

Article

Understanding Paul as an Antitype of Job: The Joban Allusion in 2 Corinthians 12:1–10

Sanghwan Lee 

Independent Researcher, San Francisco, CA 94103, USA; sanghwan.a.lee@gmail.com

Abstract: A careful reading of 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 reveals that the passage shares several motifs with the Book of Job: (1) a supernatural adversary, (2) physical suffering, (3) an otherworldly place, (4) social adversity, (5) affluence, and (6) boasting. In light of an audience-critical perspective, this article proposes that the language and imagery in 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 contain a number of allusions that could direct its audience to juxtapose Paul with Job—a well-known righteous figure who demonstrated physical vulnerability but received public vindication from YHWH. According to this reading, the Joban allusion in the Corinthian passage functions as a rhetorical device that defends Paul’s apostolic authority against the super-apostles’ charge that his vulnerability evinces his lack of authority.

Keywords: 2 Corinthians 12:1–10; allusion; audience-critical approach; Job; Paul

1. Introduction

2 Corinthians 12:1–10 is one of the most difficult passages in 2 Corinthians because it contains multiple puzzling elements to interpret: the third heaven, Paradise, the messenger of Satan, the thorn in the flesh, and the boasting of Paul in his weakness. These elements in the Corinthian passage “have received wide attention as demonstrated by the enormous amount of studies debating on wide-ranging issues that never seem to exhaust the creative imagination of commentators” (Lim 2009, pp. 182–83). Even today, scholars have not reached a consensus about the passage, thereby yielding a very wide variety of interpretations.¹

However, I still think that there is an important but not yet fully discussed approach that could contribute to the ongoing discussion of the Corinthian passage. That is, the language and imagery in 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 contain a number of allusions that could draw the audience’s attention to the Book of Job (hereafter JOB).² As will be shown in this article, a careful reading of 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 reveals that there are similarities between JOB and the Corinthian passage. These similarities raise the possibility that the audience of Paul might hear allusions from JOB.³ Hence, the purpose of this article is to understand the Corinthian passage in light of JOB. Granted, neither the name “Job” appears nor does Paul cite JOB in 2 Corinthians 12:1–10. However, it is significant that 1 Corinthians 3:19 makes an explicit reference to JOB. Furthermore, Paul alludes to JOB throughout his letters. Robert Ewusie Moses (2014, p. 108) aptly remarks the following:

He [i.e., Paul] offers direct quotations from Job in Rom. 11:35 (Job 41:11) and 1 Cor. 3:19 (Job 5:12–13). 1 Corinthians also contains at least four allusions to Job: 1 Cor. 1:20 (Job 12:17); 1 Cor. 1:24 (Job 12:13); 1 Cor. 2:10 (Job 11:7); 1 Cor. 4:4 (Job 27:6).

Therefore, it is probable that some of the Corinthians would have been familiar with JOB.

The benefit of this approach is twofold: it coherently explains the function of every major element in 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 and it reveals how the passage functions in the larger context of 2 Corinthians.⁴



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In order to achieve this task, I first deal with one of the crucial themes in 2 Corinthians that runs through the book: the clash between Paul and the “super-apostles” (11:5; 12:11).⁵ This step is important because 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 is not isolated from its larger context. Next, I demonstrate that the Corinthian passage shares several motifs with JOB: (1) a supernatural adversary, (2) physical suffering, (3) an otherworldly place, (4) social adversity, (5) affluence, and (6) boasting. Then, I deal with the rhetorical effect that the Joban allusion in the Corinthian passage may have created in the minds of Paul’s audience: by identifying his physical vulnerability with that of Job, Paul defends his authority from the super-apostles’ charge that his bodily weakness evinced his lack of apostolic authority. Next, I expound on two notable differences between Job and Paul. First, whereas Job was not informed why he needed to suffer, Paul had the reason for his suffering revealed. Second, while Job was vindicated by God in a public setting, Paul did not receive a public vindication by God. I suggest that the first difference depicts Paul as having received a greater revelation than Job, whereas the second difference shows Paul’s eschatological hope for the day of the Lord, a day when Christ will appear and openly vindicate him in front of all who doubted his apostolic leadership. I conclude that this approach aligns well with the themes of Paul’s bodily weakness and his eschatological hope that appears in other parts of 2 Corinthians.

