

Article

Paul's Self-Presentation in Phil 1:12–26

Dolly Elias Chaaya 

Pontifical Faculty of Theology, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, Jounieh 446, Lebanon; dollychaaya@usek.edu.lb

Abstract: This article demonstrates how Paul's self-presentation in Phil 1:12–26 serves as an important exemplum to the Christian community, whereby Paul, in contrast to those who "proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition" (Phil 1:17), values the Gospel, and therefore values Christ above all things. However, Paul's *synkrisis* does not lead to self-boasting, but suggests that in regard to the Philippian community, "by his presence again [...] their boast might abound in Christ Jesus because of him" (Phil 1:26). This sincerity guides us to focus this article on the function of Phil 1:12–26 in preparing the exemplum of Christ in Phil 2:6–11. In order to reach our desired result, it is necessarily important to underline keywords that are constantly repeated in Phil 1:12–26, such as *χριστός*, *κύριος*, *καταγγέλλω*, and *καύχημα*, which serve as a hinge between the first three chapters of the letter to the Philippians, in addition to *προσκοπή* and *παρησία*.

Keywords: self-presentation; boasting; exemplum; christocentric; joy in adversity; suffering

1. Introduction

Self-presentation¹, as a persuasive tool², has emerged as a prevalent and critical aspect, illustrating the challenges and complexities that arise when individuals seek to articulate their identities within the context of faith.

Paul frequently uses self-presentation techniques in his letter to the Philippians, in which he emphasizes his status as a servant of God, his *topoi* of deeds, and his imprisonment³ in order to achieve two primary purposes: to provide his addressees a Christocentric exemplum⁴, helping them to endure their own suffering (Phil 2:6–11), and to acknowledge the Philippians' gift (Phil 4:10–20).

Comparing Paul's use of exempla with that of his contemporaries, such as Cicero, reveals both similarities and differences in their rhetorical styles. While both Paul and Cicero utilize exempla to support their arguments and convey moral lessons, they do so within the context of their respective audiences. Paul's use of exempla in his letters to the early Christian communities often draws from a place of biblical authority, reflecting his role as an apostle of Christ. In contrast, Cicero's exempla draw more heavily from classical literature and historical events, reflecting his background as a Roman statesman and orator. Despite these differences, both Paul and Cicero aim to persuade and instruct their audiences through the use of compelling examples that resonate with their listeners' values.

Additional references of exempla can also be found in Cicero's *Letters to Atticus* (Cicero 1999). In these letters, Cicero often employs exempla from history and literature to support his arguments and convey moral lessons. For example, Cicero might cite the actions of famous statesmen or historical events to provide guidance or encouragement to his correspondents.⁵

Notwithstanding the importance of the above-mentioned Greco-Roman context, our article studies the dynamics of Paul's self-presentation as an exemplum in Phil 1:12–26, a text that illuminates the reading of the whole letter. Yet, as we read Phil 1:12–26 in the context of the whole letter, we confront a problem: How can Paul echo his personal identity while he is imprisoned, a circumstance that might presumably be a hindrance to effective self-presentation? The current state of research on Phil 1:12–26 draws insights from notable



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scholars' monographs, highlighting the historical context of Paul's imprisonment as crucial for interpreting Phil 1:12–16.

On the one hand, Michael F. Bird and Nijay K. Gupta emphasize the political climate of the Roman Empire during Paul's time. They argue that Paul's imprisonment provided an unexpected opportunity for the advancement of the Gospel, as he continued to preach and write letters despite being confined⁶. On the other hand, Richard Cassidy meticulously examines the circumstances surrounding Paul's incarceration, drawing on historical sources and biblical scholarship to illuminate the context in which Paul wrote his letters. Through a thorough analysis of Paul's prison epistles, Cassidy explores how Paul's experiences shaped his theological outlook and influenced the content of his letters. He considers the rhetorical strategies employed by Paul to communicate with his audiences despite his confinement and contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between Paul's imprisonment and his epistolary correspondence⁷.

However, historical issues and epistolography alone are not enough to completely enlighten this issue. For this reason, we seek to reply to the aforementioned question by applying a literary rhetorical analysis to discover the nuances of Greek terminology and linguistic devices used by Paul in Phil 1:12–26. We elucidate the underlying mechanisms through which Paul is able to boast amidst his imprisonment in order to determine the purpose of Paul in his relationship with the Philippian community, which is being urged to adopt a Christ-centered approach (Phil 2:6–11), valuing Christ above all other pursuits.

2. Persuasive Techniques and Relevant Keywords

The keywords repeated in Phil 1:12–16 enable us to accurately show that the nuances of Paul's language choices are essential to his rhetoric, for the implied meaning of these keywords go beyond their literal definitions and contribute to the overall Pauline message within the whole letter. Paul's extensive vocabulary helps the reader identify and understand his persuasive techniques⁸. Before referring to these constantly repeated terms, it is important to underline the key issues of persuasive techniques used in Phil 1:12–26.

In Phil 1:18, Paul employs *pathos* by showing his joy (*χαίρω*) at the proclamation of Christ, regardless of his circumstances. This evokes a sense of shared joy and unity with the Philippians, fostering a bond of affection and solidarity⁹. Enlightening in this area is Ryan Schellenberg's significant contribution to addressing core questions in Phil 1:1–26, which are particularly relevant to the theme of Paul's self-presentation in the context of imprisonment. One of the key questions addressed by Schellenberg is how Paul's experience of imprisonment shaped his understanding of joy. Schellenberg refers to the cultural and historical challenges faced by prisoners like Paul. Through a careful analysis of Phil 1:12–26, Schellenberg uncovers the paradoxical nature of Paul's joy, which arises not despite his suffering but precisely because of it. Furthermore, Schellenberg's exploration of Paul's self-presentation in Phil 1:12–26 sheds light on the complexities of Paul's identity as an apostle and a prisoner. Schellenberg examines how Paul navigates his dual roles, considering his imprisonment as an opportunity for the advancement of the Gospel while also acknowledging the limitations and constraints imposed by his circumstances¹⁰.

Paul also enhances his *ethos* in Phil 1:20 by expressing his expectation and hope (*ἐλπίζω*) that he will not be ashamed, demonstrating his confidence in God's faithfulness even in the face of adversity¹¹. Russell B. Sisson's book section "Authorial *ethos* in Philippians: the *agōn topos* in Paul and Hellenistic moralists"¹² explores the concept of authorial *ethos* within the context of Paul's letter to the Philippians, particularly focusing on the use of the *agōn topos*, or the motif of struggle in Paul's rhetoric, by comparing Paul's strategies with those of Hellenistic moralists to understand how Paul establishes his credibility and authority. Furthermore, Paul's use of the *agōn topos* in Phil 1:12–26 can be seen in his depiction of his struggles and hardships as part of his service to Christ. Paul presents himself as engaged in a spiritual struggle, likening his sufferings to those endured by athletes striving for a prize (Phil 1:19–24). Therefore, by aligning his own struggles with the pursuit of heavenly

reward, Paul reinforces his authorial *ethos* and inspires the Philippians to persevere in their own faith.

