

than impede the gospel, his imprisonment has encouraged others to proclaim it. In the second (1:18b-26), Paul expresses his confidence that he will be released from his imprisonment so that he can continue his work among them. In this section, Paul will develop many of the themes he introduced in the thanksgiving and begin the process of presenting himself as a model to be imitated.

Paul's imprisonment has furthered the gospel (1:12-18a). This unit begins with a formula that indicates the beginning of the main part of the letter ("I want you to know"). Picking up the theme of the "gospel" that he introduced in the thanksgiving section, the apostle assures the Philippians that contrary to all expectations, his imprisonment has contributed to the spread of the gospel. First, it has become obvious, even to his guards, that he has been imprisoned for preaching the gospel of Christ. The translation of *praitōriō* (1:13) depends upon where one thinks Paul was imprisoned. If he was imprisoned at Rome, it should be translated as "imperial guard," as in the NRSV; if he was imprisoned at Ephesus or Caesarea, it should be translated as "praetorium" (the governor's residence), as in the NAB. Second, the fact that Paul has been imprisoned and is still filled with joy has emboldened others to preach the gospel in his stead. Paul, however, notes that people are preaching for different motives. While some understand that his imprisonment is his defense of the gospel, others are taking advantage of his imprisonment to increase his suffering by preaching from selfish ambition. Whereas Paul normally opposes those who preach the gospel in this way, here he manifests no animosity whatsoever. Rather, he rejoices that Christ is being preached. In effect, Paul is a model of the behavior to which he calls the Philippians: joy in the midst of suffering for the gospel and the need for unity within the community. The fact that the gospel is being preached is more important than those who preach it.

Paul's confidence of deliverance (1:18b-26). Paul begins this unit with another expression of rejoicing based on his confidence that their prayers and "the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (1:19) will end in deliverance (*sothēria*) for him, that is, release from prison. The "Spirit of Jesus Christ" is the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit that Jesus released into the world by his resurrection. Paul's confidence in the gospel assures him that he is not going to be put to shame, since God will vindicate him either by releasing him from this imprisonment or by raising him from the dead, should he be put to death. The whole purpose of Paul's life is to exalt or magnify (*megalyntētai*) Christ, both in life and in death

(1:20). Thus the outcome of his imprisonment is not his primary concern, since he can defend the gospel and glorify Christ either by life or by death.

Whereas in 1 Thess 4:17 Paul appears to think he will still be alive when the Lord returns, here (1:23) he reckons with the possibility that he may die before the parousia. But whether he dies or not, it doesn't matter since his life belongs to Christ, whether he is dead or alive. Paul's deepest desire is to be with Christ since this is the goal of his life (3:20-21), but he understands that remaining alive will be of benefit to the Philippians. Although he is hard pressed between the two, he understands he still has work to do among them, and so he is confident that he will be released and visit them.

LIVE AS A UNIFIED COMMUNITY (1:27-3:1A)

Having explained that the circumstances of his imprisonment have furthered the cause of the gospel, and having presented himself as a model to be imitated, Paul turns to the situation of the Philippians to encourage and present them with a series of models to imitate: himself, Christ, Timothy, Epaphroditus. This section has five units. In the first, Paul exhorts the Philippians to stand firm as one community in the face of their opponents because they have begun to endure the same struggle they see and hear about in him (1:27-30). In the second, he asks them to live as a community of one mind and spirit in which each member considers the needs of the others as more important than one's own (2:1-4). In the third, he presents Christ as the supreme example of one who humbled himself (2:5-11). In the fourth, he encourages them to work out their salvation in a world that is often hostile to them, so that he will be able to boast about them when the Lord returns (2:12-18). In the fifth and last unit, he encourages them to welcome Timothy and Epaphroditus, who are models of the Christian life they should imitate (2:19-3:1a). In this section, Paul develops themes that he has already introduced: the gospel, salvation, communion/sharing, joy/rejoicing, and the day of Christ. The purpose of this section is to encourage the community to live fully unified by adopting the mindset of Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and ultimately of Christ.

Stand firm (1:27-30). Paul begins this section by exhorting the Philippians to "live [their] life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." The Greek word underlying the English verb "to live" is *politeuesthe*, which has the sense of conducting one's life as a citizen of the body politic to which one is obligated. Paul, however, uses the word in a new way. The Philippians

are to conduct themselves in a way that is worthy of the gospel of Christ, since their ultimate allegiance belongs, not to the Roman colony of Philippi, but to the gospel of and about Christ. Paul will make a similar point in 3:20 when he writes, "But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore, although the Philippians are subject to Rome, whose "savior" is Caesar, Paul reminds them that their ultimate allegiance is to Christ, who is the true "savior" of the world. Accordingly, they must live in a way that conforms to the gospel of Christ.