2. The Vulnerable Paul and the Vulnerable Christ

Paul was a man of scars, scars that were carved on his body due to various kinds of hardships (τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ; Gal 6:17).⁶ When taking his lengthiest “hardship catalog” in 2 Corinthians into account (11:23–33),⁷ one can reasonably view that some of his scars were the result of beatings, such as stoning, rodding, and whipping (vv. 24–25).⁸ A few scholars view that such somatic markings would have created a positive mental image of Paul for the Christian audience, projecting Paul as a glorious soldier (Martyn 1997, p. 568; Longenecker 1990, pp. 299–300; Burton 1921, pp. 360–61; Bowens 2017), virtuous sage (Fitzgerald 1988, p. 43; Fredrickson 2003, pp. 176–78. Cf. Bertschmann 2020, pp. 256–75), or trustworthy friend (Fredrickson 2003, pp. 176–78). According to this view, the scars on Paul’s body functioned as badges of honor and excellence. However, Jennifer Glancy (2004, pp. 107, 34) correctly questions this view, pointing out that not every scarred body tells an honorable story about the scar bearer.⁹ In fact, some bodies—bodies that received scars via dishonorable means (e.g., stoning, rodding, and whipping)—tell a shameful story. Glancy (2010, p. 30) articulates the following:

Ancient audiences distinguished between the mark of a sword slashing a courageous breast and the mark of a sword slashing a cowardly back. They distinguished even more sharply between the martial tracing left by a sword and the servile tracing left by a whip or a rod. The Corinthian Christians would have appreciated the nuances implicit in the markings of a man’s corpus: not every scarred body told an honorable story.

Therefore, depending on the types of scars and their location on a body, a scarred body tells a different story. Paul was not an exception to this cultural phenomenon. Paul himself revealed in 2 Corinthians 11:24–25 that he received thirty-nine lashes five times from the Jews. Thus, he might have carried multiple layers of crosshatched wounds on his back. Concerning the negative aspect of the whipping punishment, Glancy (2004, pp. 107, 34) remarks “In Roman *habitus*, whipping was the archetypal mark of dishonor”, and thus “[w]hippability was a token not of honor, excellence, or virility, but of dishonor, abasement, and servility”. That Paul bore the marks of dishonor on his body cannot be taken lightly in the honor–shame culture of the Greco-Roman world.¹⁰ Kar Yong Lim (2017, p. 104) explains the following:

Ultimately, the goal of punishment such as the use of the rod, more so if the whipping was done in public, was to shame the ones being punished where their dignity, or *dignitas*, was violated. Within an honor–shame culture, humiliation,

more so if it was inflicted publicly, caused more pain than the rod. As such, punishment or public shame could potentially be a tool to shape a person to a particular behavioral norm.

Therefore, Paul's contemporaneous audience might have interpreted the scars on Paul's back as "markings of a servile body, insignia of humiliation and submission" and as indicating a "lack of integrity" (Glancy 2010, pp. 24, 25–26; Bowens 2017, p. 65).¹¹

This unpleasant story that Paul's somatic markings told might have given the super-apostles an opportunity to challenge his position as their rightful leader. In fact, Paul's boast of beatings in the hardship catalog (11:23–33) reveals that his vulnerability was already "the subject of discussion and even derision in Corinth" (Glancy 2010, p. 47). The super-apostles strategically targeted Paul's noticeable weakness in appearance (10:1, 10), saying that his personal presence was ταπεινός ("base") and ἀσθενής ("powerless") and that his speech was ἐξουθενέω ("contemptible").¹² In doing so, they described Paul as a man of "dishonor and servility", questioning his "manhood and right to dominate others" (Harrill 2006, p. 54; cf. Glancy 2010, pp. 44, 46). According to Lars Aejmelaeus (2008, p. 120), "[I]n this context of a religious quarrel the humbleness of Paul meant absence of spiritual authority and strength in his whole being, not only in his speech". In short, the opponents of Paul criticized "the whole persona of Paul", and thus Paul must have felt that it was necessary to "correct the criticism of him in Corinth" (Aejmelaeus 2008, pp. 118, 20).