In Phil 1:21, Paul employs *logos* by stating logical reasons and evidence to support his assertions: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”, providing the argument for his willingness to face death for the sake of Christ¹³.

After having referred to Paul’s persuasive techniques in Phil 1:12–26, we now concentrate on the keywords that play an important role in these techniques in order to convey Paul’s message effectively:

1. Χριστός

The noun Χριστός occurs eighteen times in chapter 1 (Phil 1:1 [x2], 2, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 26, 27, 29), six times in chapter 2 (Phil 2: 1, 5, 11, 16, 21, 30), eight times in chapter 3 (Phil 3: 3, 7, 8 [x2], 9, 12, 14, 18, 20), and four times in chapter 4 (Phil 4: 7, 19, 21, 23).

Among the above-mentioned occurrences, we note that the frequency of the noun Χριστός is consistent throughout the letter, but it is more prevalent in the first and third chapters concerning Paul’s self-presentation and exemplum. Although the noun χριστός is also related to addressing certain concerns that are relevant to the Philippian community to instruct them in terms of their faith and conduct, we focus on its association with Paul’s self-presentation.

Paul asserts that he is a δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (Phil 1:1), appointed (κεῖμαι) by God¹⁴ to defend the Gospel (Phil 1:16) and chosen by Christ (κατελήμφθην ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ; Phil 3:12). Furthermore, he presents himself as relieved from distress by Christ (cf., Phil 1:18–19), as well as from shame, because Christ will be exalted in his body (Phil 1:20). Therefore, Paul’s consistent portrayal of himself as an instrument of God validates his plea that God will reward the Philippians on Paul’s behalf, ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (Phil 4:19).

Paul’s depiction of his own suffering in Philippians stands in stark contrast to well-known social conventions¹⁵. In Phil 1:12–26, Paul highlights three specific *topoi* of deeds¹⁶ he was able to accomplish despite his imprisonment, providing the foundation for his exemplum to the Philippians¹⁷. The three *topoi* of deeds that Paul was able to accomplish are as follows:

- (1) “His imprisonment ἐν Χριστῷ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else” (Phil 1:13).
- (2) Because of his imprisonment, Paul has “far more courage to speak the word (of God) without fear” (Phil 1:14).
- (3) He states his intention to “remain in the flesh” (Phil 1:24), despite his desire “to depart and σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι” (Phil 1:23), because it is more necessary for the Philippians.

Moreover, in Phil 3:5–6, Paul emphasizes his extensive achievements within Judaism, including his ancestry and fervant adherence to the Law as a Pharisee¹⁸:

Types of Praise	Phil 3:5–6
Origin	circumcised the eighth day
	of the nation of Israel
	of the tribe of Benjamin
	Hebrew son of Hebrews
Education	as to the Law, a Pharisee
Deeds	as to zeal, a persecutor of the Church
	as to righteousness, which the Law can give, a blameless man

Yet, he breaks from social conventions and refuses to cling to these remarkable previous achievements, considering them to be σκύβαλα (Phil 3:8) in order to embrace the new values ἐν Χριστῷ (cf., Phil 3:7–14). Finally, in Phil 4:11–12, Paul boasts that his ἀνάρκης

(self-sufficiency) became a (Christ-sufficiency): πάντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με (Phil 4:13)¹⁹. Hence, although his boasting aligns with established conventions, its intent diverges significantly: Paul's boasting serves as an exemplum of behavior in persevering and accomplishing deeds despite his imprisonment; it illustrates the willingness to set aside one's own achievements for the good of the community²⁰.

2. Κύριος

The name Κύριος²¹ occurs two times in chapter 1 (Phil 1:2, 14), four times in chapter 2 (Phil 2:11, 19, 24, 29), three times in chapter 3 (Phil 3:1, 8, 20), and six times in chapter 4 (Phil 4:1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 23). The occurrences of κύριος in Philippians are connected with Paul's self-presentation and convey various aspects related to the previously studied term Χριστός²².

The letter begins with the usual opening greeting that includes the formula κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Phil 1:2) which is addressed to the recipients of the letter. Moreover, the genitive name κυρίου associated with Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is related to Paul's self-perception as δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ of Phil 1:1. In Phil 1:14, the trust of the community ἐν κυρίῳ is related to Paul's imprisonment.

In the pivotal hymn of Phil 2:6–11, the name κύριος is used explicitly in Phil 2:11, which declares that every tongue should confess ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, a statement that underlines Paul's understanding of Christ's exemplum in κένωσις and aligns with Paul's self-presentation as δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ in Phil 1:1.

The remaining occurrences of κύριος in Phil 2 are related to three terms: hope (2:19), trust (2:24), and joy (2:29). In the introduction (2:1–5) to the hymn of 2:6–11, Paul urged the Philippians to have the same φρόνησις as Christ, to have the same love, and to be in accord (2:2). This unity is not to be achieved through "self-ambition" (Phil 1:17), but through humility, considering others to be "better than oneself" (2:3). The hope here lies in the transformation of the community. By imitating Christ's exemplum, there is a hopeful anticipation of a unified and harmonious life. On the other hand, trust is implicit in Christ's obedience to the point of "death on the cross" (2:8), the cornerstone of Christians' trust in God's plan of salvation. After Christ's obedience unto death, Paul declares that God "highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name" (2:9). The exaltation of Christ brings immense joy to believers because it is rooted in the acknowledgment of Christ's ultimate victory over death.

Furthermore, Paul provides Timothy and Epaphroditus as exempla of those who share in this hope, trust, and joy. Timothy is described as "genuinely concerned" for the Philippians (2:19–24)²³, and Epaphroditus, who almost died for the work of Christ, is a "brother, co-worker and fellow soldier" (2:25)²⁴. Paul's mention of these two individuals demonstrates that Christian life, modeled after Christ's exemplum, is characterized by hope in God's purposes, trust in his providence, and a deep abiding joy that transcends one's circumstances²⁵.

Paul's use of κύριος in chapter 3 of Philippians emphasizes Paul's loss of everything compared to the surpassing greatness of τοῦ γνῶσαι αὐτόν (Christ). Not only is Paul concerned here, but also the believers who τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, and from there, they eagerly await the coming of κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν (3:20). The use of Κύριος here shapes Paul's self-presentation related to the eschatological hope of believers.

In chapter 4, Paul's use of Κύριος emphasizes various aspects of the believers' relationship with Christ. In the opening verse of the chapter, Paul exhorts the Philippians to "stand firm" (4:1) not in their own strength but in their relationship with the Lord. Then he appeals to a relational aspect of unity, in which believers can find common ground and agree in their shared commitment to the Lord (4:2). Moreover, "rejoicing in the Lord always" (4:4) directs the focus of believers away from external circumstances toward their relationship with Christ as the grounds for rejoicing, awaiting the coming of the Lord that is "near" (4:5).