This "gospel of Christ" is the good news that Christ brought about the kingdom of God and the good news of what God has done in the death and resurrection of Christ to bring about the kingdom. To live in a manner worthy of the gospel, then, is to live in a way that embodies the saving mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. As the Christ hymn (2:6-11) will show, this is a way of humbling oneself, even to the point of death. This is why Paul exhorts the Philippians to stand firm in one spirit and mind, like a team of athletes striving as one (*synthloutentes*) to win the contest (1:27). But whereas a team of athletes is bound by team spirit and pride, the Philippians are united by their faith in the gospel. If the Philippians maintain this kind of unity, which is rooted in the gospel, it will be a sign of defeat for their enemies and of salvation for them, since none will be able to overcome them. Paul does not identify who these enemies are. Indeed there is no need to, since those who belong to Christ will always be opposed by those who do not. What is important is that the Christian community should function in a unified manner.

Toward the end of this unit, Paul draws a comparison between the situation of the Philippians and his own circumstances. The struggle for the gospel they are presently experiencing is the same struggle he is now enduring in his imprisonment. They have been given the same grace that he has. They have been granted the grace to suffer, as well as the grace to believe in the gospel they proclaim.

Be united (2:1-4). After exhorting the Philippians to stand firm by living in a manner worthy of the gospel by living as a unified community and sharing in the sufferings of the gospel, Paul explains how the Philippians are to interact with each other so that they can be a unified community. He asks them to make his joy complete by being "of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind" (2:2). The "mind" they are to adopt is the "mind" or "attitude" that Christ manifested when he humbled himself to the point of death on the cross. This mindset or attitude does away with all ambition within the community

whereby individual members of the church regard themselves as more important than others. Instead of looking to their own interests, they are to adopt a new kind of behavior that is in accord with the gospel: like Christ, they must consider the interests of others as more important than their own.

Paul grounds this new attitude that must undergird the Philippian community in the "encouragement" that is present in Christ, the "consolation" that comes from love, the "sharing" (*koinōnia*) of the Spirit, and the "compassion and sympathy" that ought to characterize the Christian life. The gospel of Christ, which is the norm for Christian conduct, is the source of all consolation, love, compassion, and sympathy, and the Spirit unites believers in a profound communion (*koinōnia*). Consequently, those who profess the gospel of Christ are able to live as a unified community in which each one is concerned for the needs of the other.

Adopt the attitude of Christ (2:5-11). Having exhorted the Philippians to stand firm in the face of their enemies by living as a unified community, Paul presents them with a powerful model of what it means to regard others as better than themselves and to look to the interests of others rather than to their self-interest.

This passage is often referred to as the "Christ hymn" because of its poetic structure, which allows it to be divided into different strophes. Although it is impossible to determine whether Paul inherited or imposed this passage, it is one of the most important christological texts of the New Testament inasmuch as it speaks of the preexistence, the abasement, and the exaltation of Christ. The text has been the subject of countless studies about its origin, structure, and meaning. Its meaning within the context of the letter, however, is clear: in their relations with each other, the Philippians are to adopt the attitude of Christ described in this passage.

Although the overall structure of the passage is contested, there is little doubt that it consists of two parts: the first part describes the self-abasement of Christ (2:6-8); the second part recounts how God exalted Christ (2:9-11). Key words for identifying the structure of the passage are "who" (*hos*, v. 6), "but" (*alla*, v. 6), "therefore" (*dio*, v. 9), and "so that" (*hina*, v. 10).

Paul introduces the text in verse 5 with a phrase that is difficult to translate since it lacks a verb. Rendered literally, verse 5 reads, "Think this in (or among) you that even in Christ Jesus." To make sense of this verse, one must introduce a verb such as "was" or "have." For example, the NRSV reads, "Let the same mind *be* in you that *was* in Christ Jesus," whereas the NABRE reads, "Have among yourselves the same attitude that *is* also yours in Christ Jesus." Whereas the NRSV suggests

that the Philippians must imitate the attitude or mind of Christ, the NABRE implies that this attitude or mindset is something the Philippians ought to adopt because it already belongs to them inasmuch as they belong to Christ. Although the difference is subtle, the NRSV translation gives greater emphasis to imitation. Neither translation, however, excludes the other since those who are in Christ *have* the mindset that *was* in Christ, which they must now adopt.

In the first part of the hymn (vv. 6-8), Paul describes the self-abasement of the one who was in the "form of God" (*morphē theou*). Although the English word "form" gives the impression of Christ being like but not truly God, the Greek word has a fuller meaning: the form is the outward manifestation of the inner reality. This is made clear by the next phrase, which describes Christ as possessing "equality with God." The abasement of Christ consists in taking the "form of a slave" (*morphē doulou*), even to the point of dying the death of a slave, death on the cross. To do this, Christ did not consider his equality with God a "privilege" or "prize" (*harpagmon*) to be insisted upon (NRSV "to be exploited"). Instead, he emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave. This emptying or kenosis does not mean that Christ ceased being who he was (equal to God) but that he refused to insist on his rightful status so that he could serve others. The lesson for the Philippians is clear. They are not to insist on their own status in their relations with each other.