In response to this challenge, Paul accepted that his somatic markings demonstrated his vulnerability (11:24–25) but then paradoxically boasted of his weakness (ἀσθενεία). Paul's statement in 11:30 encapsulates this point: Εἰ καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ, τὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας μου καυχῆσομαι. Glancy (2010, p. 43) rightly asks "As Paul confronts a challenge to his apostolic authority in Corinth, he commits what may seem like a tactical error. He boasts of his beatings. Why does he highlight his corporal abasement during a crisis of Corinthian confidence in his apostolic authority?" The answer to this question lies in 10:1, where Paul states Αὐτὸς δὲ ἐγὼ Παῦλος παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς διὰ τῆς πραΰτητος καὶ ἐπιεικειᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Here, Paul makes a case that his somatic weakness (ταπεινός) parallels that of the meek (πραΰτης) and gentle (ἐπιεικεία) Christ (Glancy 2004, pp. 129–30). As James M. Scott (2011, p. 194; cf. Aejmelaeus 2008, p. 123) points out, Paul had already "presented himself as one who shares in the sufferings of Christ (1:5) and is himself the aroma of Christ (2:15), as one who speaks in Christ (2:17) and is compelled by the love of Christ (5:14)". Thus, in response to his opponents' charge, Paul once again identified himself with Christ, arguing that his vulnerability resembled that of Christ. Paul's logic is simple but powerful: "If my [Paul's] authority is questionable due to my whippability, then so was Christ's for he also exhibited whippability" (Scott 2011, p. 194). Through this Paul–Jesus parallel, Paul attempted to "repel the accusation that his own meekness and gentleness are signs of weakness or lack of power and authority, for otherwise the power and authority of Christ himself would be impugned" (Scott 2011, p. 194).

Then, in 13:4, Paul provides another reason for his boasting in weakness: καὶ γὰρ ἐσταυρώθη ἐξ ἀσθενείας, ἀλλὰ ζῇ ἐκ δυνάμεως θεοῦ. καὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς ἀσθενούμεεν ἐν αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ ζήσομεν σὺν αὐτῷ ἐκ δυνάμεως θεοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς. Here, Paul presents his weakness as a bridge that connects him to Christ. Glancy (2010, p. 46) correctly observes "In writing that Jesus was crucified 'out of weakness,' Paul acknowledges the socially conditioned meaning of a condemned, flagellated, and ultimately crucified body". She (Glancy 2004, p. 135) continues, stating "Jesus' vulnerability to corporal abuse and violation—being whipped, spat upon, and crucified—incarnates his degradation and dishonor. Paul is weak in—or, with—Jesus (13:4), bearing in his own body the marks of the events leading to Jesus' death (4:10)". In this regard, Paul "believes that the story of Jesus's death is legible in the scar tissue that has formed over welts and lacerations inflicted by rod and whip".

As seen, Paul accepted the super-apostles' charge that his body demonstrated weakness. However, he paradoxically boasted of his weakness because his scarred body not only resembled that of Christ but also united him with Christ. By strategically drawing the Paul–Jesus parallel, the vulnerable apostle appropriately responded to his opponents

and urged his Corinthian audience to “read the degrading and powerful story of the passion of Jesus” through the markings on his (i.e., Paul’s) body (Glancy 2010, p. 47).