3. Καταγγέλλω

Paul employs the verb καταγγέλλω to emphasize the central role of proclaiming the Gospel which is Christ himself (Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν in Phil 1:17 and Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται in Phil 1:18).

In Phil 1:17, Paul uses the verb καταγγέλλω when discussing the problem of those who preach Christ out of self-ambition. He says, “οἱ δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας τὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν, οὐχ ἄγνως, οἰόμενοι θλίψιν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου”. Here, the term is used to describe the proclamation of Christ, but with a negative connotation. It suggests a self-centered motivation rather than a genuine proclamation of the Gospel.

In Phil 1:18, Paul contrasts those who preach out of selfish ambition with those who proclaim Christ out of goodwill. He says, “Τί γάρ; πλὴν ὅτι παντὶ τρόπῳ, εἴτε προφάσει εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ, Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ χαίρω. Ἀλλὰ καὶ χαρήσομαι”. Here καταγγέλλω is used to convey the act of proclaiming Christ, emphasizing the overarching importance of the message itself, even if the motives of the messengers differ²⁶.

Moreover, throughout the letter, Paul expresses his joy and gratitude for the partnership of the Philippians in the proclamation of the Gospel²⁷. Despite his imprisonment, Paul sees the spread of the Gospel as an unstoppable force, and he encourages the Philippians to continue fearlessly announcing the message of salvation, knowing that God accomplishes his work despite man’s lies, deceit, and ambition²⁸.

Hence, the verb καταγγέλλω reflects not just a communication of facts, but an active engagement in sharing the transformative message of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. Thus, Paul acknowledges that the Gospel is advanced not only through his efforts, but through the collective commitment of believers. Therefore, by using the verb καταγγέλλω, Paul underlines the urgency of participating in the ongoing proclamation of the Gospel.

4. Καύχημα and Καυχόμαι

Καύχημα in the letter to the Philippians is strictly related to Christ (καύχημα ὑμῶν περισσεύω ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in Phil 1:26, καύχημα ἐμοὶ εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ in Phil 2:16, and καυχόμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in Phil 3:3) and is insightful into Paul’s discourse on Christian identity and values. A striking element of these occurrences is that the first (Phil 1:26) refers to the Philippians’ καύχημα, the second (Phil 2:16) to Paul’s καύχημα, and the third (Phil 3:3) to the καυχόμαι of Paul and the community together²⁹.

Phil 1:26	Phil 2:16	Phil 3:3
You	I	We
καύχημα ὑμῶν	καύχημα ἐμοὶ	καυχόμενοι
περισσεύω ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ	εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ	ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

However, in these three occurrences, Christ remains at the center. In Phil 1:26, ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ comes between the Philippians (καύχημα ὑμῶν) and Paul (ἐν ἐμοί). So καύχημα here cannot designate the reasons for boasting, since they are expressed immediately afterwards (διὰ τῆς ἐμῆς παρουσίας πάλιν πρὸς ὑμᾶς)³⁰. Rather, the boast benefits Christ, i.e., the Philippians’ boasting is abounding in *what Christ has done and will do through Paul*³¹. Moreover, this is the only time that the noun καύχημα is combined with the verb περισσεύω, and the latter is followed immediately by ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, which indicates clearly that the real abundance is in the divine blessings that are proclaimed as καύχημα³².

In Phil 2:16, Paul’s motif of καύχημα is related to the beginning of the verse in which he boasts of the day of Christ because of the Philippians’ modalities in being λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες. Furthermore, Paul’s καύχημα here seems to motivate the Philippians to invite them to perfection, underlined by the expression οὐδὲ εἰς κενὸν ἐκοπίασα which constitutes the content of καύχημα.

Phil 3:3 deals directly with Christian identity and values. The verb καυχόμενοι refers to the characteristics of circumcision for those who are in Christ; for them, it is not a physical circumcision, because Christians do not rely on worldly values, one’s own efforts,

or human achievements for salvation, but on a relationship rooted in a transformed heart through πνεύματι Θεοῦ.

Paul employs rhetorical strategies to frame his imprisonment in a positive way. He uses the term καυχόμαι. In Greek rhetoric, boasting was not always about arrogance but could also denote confidence and pride in one's accomplishments or situation³³. By using this term, Paul indicates his confidence in God and the effectiveness of his ministry, even in chains. Moreover, Paul uses paradoxical language to convey his perspective on suffering and the advancement of the Gospel. For instance, he uses the term τὰ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ. This phrase highlights Paul's willingness to endure suffering for the sake of Christ and the Gospel, turning what might seem like a negative circumstance into an opportunity for glorifying God. Paul also reframes his imprisonment as an opportunity for the προκοπή. This term suggests forward movement or advancement despite obstacles. Paul sees his imprisonment not as a setback but as a means for the Gospel to advance further. His boasting is thus rooted in his conviction that God is working through his circumstances for the greater purpose of spreading the Gospel. Furthermore, Paul demonstrates throughout Phil 1:12–26 his trust in the providence of God. He uses the term προθυμία to express his readiness to face whatever comes his way. This eagerness stems from his confidence that God is at work for the advancement of the Gospel, regardless of his present circumstances.

5. Προσκοπή and Παρρησία

In Phil 1:12, Paul uses the term προσκοπή to describe the outcome of his imprisonment (εἰς προκοπήν). Grammatically, προσκοπή derives from the verb προσκόπτω, which means to progress or advance. Paul's use of this term suggests a forward movement or advancement despite obstacles, aligning with his theme of the Gospel's progress in the midst of adversity.

Paul also demonstrates παρρησία throughout the passage as he speaks openly and fearlessly about his imprisonment and impending death. For example, in Phil 1:20, he expresses his expectation and hope (ἐν πάσῃ παρρησίᾳ) that he will not be ashamed but will have sufficient courage (παρρησία) to exalt Christ in his body, whether by life or by death. This use of παρρησία highlights Paul's boldness and confidence in facing death for the sake of Christ. In this same line, P. Rogers argues how Paul's unwavering spirit of hope and profound faith serve an example of hopefulness in the face of adversity and as a powerful testament to the transformative impact of faith³⁴.

The terms προσκοπή and παρρησία both serve as a rhetorical strategy to emphasize his detachment from worldly concerns, his willingness to boast in Christ, and his courage in the face of death. In Plato's apology, Socrates demonstrates similar qualities of detachment, boasting, and courage in the face of death. For example, he boldly defends his philosophical pursuits and refuses to compromise his principles, even in the face of condemnation and death. Thus, Socrates demonstrates παρρησία by speaking openly and fearlessly about his beliefs³⁵. Similarly, in Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates demonstrates his detachment from worldly concerns and his commitment to truth, using προσκοπή to describe the forward movement of the soul towards knowledge and wisdom³⁶. However, Paul's use of προσκοπή and παρρησία functions not only as a mere detachment from worldly concerns, but as a paradoxical encomium that distinguishes Paul from his opponents, who may view suffering and death as shameful or defeating. So, by boasting in his imprisonment and facing death with boldness, Paul aligns himself more closely with Jesus, who endured suffering and death for the sake of others.