Having described the self-abasement of Christ, in the second part of the hymn Paul explains how God exalted the one who abased himself (vv. 9-11). This part of the hymn begins with a strong indication of what is to follow, "therefore" (*dio*). Because Christ abased himself, therefore God exalted him by giving him the name above every other name. The name God gives Christ is God's own name, *kyrios* ("Lord," the Greek substitute for the divine name YHWH). This does not mean that Christ became divine again, or that he became divine for the first time. The one who was equal to God remained equal to God, even in his abasement. But now his status as equal to God is revealed in a way for all to see "so that" (*hina*) whenever the name of "Jesus" is proclaimed, every knee should bend and every tongue proclaim that "Jesus Christ is Lord." As nearly all commentators note, this passage echoes Isa 45:23, a passage in which God proclaims,

By myself I have sworn,
from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness
a word that shall not return:
"To me every knee shall bow,
every tongue shall swear."

such a sacrifice if they imitate the example of Christ that Paul has presented to them rather than focus on their personal interests.

Welcome Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-3:1a). Having spoken of the Philippians' circumstances, Paul briefly returns to his own circumstances and what he intends to do. He will soon be sending Timothy and Epaphroditus to them. Timothy is Paul's trusted coworker and cosender of this letter, one who is capable of showing others Paul's "ways in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 4:17). Epaphroditus, whom Paul describes as his brother, coworker, and fellow soldier, had been sent by the Philippians as their messenger (*apostolon*) to Paul with a gift of money to assist him during the time of his imprisonment. While attending to Paul, however, he became ill and the Philippians learned about this. They were concerned about him, and Epaphroditus was concerned about them. Accordingly, Paul is about to send him back to the Philippians so that they can see he has recovered.

While this unit alerts the Philippians that Paul is sending Timothy and Epaphroditus to them so that they will be prepared to welcome them, it does something else as well. It provides the Philippians with two examples to imitate. First, Paul presents Timothy as someone who is genuinely concerned for their welfare. Whereas others seek their own interests (2:21; cf. 2:17), Timothy seeks the interest of Christ. He is the perfect example of someone who has served with Paul in the work of the gospel. If the Philippians imitate Timothy, they will know how to work with Paul in proclaiming the gospel and serve the interests of others rather than their own self-interests.

Epaphroditus provides the Philippians with another example to imitate. He has already served Paul in their absence, and he has done even more: he risked his life to do those things the Philippians could not do because they were not present. Paul has now presented the Philippians with four models to imitate: himself (1:30), Christ (2:6-11), Timothy, and Epaphroditus. If they imitate these examples, they will stand firm in the face of their opponents. Paul concludes this section with the theme that runs throughout this letter: the Philippians should rejoice in the Lord.

FOLLOW PAUL'S EXAMPLE (3:1B-21)

This section consists of two units. In the first, Paul warns the Philippians against those who would require them to be circumcised by presenting himself as an example of someone who has forsaken everything for the sake of the righteousness that comes from God (3:1b-11). In the second, he invites the

Philippians to imitate him as a model of what it means to strive to attain the goal of resurrection from the dead (3:12-21). Although this section is often viewed as different in tone from the rest of the letter, it continues to develop a major theme of this letter: the need to imitate Paul.

Seek the righteousness that comes from God (3:1b-11). If the words, "To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard," introduce what follows rather than summarize what Paul has just said, then 3:1b begins a new section, as the paragraphing of the NRSV indicates. Having exhorted the Philippians to live as a united community, Paul now warns them of something he has told them before: they must not submit to those who would require them to be circumcised, since there is no comparison between the righteousness that comes from God and the righteousness that comes from observing the law. Although the Philippians are Gentiles who have not been circumcised, Paul calls them "the circumcision" (3:3) because their faith in Jesus Christ has enabled them to worship God in the Spirit. Paul makes a similar point in Rom 2:28-29, where he declares that circumcision is more than a physical act; rather, it is "a matter of the heart—it is spiritual and not literal." Similarly in Col 2:11-12 he speaks of baptism as a spiritual circumcision, the circumcision of Christ. Consequently, as in Galatians, Paul seeks to dissuade his converts from succumbing to those who would require them to receive the physical mark of circumcision.

The argument Paul employs is grounded in the example of his own life. One could hardly find a more law-observant Jew than Paul. His Jewish pedigree was beyond reproach, and he proved his zeal by persecuting the church. He can rightly affirm that in regard to righteousness under the law he was "blameless" (3:6) inasmuch as he lived his life in accordance with the Mosaic law, and made atonement for his sins and transgressions by the appropriate sin offering when he transgressed the law. Therefore, although he may have sinned, he was blameless as regards the law.

The righteousness that Paul attained as a Pharisee was a righteousness based on observance of the law. It assured him that he stood in a right relationship with God because he observed the legal prescriptions of the Mosaic covenant contained in the law. Paul's encounter with the risen Christ, which Luke narrates in Acts 9 and to which Paul refers in Galatians 2, effected a dramatic change in his life. Having encountered the risen Christ, whom he had previously judged a blasphemer, Paul saw the righteousness he had attained through observance of the law in a new light. His own righteousness now appeared as so much "rubbish" in comparison to the