Interestingly, a careful reading of 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 suggests that the audience at Corinth might have identified Paul with *another* well-known, vulnerable, but honorable figure: the Patriarch Job. Granted, unlike 1 Corinthians 3:19 and Romans 11:35, where Paul explicitly cites JOB,¹³ the Corinthian passage does not feature a Joban quotation. Moreover, the name “Job” does not appear in the passage. However, as will be shown in Section 4, 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 and JOB contain similar motifs: (1) a supernatural adversary, (2) physical suffering, (3) an otherworldly place, (4) social adversity, (5) affluence, and (6) boasting. This observation suggests that Paul’s audience would have heard in the passage clear allusions to JOB. In order to better grapple with this issue, we need to discuss *intertextual allusions* between JOB and the Corinthian passage.

3. Intertextual Allusion

To understand how relationships are created between texts, scholars use technical terms, such as quotation, allusion, and echo. In his groundbreaking work, Richard B. Hays (1989, p. 23) remarks “[q]uotation, allusion, and echo may be seen as points along a spectrum of intertextual reference, moving from the explicit to the subliminal” (See also Moyise 2000, pp. 18–19; Stamps 2006, pp. 9–37; Bird 2011, pp. 70–90). Ever since Hays’ publication, many scholars have adopted and modified these terms according to their own purposes. Unfortunately, this phenomenon has created unnecessary confusion by yielding slightly different definitions for the same term. Hence, it is necessary for us to clearly demarcate each term for our study. In this light, Christopher A. Beetham’s definitions of what constitutes a quotation, an allusion, and an echo is helpful (Beetham 2009, pp. 17, 20, 24).

Quotation: An intentional, explicit, verbatim or near verbatim citation of a former text of six or more words in length. A *formal* quotation is a quotation accompanied by an introductory marker, or *quotation formula*; an *informal* quotation lacks such a marker.

Allusion: A literary device intentionally employed by an author to point a reader back to a single identifiable source, of which one or more components must be remembered and brought forward into the new context in order for the alluding text to be understood fully. An allusion is less explicit than a *quotation*, but more explicit than an *echo*.

Echo: A subtle, literary mode of reference that is not intended for public recognition yet derives from a specific predecessor. An author’s wording may echo the precursor consciously or unconsciously and/or contextually or non-contextually.

The concept of each word will be employed in this article.

Since my interest lies in intertextual allusions between JOB and the Corinthian passage, it is necessary to establish criteria for establishing a genuine allusion. According to Beetham, there are three criteria for detecting and verifying the proposed allusion that Paul may have embedded in the text: (1) availability, (2) word agreement or rare concept similarity, and (3) an essential interpretive link (Beetham 2009, pp. 27–32). The first criterion indicates that the alleged source must be available to the author and historically precede the latter text. For the second criterion, both texts should have word agreement or a rare concept in common. The greater the number of word agreements or rare concepts shared by the two texts, the greater the likelihood that a genuine relationship exists. For the third criterion, the verified allusion provides a fuller meaning of the text, unlocking the riddle of the alluding text. When these criteria are met, one can safely propose that a genuine allusion exists between both texts.

For our current study, the first criterion (i.e., availability) is met since Paul incorporated materials from JOB elsewhere to explain his theological agenda (i.e., 1 Cor. 3:19; Phil. 1:19). It is beyond doubt that JOB, as a sacred text linked to his Jewish heritage, carried continuing importance when Paul composed 2 Corinthians. The existence of the *Testament*

of Job (1st c. BCE or 1st c. CE) further shows how popular JOB was at the time. What about the second and the third criteria? We now turn to this topic.

4. Concept Similarity: The Paul–Job Parallel

In this section, I will demonstrate five similar motifs between JOB and the Corinthian passage: (1) a supernatural adversary, (2) physical suffering, (3) an otherworldly place, (4) social adversity, (5) affluence, and (6) boasting.