Paul's boast in Philippians also echoes the rhetorical strategies employed by Plutarch in his *De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando*, in which he reflects upon the art of self-praise without evoking envy³⁷. Both Paul and Plutarch demonstrate a keen understanding of the delicate balance required in the act of boasting, utilizing it as a tool to convey virtuous character traits and noble intentions rather than self-boasting. But, in Phil 1:12–26, Paul applies boasting with finesse, intertwining his personal experiences of suffering and persecution with his steadfast faith in Christ. By framing his imprisonment as an opportunity for the

Gospel to flourish, Paul not only showcases his own courage but also invites his audience to partake in the triumph of the Gospel's message.

Similarly, Plutarch, in *De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando*, employs the art of self-praise with subtlety and sophistication. He avoids the pitfalls of vanity by focusing on commendable qualities and achievements that inspire admiration rather than resentment. Plutarch's discourse mirrors Paul's ethos of humility and selflessness, demonstrating how boasting, when wielded judiciously, can elevate both the speaker and the audience.

Although both respective approaches of Paul and Plutarch highlight the power of rhetorical strategy to inspire courage, virtue, and resilience in the face of challenges, Plutarch only navigates the delicate balance of self-praise without invoking envy, while Paul emphasizes the advancement of the Gospel amidst adversity and persecution, considering it a divine commitment to spread the message of salvation³⁸.

3. Paul's *Synkrisis* with "Self-Ambitious" Preachers

Therefore, the contrast between Paul's self-presentation in Phil 1:12–26 and those who "proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition" (Phil 1:17), highlights, on the one hand, that Paul's opponents are concerned with envy and rivalry, while, on the other hand, that Paul's self-presentation underlines the virtues and values integral to genuine service, particularly his emphasis on Christ³⁹, the Gospel⁴⁰, and selflessness⁴¹.

An article by Christfried Böttrich, "Verkündigung aus 'Neid und Rivalität?': Beobachtungen zu Phil 1:12–18"⁴², is highly relevant, since his analysis provides additional insights into the rhetorical dynamics of envy and rivalry among early Christian communities, focusing specifically on Phil 1:12–18. Böttrich examines how Paul's proclamation of the Gospel from a position of imprisonment could potentially provoke envy and rivalry among his contemporaries. Moreover, Böttrich underlines the importance of considering the socio-cultural context in which Paul's letters were written, studying Paul's strategic use of boasting in Philippians 1:12–26 within the broader context of early Christian communities characterized by envy and rivalry.

Similarly, N. Nikki⁴³ offers complementary perspectives on this theme. Nikki studies the identification and characterization of Paul's opponents in Philippians, examining how their presence shapes Paul's self-presentation and leaves an impact on the Philippian community.

Taking into consideration the above insightful studies, we focus on Paul's response to opposition to the Philippian community, emphasizing his modeling of selflessness and subordination of personal interests for the greater good, serving as a counterpoint to the negative example set by those who are self-seeking.

In Phil 1:17, Paul acknowledges that there are individuals who "proclaim Christ with selfish ambition", possibly seeking personal gain or recognition. In contrast, Paul exemplifies selfless service. His primary concern is not self-boasting, but the advancement of the Gospel and the well-being of the community, emphasizing the importance of humility and selflessness. Paul's prohibition of self-seeking (μηδὲν κατ' ἐριθείαν, 2:3) recalls the negative example in 1:15–17 of those who proclaim Christ out of selfish motives (ἐξ ἐριθείας, 1:17). In 1:21–26, Paul also presents himself to the Philippians, in counterpoint to the negative example of those who preach Christ with self-seeking motives (1:15–18a), as a model of selfless subordination of his own interests to the work of the gospel⁴⁴.

Moreover, while some may proclaim Christ for personal gain, Paul focuses consistently on the Gospel. Throughout Phil 1:12–26, Paul rejoices in the progress of the Gospel (προσκοπήν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, Phil 1:12) while he is in prison. The advancement of the Gospel takes place not only through Paul's preaching of the Gospel (Phil 1:13, 16), but also through other Christians (Phil 1:14, 18). This expresses Paul's desire for Christ to be proclaimed (Phil 1:18). Consequently, the Philippian community is encouraged to prioritize the spread of Christ's Gospel above all personal ambitions, since Paul's entire perspective is Christ-centered. He sees his imprisonment as an opportunity for Christ to be magnified (μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστός), whether by life or death (Phil 1:20). This Christocentric focus

contrasts with those who are driven by selfish ambitions. The Philippian community is urged to adopt a similar Christ-centered approach, valuing Christ above all other pursuits.

Despite facing imprisonment and uncertainty, Paul maintains a spirit of joy and rejoice (Phil 1:18). This joy is not based on his circumstances, but on his confidence in Christ. In contrast, those with selfish ambition may find their joy in personal achievements or recognition. The Philippian community is encouraged to find joy in Christ, irrespective of external circumstances.

Paul grapples the dilemma of whether to live or die, recognizing that either way, he belongs to Christ (Phil 1:21)⁴⁵. His ultimate commitment is to the service of others, choosing to remain for the benefit of the Philippian believers (Phil 1:24–26). This sacrificial commitment stands in contrast to the self-serving motives of those with selfish ambitions. The Philippian community is challenged to embrace a sacrificial commitment to others in the name of Christ.

Certainly, in Phil 1:26, Paul expresses a specific purpose for his potential return to the Philippian community. This verse is part of his larger argument about his own circumstances, including the possibility of death (Phil 1:20–26). In this context, Paul is discussing the potential outcome of his situation, and he envisions that if he is released from prison and able to visit the Philippians again, “their boast might abound in Christ Jesus because of him” (Phil 1:26).

A noticeable nuance is found between two expressions: ἐν σαρκί (Phil 1:22, 24) and ἐν πνεύματι (Phil 1:27):

ἐν σαρκί	ἐν πνεύματι
ζῆν ἐν σαρκί (Phil 1:22)	ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι (Phil 1:27)
ἐπιμένειν [ἐν] τῇ σαρκί (Phil 1:24)	

However, it is important to remark that Paul does not live “according to the flesh” (κατὰ σάρκα), but that he lives “in the flesh” (ἐν σαρκί, Phil 1:22, 24). This is what justifies Paul’s invitation to the Philippians to live “in one spirit” (ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι, Phil 1: 27)⁴⁶.

Paul is careful to avoid any form of self-boasting. Instead, his desire is that any boasting or glorification would be in Christ Jesus (ἵνα τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν περισσεύῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, Phil 1:26)⁴⁷. This aligns with his broader theme of humility and exalting Christ above all else (cf., Phil 2:9). Therefore, Paul sees his potential return not as an opportunity for personal boasting but as a way for the Philippians to see and experience the work of Christ through his ministry.

