedience to God and provides encouragement to one another in that process may be basic but essential foundations to growing together in love and wisdom.

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