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Written Assignment #1

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Propositions are forms of communication that can be found in biblical writings. It helps to identify the meaning the original writer intended to communicate to the original recipients.¹ Paul arrives in Philippi, located in the province of Macedonia during his second missionary journey. Acts 16 describes some of the opposition he faces, being harassed by a servant girl with a divining spirit, then being thrown in jail and flogged at the request of her owners.² This same chapter in Acts records the miraculous iconic account of Paul and Silas's prison break. The Philippians tend to be a very giving and generous church. They often support his ministry. This letter was initiated through an act of giving so to speak. A fellow worker by the name of Epaphroditus is sent by the Philippians to bring Paul a gift. After surviving a grave illness, he is returned to Philippi with a letter from Paul, thanking the church for their gift and expressing his concerns. The letter in Philippians opens with the standard elements often found in letter writing in the ancient world. Thomas R Schreiner states that the four elements of an opening are 1) the sender of the letter is named; 2) the addressees of the letter are specified; 3) the greeting; and 4) the prayer, which is usually a thanksgiving.³ Schreiner goes on to state that a

¹ John Banker, *A Semantic And Structural Analysis Of Philippians* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 1996), 9.

² Banker, *A Semantic And Structural Analysis Of Philippians*, 13.

³Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2011), 22.

proposition is an assertion or statement about something.⁴ The argument begins by stating the senders which are Paul and Timothy. There is a progression in verse two where Paul is addressing the saints or the church but he also addresses the leadership. He mentions the saints with the bishops and deacons. This seems significant because the writer is lining up who he will be addressing but it appears he establishes a protocol and hierarchy between the saints and the ministry leaders. After the greeting in verse two, he expresses his joy in praying for a church that evangelizes well. It seems like an action-manner in verse five. He's praying with joy because they have been sharing the gospel. The very familiar verse six appears to be an inference subordinate proposition. Paul is confident because the one who started a good work in them will complete it by the day of Jesus Christ. Verse seven is an action-result because Paul gives reasons why he thinks the way he does concerning the church. He affirms his feelings because they share God's grace with him during his imprisonment and in the defense of the gospel. Verses nine through twelve looks like an action-purpose subordinate proposition. Paul prays that the church increases in love, knowledge and insight so that they may be pure, blameless, and fruitful. The purpose is for God's glory and praise. Verses twelve through eighteen appear to be an action-result. Paul gives a synopsis of his imprisonment and its great impact in his current circumstance. He mentions the imperial guard as well as brothers and sisters who were greatly influenced because of his situation. Verses nineteen through twenty-two appears conditional. If Paul continues to rejoice and if others pray, his labor becomes fruitful and may bless him with a way out.

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.

⁴ Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 97.

A key word that Paul uses that is quite intriguing is the word slaves, servants, or bond-servants found in Philippians 1:1. When Paul uses the term slave or servant, he does explain how he uses it in relation to his commitment and servitude to Christ. Critics of the bible may identify the term as something used to support racism or justification for the abuse of one group over the other. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin state that the Greek word *doulos* often translated “servants,” literally on its sociological background means “slaves,” a word that carries the normally negative ideas of abasement, subservience, and total submissiveness. It is possible then that Paul understood *doulos* in terms of this contemporary cultural practice. He, therefore, would have viewed himself and Timothy as persons bound over to Christ Jesus, owned by Him, possessing no rights of their own, totally at the service of their master.⁵ Pastor Dennis Jacob defines Paul’s term as spiritual slavery. He states that *doulos* literally means owned by someone for a lifetime. He simply states that spiritually, the scriptures teach that you are either a slave owned by the devil and sin, which leads to death, or by God and obedience, which leads to righteousness and the gift of eternal life.⁶ Paul uses this controversial term on purpose to emphasize humility but to also give the term credence to the commitment a Christian should have to God.

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).

Why is imprisonment such an intricate part of Paul’s ministry? The same Paul stated in Romans 13:1 NRSV that everyone must submit to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established

⁵ Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, Revised., vol.43, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 5.

⁶ Dennis Jacob, *Faith Matters: The meaning of ‘doulos’ and spiritual slavery*, (Greenfield, MA: Greenfield Recorder, 2021), 1.

by God. In Philippians 1:12, Paul justifies his incarceration by saying it is for Christ. He doesn't push imprisonment on others, but he does make sure his readers understand that his predicament has been sanctioned by God. Paul has had his share of miracles in bonds and free. But it appears awkward at the least to preach a Gospel that frees as opposed to living in physical bondage for a considerable amount of time. How does the theology of suffering apply to imprisonment? I believe that being arrested and imprisoned for a just cause does elevate you in the eyes of others. In Paul's case, there was an incredible miracle of Paul and Silas being freed from jail while praising their God. But to go back to what God freed you from could be a bit confusing. However, Paul's letters called prison epistles, were included in the sacred scriptures, which is beyond incredible. It appears when it comes to God the end definitely justifies the mean. Suffering for God takes you to unimaginable spiritual levels. Philippians 1:15 Paul states that some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. Is contending with envy and rivalry the steps to spiritual success? Paul had his share of enemies just like all biblical heroes of the faith. It was the jealous enemies Israel had to fight that instilled total reliance on God. Paul would push spiritual maturity through his writings. Confronting rivals will certainly provoke a place in God that will help the believer to overcome these negative external forces. Philippians 1:12 states that most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear. Are the attributes of boldness and no fear necessary today? This brings me to the story about the three Hebrew young men who were thrown into a fiery furnace because of their faith in God. Their faith and boldness triggered a miracle. It is comforting to know that God is with you in times of severe suffering. The same boldness Paul had in his day is the same boldness needed today. Paul asked a question in verse eighteen of Philippians. He asked what does it matter? In

other words, don't let the evil motives of others stop you from proclaiming Christ in every way. Paul is on to something as a servant. Let your master who is Christ take care of you anyway he sees fit. God is beyond faithful.

D) Draw out 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?
- 2) What steps would you take to help your faith community become spiritually formed in this area?

One of Paul's greatest attributes was prayer, hands down. Paul incorporates principles of prayer and thanksgiving throughout his writings. He prayed for and prayed about everything. My reason for mentioning this is because prayer is no longer at the forefront of many churches today. There was a time where an advertised prayer meeting was attractive and fulfilling amongst believers but not now. Paul prayed always. He was spiritually successful because of his prayer life. He prayed for others and constantly communicated with God. Pray still exist but the fervent prayer appears lacking. It's a very interesting question of how to build my faith community in this area. The area of motivating believers to abandon the realms of flesh into the disciplines of prayer which in turn brings you into the presence of God. Leading by example does help, but I think the passionate teachings of Paul about prayer and commitment is still effective today.