The language used by Paul suggests a communal experience of boasting. The Philippians, as a community of believers, could find a collective reason for boasting in Christ because of Paul’s return. This emphasizes the shared and communal nature of the community’s experience. Consequently, Paul’s envisioned return is not about personal acclaim, but about strengthening the unity and shared experience of the Philippian believers in their journey. In summary, the presence of Paul among them is seen as a catalyst for their collective boasting in Christ. So Paul’s *synkrisis* with “self-ambitious” preachers can be summarized as follows:

	Paul	Self-Ambitious Preachers
Motives	Motivated by a genuine desire to see the Gospel proclaimed, even if by others, and rejoices in the spread of Christ’s message	Driven by “selfish ambition”, rivalry, and contentious spirit, seeking to add suffering to Paul’s imprisonment

	Paul	Self-Ambitious Preachers
Response to adversity	Despite being in prison, Paul maintains a positive outlook on his circumstances as an opportunity for the Gospel to advance	Their goal is causing trouble rather than advancing the Gospel
Focus on others	Proposes a selfless Christological attitude based on love	Lack of concern for others, and their deeds contribute to contention
Unity versus division	Unity and mutual support setting an example of cooperation and humility	Division and strife, lack of unity

Similarly, Bird and Gupta compare Paul with his opponents, as well as Paul’s competitors with his colleagues:

Competitors	Colleagues
Preach the Messiah (vv. 15, 17)	Preach the Messiah (v. 15)
From motives of envy and rivalry (v. 15)	From motives of goodwill (v. 15)
And selfish ambition and pretention (v. 17)	And love (v. 16)
Supposing (v. 17)	Knowing (v. 16)
To stir up trouble for Paul in prison (v. 17)	Paul is set to defend the Gospel

One can see in the above table that his “competitors” and “colleagues” preach the same “Messiah” but with different perspectives.

4. Paul’s Self-Presentation and Christ’s Exemplum

Phil 1:12–26 and 2:6–11 both contribute to the overall message of the letter. While Phil 1:12–26 introduces Paul’s self-presentation in challenging circumstances, Phil 2:6–11 focuses on the exemplum of Christ’s humility and exaltation. The two texts work together to emphasize key aspects of Christian living and service.

Phil 1:12–26 sets the tone by illustrating Paul’s joy and positive attitude even amid suffering⁴⁸ and imprisonment. This joy is not based on external circumstances, but on his commitment to the Gospel even at the cost of personal comfort and death. This lays the foundation for understanding the selfless service was a model for the life of Paul.

In the context of the letter, Paul’ self-presentation (Phil 1:12–26) and Christ’s exemplum (Phil 2:6–11) follow the same rhetorical strategy:

	Phil 1:12–26	Phil 2:6–11
<i>Pathos</i>	Joy amidst imprisonment	Exaltation subsequent to κένωσις
<i>Ethos</i>	Paul’s exemplum	Christ’s exemplum
<i>Logos</i>	Argument based on discernment	Argument based on obedience

Paul’s use of *Pathos* in Phil 1:12–26 is evident in his expression of joy amidst his imprisonment. Despite being in chains, he communicates a sense that invokes empathy among his addressees. The emotional resonance lies in Paul’s ability to find joy, not in his favorable circumstances but in the advancement of the Gospel. Hereby, the Philippians are encouraged to consider their own responses to challenging situations.

Ethos is established through Paul’s exemplum and his commitment to the Gospel. The Philippians are more likely to trust and be persuaded by someone who not only preaches but also lives out the principles he advocates.

In terms of *logos*, Phil 1:12–26 presents a logical progression of thought which moves from the introduction of Paul’s imprisonment to the diverse motivations of preaching, Paul’s response to these motivations, his internal struggle over whether to live or die, and ultimately his decision to remain for the sake of the Philippians. Throughout this progression, Paul maintains his focus on the overarching theme of the advancement of the Gospel, whether through his life or potential martyrdom.

On the other hand, in Phil 2:6–11, *pathos* is evoked through Christ’s κένωσις and subsequent exaltation. Its emotional impact lies in the contrast between glory and the willing descent. The Philippians are invited not to personal suffering, as Paul describes himself in Phil 1:12–26, but to a profound adoration ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πάντων γόνων κάμψη (Phil 2:10).

Ethos is derived from the authority of Christ, who willingly humbled himself. Christ’s exemplum becomes a paradigm for selflessness and obedience, enhancing the ethos of the passage and urging the Philippian community to adopt a Christ-centered approach.

As for *logos*, Phil 2:6–11 presents a logical progression based on Christ’s obedience. The passage moves from Christ’s incarnation⁴⁹ to his humility, obedience, exaltation, and the resulting universal acknowledgement of his lordship. This rhetorical progression not only highlights the theological significance of Christ’s redemption, but also the cosmic impact of his κένωσις and obedience.

In conclusion, the rhetorical analysis of Phil 1:12–26 and 2:6–11 reveals Paul’s intentional use of *pathos*, *ethos*, and *logos*. These rhetorical devices not only enhance the persuasiveness of the passages but also contribute to the broader theme of joy in adversity throughout his letter to the Philippians.

5. Conclusions

Paul’s ability to convey his identity amidst adversity reveals his unwavering commitment to his mission. As we have already seen, several factors contribute to how Paul achieves his goal while incarcerated. He consistently emphasizes that the purpose of his life is Christocentric, shown by his deeds. This focus allows him to transcend the limitations of his physical circumstances and maintain a strong purpose.

Moreover, despite the challenges, he communicated a sense of joy that stems from his relationship with Christ. This deep-rooted relationship with Christ led him to maintain strong relational connections with the Philippians, in expressing his gratitude for their support and partnership in the Gospel. This continuous connection with the Philippians was crucial in shaping how he perceived himself and how he wanted to be perceived.

Paul consistently engaged himself in theological reflections, even in prison. This emphasis on theological depth reflects his intellectual and spiritual identity. Therefore, Paul’s imprisonment was not a hindrance; it is instead interpreted positively as an opportunity for the Gospel to advance⁵⁰. This optimistic perspective not only shaped his identity, but also communicated his trust in God’s plan. In appealing to his exemplum, Paul reinforced his identity as someone who practiced what he preached, even in challenging circumstances. Notwithstanding these strategies, Paul acknowledged his vulnerability, which made him relatable to the Philippians.

Despite his status as a convict in a Roman colony, Paul strategically reframes his imprisonment not as a hindrance but as an opportunity for the proclamation (κήρυγμα) of Christ. By boasting in the face of adversity, Paul challenges conventional notions of power and success, asserting the superiority of spiritual values over worldly ones. This strategic use of boasting serves to underscore Paul’s faithfulness to Christ and the transformative power of the Gospel, inspiring courage and confidence in his audience while highlighting the paradoxical nature of Christian virtue amid persecution.