4.1. The Motif of a Supernatural Adversary

JOB introduces the supernatural figure of the satan (שָׂטָן [MT]; ὁ διάβολος [LXX]).¹⁴ Many scholars agree that the designation “the satan” is not the personal name Satan but a role specification meaning “the accuser/adversary/doubter” (Habel 1985, p. 91). Although the exact identity and role of this figure is a matter of debate, the text depicts him as a supernatural being who operated under the full authority of YHWH in testing Job’s faithfulness (JOB 1:6) (Clines 1989, p. 20; Newsom 2009, p. 55). For example, YHWH officially gives limited freedom of action to the satan in afflicting Job: the satan is not allowed to lay a hand on Job in the first test (1:12) and then is not allowed to take Job’s life in the second test (2:6). As an otherworldly being, the Joban satan utilizes various destructive agencies—humans (i.e., Sabaeans, Chaldeans; 1:15, 17), natural elements (i.e., fire, wind; 1:16, 19), and disease (i.e., inflammation; 2:7)—in testing Job. In this respect, the satan in JOB is a supernatural figure who can “only act with God’s permission and only within the boundaries of God’s command” (Wright 2022, p. 21).

The motif of a supernatural adversary also appears in the Corinthian passage. The identification of the “angel of Satan” (ἄγγελος σατανᾶ) in 2 Corinthians 12:7 is a matter of debate.¹⁵ However, there are several factors that need to be taken into account in order to better identify the expression. First, although ἄγγελος can be translated as a “(human) messenger”, the dominant usage of the word in the New Testament refers to a supernatural being (See Kok 2015, p. 157). The Pauline corpus is not an exception to this phenomenon.¹⁶ Second, the singular phrase “angel of Satan” indicates that Paul is referring to a certain opponent, not a group of people (Bowens 2017, p. 150). Third, the appositional construction between ἄγγελος σατανᾶ and the σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί (“thorn in the flesh”) suggests that ἄγγελος σατανᾶ likely caused Paul physical harm.¹⁷ Fourth, 2 Corinthians 12:7 states that the “thorn in the flesh” was given to Paul in order that it might “attack” (κολαφίζῃ) him. The word κολαφίζω is used throughout the New Testament to speak of hitting someone with a hand or fist (Matt 26:67; Mark 14:65; 1 Pet 2:20) (See Louw and Nida 1996, pp. 222, 30). Fifth, the word “weakness” (ἀσθένεια) appears four times in 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 (12:5, 9 [x3]) in relation to the “thorn in the flesh”. Significantly, Paul uses the same word in 11:30 to refer to his physical vulnerability. Sixth, the genitive in ἄγγελος σατανᾶ can be taken as either possessive (“an angel that belongs to Satan”) or subjective (“an angel that is sent by Satan”), indicating that “there must be some sense in which the thorn was Satan’s own agent or deputy” (Harris 2005, p. 855). Seventh, “the thorn cannot refer to present opponents in Corinth since the thorn began to affect Paul fourteen years earlier and this dating precedes Paul’s founding of the Corinthian congregations” (Bowens 2017, p. 150). Eighth, and finally, since the expression σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί “is almost certainly a metaphor, the reference to the ‘angel of Satan’ ought to be taken literally” (Bazzana 2020, p. 165; cf. Abernathy 2001, p. 74; Bowens 2017, pp. 154–56). Taking these factors into account, one can suggest that ἄγγελος σατανᾶ refers to an otherworldly being who directly or indirectly inflicted physical attacks upon Paul (Schlatter 1934, pp. 666–67; Bowens 2017, pp. 149, 90–94.).

Some scholars who accept this line of reasoning go even further, identifying the “angel of Satan” in association with the angelic gatekeepers in the Jewish mystical tradition (Price 1980, pp. 36–37; Morray-Jones 1993, pp. 177–217 [Part 1: The Jewish Sources]; pp. 256–92 [Part 2: Paul’s Heavenly Ascent and Its Significance]; Williams 2009, pp. 105–9; Gooder 2006, pp. 195–203). Although this is a fascinating topic that merits discussion, the view

that ἄγγελος σατανᾶ is an otherworldly figure who caused Paul physical afflictions is a viable option for the purpose of the present study.¹⁸