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Notes

- 1 Self-presentation in the Greco-Roman world refers to the way individuals presented themselves to society, emphasizing certain qualities or characteristics to shape public perception. In ancient Greece and Rome, social standing and reputation were of utmost importance, and individuals often engaged in conscious efforts to project a particular image (cf. [Gavrielatos 2017](#), pp. viii, 1–16). A classical example of ancient self-presentation is the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (The Achievements of the Divine Augustus). The *Res Gestae* is especially significant because it gives an insight into the image Augustus portrayed to the Roman people (cf. [Brunt and Moore 1983](#), 7th ed.). Seneca repeatedly presents Socrates as a role model and thus becomes a role model himself (cf. [Seneca 1917](#), *Ep. Mor.*, 20, 34.35).
- 2 Although many studies discuss how Paul presents himself, only few analyze his self-presentation as a means of persuasion, such as [Elliot \(2004\)](#); [Kraftchick \(2008\)](#). These book sections explicitly declare their goal to investigate how Paul presents himself, yet they do not delve into the persuasive influence of his self-presentation. However, there are noteworthy studies that specifically concentrate on Paul's self-presentation as a persuasive tool. These studies can be seen as valuable contributions to this article: [Holloway \(2001\)](#) and [Vos \(2002\)](#).
- 3 Categories of self-presentation in the Greco-Roman world included origin (family, homeland, city, nation), childhood, formation, education, rhetorical skills (the ability to speak persuasively and eloquently was highly valued—public figures, such as politicians and philosophers, mastered their rhetorical skills to influence and win over the public), ethical values (emphasis was placed on moral and ethical virtues—philosophers like Plato and Aristotle discussed the importance of virtues such as wisdom, courage, and justice, and individuals sought to embody these qualities to enhance their reputation), public service and achievements (such as holding political office or contributing to the community as a way to enhance one's reputation—achievements in various fields, such as philosophy, literature, or military prowess, were also publically recognized). For more details, cf. ([Pernot 1993](#)).
- 4 An exemplum in the Greco-Roman world refers to a specific example or model that is used to illustrate a moral or philosophical point. Exempla were often employed in various forms of literature, speeches, and teachings to provide concrete instances that exemplified virtues, vices, or ethical principles. For example, Aesop, a legendary figure from ancient Greece, is famous for his collection of fables. These short stories often feature animals as characters and convey moral lessons. For example, the fable of "The Tortoise and the Hare" serves as an exemplum to teach the virtue of perseverance and the folly of overconfidence (cf. [Jones and Rackham 1912](#)). Another example is Epictetus' exempla to illustrate principles of virtue and self-discipline. For instance, he uses the example of a runner in a race to convey the idea that individuals should focus on their own efforts and actions rather than external circumstances (cf. [Epictetus 1925](#)).
- 5 For example, in *Letters to Atticus* (I, 15), Cicero references the actions of the Roman general Lucius Lucullus to illustrate the importance of prudent decision making in military affairs. Another example is Letter XXII, in which the Consul Quintus Metellus Macedonius is given as an exemplum of a virtuous and capable leader.
- 6 ([Bird and Gupta 2020](#), pp. 48–58).
- 7 ([Cassidy 2001](#)).
- 8 Paul's letters exhibit a variety of persuasive techniques, drawing on rhetorical strategies common in the Greco-Roman world. Some of the techniques found in Paul's letters are as follows: *Ethos* (Paul's credibility by identifying himself as an apostle chosen by Christ), *Logos* (Paul frequently uses OT Scriptures to support his arguments and demonstrate the logical consistency of his teachings), and *Pathos* (Paul employs emotionally charged language to evoke a range of feelings, including joy, sorrow, gratitude, and love). Paul often includes personal narratives and anecdotes to elicit empathy and emotional engagement. These stories help to humanize the message and make it relatable to the experiences of the audience. In addition to *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*, Paul frequently uses imperatives and direct commands to reinforce his role as an apostle urging his audience to adhere to his message. Paul also repeats key themes, phrases, or ideas throughout his letters to reinforce their importance. Repetition serves as a rhetorical device to emphasize and drive home some specific points without ignoring Paul's frequent use of parallelism and antithesis which make his arguments more persuasive.
- 9 Aristotle, in *Ars Rhetorica*, II, 1,5, discusses the importance of *pathos* in persuasion, emphasizing the power of emotion to sway an audience. He explores the various emotions that can be invoked in an audience, including joy, which aligns with Paul's use of *pathos* in Phil 1:12–26.
- 10 ([Schellenberg 2021](#), pp. 1–87).
- 11 Quintilian, in *Institutio Oratoria*, II, 15, 1–2, discusses the importance of *ethos* in oration, emphasizing the need for speakers to demonstrate integrity and sincerity to gain the trust of their audience. Quintilian explores the qualities that contribute to a speaker's *ethos*, such as honesty and moral character. Monographs like "Ethos and Narrative Interpretation: The Negotiation of Values in Paul's Letter to the Philippians" by Stephen E. Fowl offer in-depth analyses of the ethical dimensions of Paul's rhetoric in Philippians. [Fowl \(2005\)](#) examines how Paul's *ethos* as a faithful servant of Christ shapes his persuasive appeal to the Philippians, fostering trust and credibility.
- 12 ([Sisson 2005](#)).

- 13 Aristotle, in *Ars Rhetorica*, I, 2,1, discusses the importance of *logos* in persuasive discourse, emphasizing the need for speakers to present logical arguments supported by evidence. Aristotle outlines the three modes of persuasion, including *logos*, which relies on reasoning and proof.
- 14 The passive use of the verb κείμαι indicates that the subject is God and not Paul himself.
- 15 In the Greco-Roman world, social norms and attitudes towards suffering were influenced by various factors, including philosophical traditions, religious beliefs, and cultural practices, such as the following: stoicism, which emphasizes the acceptance of one's fate, endurance of suffering, and self-control despite external suffering; and epicureanism, which seeks to minimize suffering by pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain (cf. Gleason 1995). On the contrary, the function of suffering in Philippians encompasses other meanings for persecution, imprisonment, and personal struggles. Paul provides a unique perspective on suffering, urging the Philippians to view it through a lens of faith. As he writes in Phil 1:29, "ὅτι ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὐ μόνον τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεῦν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν". This acknowledgment of suffering as a granted privilege challenges conventional views and sets the stage for a deeper understanding of its function. Rather than being a mere consequence of a fallen world, suffering in Philippians is presented as an integral part of the Christian journey, intimately connected to one's identification with Christ. The reality of sharing Christ's sufferings echoes throughout Philippians, reinforcing the idea that suffering is not out of purpose, but rather a transformative process. Moreover, contrary to worldly expectations, Philippians introduces the paradoxical notion of joy amid suffering. For more details on the subject, cf. (Bloomquist 1992).
- 16 The *topoi* of deeds in Greek rhetoric, as applied to Phil 1:12–26, highlight Paul's use of his past actions and experiences to bolster his credibility and authority as a messenger of the Gospel, despite his imprisonment. This rhetorical strategy is evident throughout the passage, in which Paul reflects on his circumstances and emphasizes the positive outcomes of his suffering for the sake of Christ. In ancient rhetorical handbooks, such as Aristotle's "Rhetoric", the *topos* of deeds is recognized as a persuasive device whereby speakers appeal to their past actions or achievements to establish credibility and persuade their audience. Aristotle discusses the importance of *ethos*, or the speaker's character and credibility, in effective persuasion, and the *topos* of deeds serves as a means of enhancing *ethos* by demonstrating the speaker's virtue and integrity through their actions. Contemporary biblical scholars, such as Gordon D. Fee in his commentary on the Philippians, acknowledge Paul's use of the *topos* of deeds in Phil 1:12–26. Fee highlights how Paul's recounting of his past actions and experiences serves to strengthen his credibility and authority as an apostle of Christ, despite his imprisonment. Fee emphasizes the thematic significance of Paul's suffering for the sake of the Gospel, arguing that Paul's willingness to endure hardship for the sake of Christ serves as a powerful example for believers. Moreover, Richard N. Longenecker, in his commentary on Philippians, notes the rhetorical skill with which Paul employs the *topos* of deeds in Phil 1:12–26. Longenecker highlights Paul's strategic use of his imprisonment as an opportunity to advance the Gospel's message, thereby demonstrating his commitment to Christ and his dedication to the mission of spreading the good news. Longenecker argues that Paul's willingness to endure suffering for the sake of the Gospel enhances his credibility and authority as an apostle.
- 17 Paul's "positive imprisonment in the presence of the Philippians is extremely relevant for Paul's argument in 1.12–14. His prior contact with the Philippians which showed that a *bona fide* apostle could be imprisoned, forms the basis for his justification of his current imprisonment" (Marshall 1993, 2nd ed.).
- 18 The table following the explanation is taken from Aletti (2005, p. 221), and translated from the original French by the author.
- 19 Cf., the monograph in Chaaya (2018, pp. 53–54).
- 20 For an explicit study on Phil 3:1–4:1, see the monograph of Bianchini (2006).
- 21 Paul's references to κύριος in Philippians are special and unique. The name is relevant to Christ (cf., Phil 2:11, 19; 3:8, 20) and Paul confesses that "Jesus Christ is Lord" in Phil 2,11 is the cornerstone of his proclamation of faith.
- 22 Paul's characteristic name for Jesus Christ is κύριος. The clearest evidence that Paul in his letter applied the name κύριος to Christ is in the hymn of Phil 2:6–11.
- 23 At the beginning of the letter, Paul is associated with Paul as being both δοῦλοι Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. Moreover, the adjective ἰσόψυχον applied to Timothy is a *hapax* in the New Testament and is analogous to that of the σύμψυχοι in Phil 2:2 (cf. Aletti 2005, p. 199).
- 24 Each of the three terms with which Paul describes Epaphroditus (ἀδελφός, συνεργός, συστρατιώτης) ties him to Paul's mission. ἀδελφός is one of Paul's favorite terms (it occurs 113 times in the Pauline homologoumena) for depicting those who accept his proclamation: the Gospel has created new bonds in Christ through faith. Epaphroditus is also described as συνεργός, which frequently designates a member of a group that assists Paul in ministering the Church. Furthermore, the term occurs again in 4:3, referring to Euodia, Syntyche, and Clement, and may designate the specific office that Paul entrusts with his charge to bring the good news of Christ to the nations. Therefore by mentioning that Epaphroditus is a συνεργός, Paul marks him as one he has commissioned to them. The Philippians sent to Paul an emissary in Epaphroditus; now Paul returns him to them as a συνεργός. Finally, Paul describes Epaphroditus as his συστρατιώτης. The meaning of this term is difficult to determine. Outside Phil 2:25, it only occurs in Phlm 2. However, according to the direct context, it may be read in v. 27 that Epaphroditus' sickness was "to the point of death".
- 25 The exempla of Timothy and Epaphroditus serve various functions within the broader context of Paul's message. Timothy's exemplum underlines unity and concern for others, and Epaphroditus' exemplum underlines sacrificial service.

- 26 In his commentary on Philippians, Gordon Fee remarks that Paul could pass easily from Phil 1:14 to v.18b, based on the fact that Paul's imprisonment permitted the progress of the Gospel in which Paul rejoices (cf. [Fee 1995](#), p. 124). It is true that the Gospel advanced notwithstanding Paul's imprisonment, but Phil 1:15–17 are essential in Paul's argument since "en redoublant d'audace, la plupart des frères se sont risqués à annoncer la Parole, voilà Pourquoi Paul a parlé de progrès dans l'Évangile" ([Aletti 2005](#), p. 78).
- 27 Jennings remarks that "Paul hardly refers here to his personal needs, but instead discusses the status of the shared Gospel mission" between him and the Philippians ([Jennings 2018](#), p. 45). Likewise, Blois observes that "one striking element of Paul's presentation of his own circumstances, however, is that he speaks less about what has happened to himself and more about what has happened to the spread of the gospel, presumably with the intention of directing the Philippians' gaze *away from* the negative circumstances of his imprisonment and *toward* the progress of the gospel (cf., 1:12)" ([Blois 2020](#), p. 114).
- 28 ([Aletti 2005](#), p. 79).
- 29 Bouttier describes these three references by saying, "what unites [Paul] with the Philippians unites him with Christ. Paul's only "boasting" in *Christo* is expressed in the fact that henceforth, and equally, the members of Christ have become with him what he has become for the others. Consequently, *this mutual "glorification"* does not arise from any mutual complacency. . . The glory that they receive from each other comes not from any success, but from Christ alone, from Christ in them as in him" ([Bouttier 1966](#), pp. 62–63, as cited by [Blois 2020](#), p. 116).
- 30 ([Aletti 2005](#), p. 96).
- 31 ([Blois 2020](#), p. 127).
- 32 ([Aletti 2005](#), p. 96).
- 33 Some examples illustrate that boasting was not always viewed negatively but could serve as a means of asserting authority, inspiring confidence, and enhancing persuasive power when employed with moderation and sincerity. Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* acknowledges boasting as a rhetorical device that can be used effectively. He discusses the concept of μεγαλοπρεπεία, or magnificence, which involves boasting about one's achievements in a dignified manner. Aristotle suggests that boasting, when done appropriately, can enhance the speaker's credibility and persuasive power (cf. [Aristotle 1926](#), Art Rhetorica II, 12, 8. Quintilian). He also recognizes the legitimate use of boasting in oration in *Institutio Oratoria*. He discusses how a speaker can employ boasting to establish authority and inspire confidence in the audience. Quintilian emphasizes the importance of moderation in boasting, cautioning against excessive pride or arrogance that could alienate the audience (cf. [Quintilian 2002](#), Institutio Oratoria IV, 2, 1–3).
- 34 ([Rogers 1982](#)).
- 35 This recurring theme, through which Socrates demonstrates qualities of detachment throughout the dialogue of Plato is found in [Plato \(1966\)](#).
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 ([Fowler 1936](#)).
- 38 See also the enlightening article of [Smit \(2014\)](#).
- 39 Ἐν Χριστῷ (Phil 1:1; 1:13; 1:26; 2:1; 2:5; 3:3,14; 4:7, 19, 21), σύν Χριστῷ εἶναι (Phil 1:23).
- 40 Τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (Phil 1:5, 7, 12, 16, 27; 2:22; 4:3, 15).
- 41 Selflessness (Phil 1:22–24; 2:3–4, 6–7, 20, 21, 30).
- 42 ([Böttrich 2004](#)).
- 43 ([Nikki 2019](#)).
- 44 ([Ware 2005](#), pp. 221, 234).
- 45 Ἐμοί at the beginning of Phil 1:21 is emphatic. Its force contrasts with those who proclaim the Gospel with impure motives (1:15, 17). "Paul's contrast with them is not self-centered, but Christ-centered" ([Hendricksen 1962](#), p. 76).
- 46 "The apostle speaks several times in negative form of a "life in the flesh" (cf., 2 Cor 10:3; Gal 2:20; Phil 1:22, 24; Philem 16), by which he expresses a negative judgment on normal human existence. In contrast, while Paul of course lives ἐν σαρκί (in the flesh), he does not live κατὰ σάρκα (according to the flesh; cf., 2 Cor 10:3). Fleshly people are characterized by self-centeredness and self-satisfaction, relying on their own abilities, making their own knowledge the standard of what is reasonable and real. A life κατὰ σάρκα means a life without access to God, a life imprisoned in what is earthly and transient (cf., Rom. 7:14b). Here σάρξ is the summary expression for a life separated from and opposed to God. The real acting subject of life is sin, which results in death (Rom 7:5, "While we were living in the flesh [ἐν τῇ σαρκί], our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death" ([Schnelle 2009](#), p. 285).
- 47 "This introduces an allusion to Paul's discussion of the threat of judaizing tendencies in 3:2–10 (cf., 3:3, οἱ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), and this suggests that the instruction Paul envisages here will be focused upon this threat. By reasserting in 1:12–26 his role not only as a paradigm (1:13–14; 1:19–24), but also as a teacher (1:25–26), Paul lays the basis not only for his upcoming visit, but also for the direct exhortation which is to follow (1:27–4:9) in the letter, which must be a substitute for Paul's personal presence (1:27; 2:12) until his release and reunion with the Philippians (2:24). Thus, just as 1:12–18a are setting forth Paul's role as paradigm, preparing the way for the actual description of the example in 1:18b–26, so 1:18b–26 are setting forth