4.2. The Motif of Physical Suffering

Even a surface reading of JOB reveals that the motif of suffering abounds in the book. The protagonist experiences multiple dimensions of suffering due to the loss of his family, servants, goods, health, and social status.¹⁹ However, the book particularly emphasizes Job's physical pain. For example, several somatic expressions—"skin for skin" (δέρμα ὑπὲρ δέρματος [2:4]; עור בעד עור [MT]), "bone" (τῶν ὀστέων [v. 5]; עצם [MT]), and "flesh" (τῶν σαρκῶν; בשר [MT])—that appear in the second divine council scene indicate that the satan specifically targeted Job's body.²⁰ A subsequent narrative (v. 7) shows that the satan struck (ἐπαίσειν; נכה [MT]) the entire body of Job (ἀπὸ ποδῶν ἕως κεφαλῆς; עד מכה רגלו עד קדקדו [MT]) with sores (ἐλκει; שחין [MT]). As a result, Job took a piece of broken pottery in order to scrape (ξύει; גרד [MT]) himself. Although the scratching action could be understood as a sign of mourning, viewing it as a counterirritant better aligns with the context. Whatever the case may have been, the smiting and scratching actions together seemed to leave severe visible markings on Job's body—even Job's friends were not able to recognize his appearance (JOB 2:12) (Pope 2008, p. 24; Seow 2013, p. 307; Wilson 2007, pp. 33–34). The Joban prologue "ends instead in a protracted seven days and seven nights of silence. No one can speak a word it seems, not Job, not the friends, and not God, for they saw that [Job's] suffering was very great" (JOB 2:13) (Balentine 2013, p. 46; cf. Kelley 1971, p. 480). The middle of the book (7:1–5; 15–16) further depicts Job as undergoing excruciating bodily pain. Hence, no scholar would deny that one of the main themes of JOB is physical suffering.²¹

The motif of suffering is a dominant theme in 2 Corinthians as well.²² The root of the word πάθημα appears four times in the epistolary thanksgiving section in verbal and nominal forms (1:5, 6 [2x], 7), indicating that suffering is one of the crucial motifs in the letter. As expected, the suffering motif is subsequently expanded as the letter unfolds (2:4, 14–16; 4:7–12, 17; 6:1–11; 7:5; 8:2; 11:23–29; 12:7–10). Lim (2009, p. 1; cf. Schreiner 2006, pp. 88–89, 94–99) correctly observes "Throughout this letter, one theme that frequently emerges with greater intensity and detailed description compared to his other letters is the description of his apostolic suffering". It would not be an exaggeration to view that the suffering motif functions as the unifying theme that holds the entire message of the letter together.

Recall that according to 2 Corinthians 12:7, the "thorn in the flesh", which is at apposition to the "angel of Satan", struck (κολαφίζη) Paul, causing him bodily pain. Here, we can observe another similarity between the Joban satan and ἄγγελος σατανᾶ: just as the Joban satan struck (ἐπαίσειν) Job's body (ἀπὸ ποδῶν ἕως κεφαλῆς), the Pauline Satan also struck (κολαφίζη) Paul's body (τῇ σαρκί). Thus, we can reasonably suggest that the Joban satan and the Pauline Satan function similarly in that they caused the respective protagonist's physical suffering.

4.3. The Motif of an Otherworldly Place

Many scholars view the gathering of YHWH, ὁ διάβολος (the Satan; MT: השטן), and οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ (the angels of God; MT: בני האלהים) in JOB 1:6–12 and 2:1–7 as heavenly council scenes (White 2014, pp. 23–24, 65–79; Kelly 2017, p. 9; Seow 2013, pp. 105, 291; Heiser 2008, p. 114; Driver and Gray 1921, p. 134; Alden 1993, pp. 30–31, 45; Yeatts 2003, p. 102; Smick 2010, p. 714). In her investigation of the divine councils that appear throughout the Hebrew Bible, Ellen White (2014, p. 22) establishes five criteria for what constitutes a Yahwistic council: (C1) multiple divine beings are present; (C2) a judgment regarding the fate of a group or an individual occurs; (C3) YHWH is depicted as the leader of the gathering; (C4) the scene is usually set in a sacred space; and (C5) a discussion between the gathered members can be observed. Based on these criteria, White identifies JOB 1:6–12 and 2:1–7 as Yahwistic divine council scenes in that those scenes contain (C1) YHWH,