Paul's role as a teacher of the Philippians, preparing the way for his direct exhortation of them in 1:27–2:18 (Ware 2005, pp. 214–15).

48 Few studies have emphasized the persuasive aspect of Paul's presentation of his suffering. One notable monograph on the topic is that of Gregory Bloomquist, *The Function of Suffering in Philippians*, in which he examines the function of Paul's suffering epistemologically and rhetorically. Bloomquist argues that while Paul's suffering carries theological significance, it also contains a persuasive element. Bloomquist points out that Paul's suffering in the exordium serves as a *captatio benevolentiae*; which is a rhetorical technique to attempt to "endear them to oneself" (Bloomquist 1992, pp. 146, 193). Bloomquist suggests that Paul's consistent use of self-presentation aligns with the principles outlined in rhetorical handbooks which advise establishing a positive *ethos* with the addressee or community. Although Bloomquist correctly observes that Paul refrains from elaborating his suffering, he fails to highlight the contrast between Paul's approach and the guidance found in rhetorical handbooks (Bloomquist 1992, p. 148). For instance, ancient rhetoricians like Quintilian and Cicero often recommend presenting the specifics of one's suffering to sway the audience, citing examples such as Manius Aquilius, who revealed his scars to gain sympathy (Cicero 1942, *De or.* 2.195; Quintilian 2002, *Inst.* 2.15.7). Therefore, even though Paul typically uses his suffering in other letters to establish a positive connection with his addressees, he breaks away from this pattern in his letter to the Philippians. Paul purposefully leaves out specifics about his suffering in this letter to illustrate the idea that success is achievable despite adversity. While Bloomquist is accurate in noting Paul's tendency to present his suffering to foster community bonds, he appears to miss the significance of Paul's distinct approach to portraying suffering in his letter to the Philippians.

49 "Si les premiers Pères l'ont interprété du Christ incarné, si le vocable *morfh*, dénote coporéité et visibilité, si d'autre part le participe *υ'πα,rcwn* n'est jamais utilisé par Paul pour les énoncés concernant Dieu, cela signifie très probablement que *εὐμορφῆ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων* désigne la condition divine du Christ *incarné*—et non celle du préexistant. Non que le syntagme nie la préexistence: il n'en parle pas, car tel n'est pas son propos" (Aletti 2005, *Lettre aux Philippiens*, p. 154).

50 The scholarly debate surrounding why Paul does not provide more details about his imprisonment in Phil 1:12–26 is multifaceted and has generated various hypotheses and interpretations. This debate is situated within the broader context of Pauline studies, biblical exegesis, and historical inquiries into the life and writings of the apostle Paul. Understanding the historical context of Paul's imprisonment is crucial for interpreting his silence on the matter in Phil 1:12–26. Scholars such as F. F. Bruce and N. T. Wright argue that Paul's reticence regarding his imprisonment may stem from the fact that he was in Roman custody rather than in a typical prison setting. In this view, Paul's status as a Roman citizen afforded him certain privileges and protections, which may have influenced his approach to discussing his imprisonment (cf. Bruce 1977; Wright 2008). Other scholars suggest that Paul's silence on the details of his imprisonment in Phil 1:12–26 may be a deliberate rhetorical strategy aimed at emphasizing the positive outcomes of his situation rather than dwelling on the negative aspects (cf. Fee 1995). This interpretation aligns with Paul's broader rhetorical approach in his letters, in which he often focuses on the themes of joy, perseverance, and the advancement of the Gospel in the face of adversity. Another perspective posits that Paul's decision not to dwell on his imprisonment in Philippians 1:12–26 may be motivated by pastoral concerns rather than historical or rhetorical factors. Scholars such as John Stott suggest that Paul's primary aim in writing to the Philippians was to encourage and strengthen their faith, rather than to provide a detailed account of his personal circumstances (cf. Stott 1999). Some scholars, such as M. Silva, propose that Paul's silence on his imprisonment in Phil 1:12–26 may be due to editorial decisions made by the compiler or editor of the letter. According to this view, the letter to the Philippians may have been edited or redacted to focus on specific themes or theological concerns, leading to the omission of certain details about Paul's imprisonment. However, by engaging with various perspectives and analyzing the relevant biblical texts, one can gain a deeper understanding of Paul's intentions and the context in which he wrote his letter (cf. Silva 1992).

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