ὁ διάβολος, and οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ;²³ (C2) the fate of Job, his family, and his servants; (C3) YHWH as the leader; (C4) the heavenly court; and (C5) dialogue between YHWH and ὁ διάβολος (White 2014, pp. 23–24, 65–79). Although the prologue of JOB does not specifically reveal the exact location of the divine gathering, based on these factors, it is most likely that the meeting took place in an otherworldly place, such as heaven (cf. Zech 3:1).

2 Corinthians 12:1–10 also contains the motif of an otherworldly place. Paul claims in 12:2–4 that he was snatched unto the third heaven (ἀρπαγέντα ... ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ) and into Paradise (εἰς τὸν παράδεισον). Here, Paul describes the otherworldly journey in the third person, indicating that he is boasting about another person. However, this experience is likely his own because “the reference to the abundance of revelations in 12:7 suggests that Paul has himself in mind, or perhaps even his ‘apocalyptic persona,’ or heavenly alter ego, who experiences such awesome things” (Rowland and Morray-Jones 2009, pp. 138–39) (Wallace 2011, p. 4; Harris 2005, p. 835; Barrett 1973, pp. 307–8; Matera 2003, pp. 279–80). According to this understanding, Paul’s use of the third-person perspective can be understood as a rhetorical ploy, intentionally distancing himself from boasting based on an extraordinary event (Thrall 2000, p. 782).

Scholars debate which cosmology Paul was working with when composing the passage of our interest: a three- or seven-story cosmology. Based on the assumption that Paul held to a seven-story cosmology, some suggest that Paul first went to the third heaven and then moved to Paradise in the seventh (Rowland 1982, pp. 380–82; Tabor 1986, pp. 115–20). However, Rowland and Morray-Jones (2009, p. 174) rightly reject this view, pointing out that such a two-stage ascent is not attested in the apocalyptic and mystical literature. Paula Gooder (2006, pp. 175–89), a proponent of the seven-story cosmology position, offers a slightly modified view: Paul went to the third of seven heavens and then moved to Paradise located in the third heaven. According to this view, Paul did not ascend to the highest heaven, and thus it was a “failed journey” to the seventh heaven.²⁴ Although this view aligns with the larger context (i.e., Paul’s boasting of things that show his weakness), the immediate context seems to go against this interpretation (Lincoln 1981, p. 79; Wallace 2011, p. 18; Bowens 2017, p. 138). In verse 7, Paul claims that the ascent to the third heaven and Paradise was an exceptional revelation, and thus it would be worthy of a boast. Yet, he goes on to explain why he refrained from boasting. Based on these data, Wallace (2011, p. 18) argues that the aborted ascent theory fails to explain the reason that “Paul interrupted the account to explain why he will not boast of the initial ascent”. In a similar vein, Rowland and Morray-Jones (2009, p. 390) note “[I]t seems most unlikely that Paul would have based his claim to apostolic authority on an ascent merely to the third of seven heavens, since this would hardly qualify as an ‘exceptional’ revelation (2 Cor 12:7a)”. They (Rowland and Morray-Jones 2009, p. 396; cf. Thrall 2000, pp. 356–57; Bowens 2017, pp. 140–41) conclude “Paul’s meaning in 2 Cor 12:2–3 is surely that he was first caught up ‘as far as’ (ἕως) the gate or threshold of the third heaven, and then subsequently ‘into’ (εἰς) the same heaven, i.e., paradise”.

If this interpretation holds, then the connection between JOB and 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 becomes stronger in that both stories contain the motif of an otherworldly place. However, even if one holds the “failed journey” theory, the mentioned connection can still be maintained due to the otherworldly nature of the third heaven and Paradise. Whatever the case may have been, the Corinthian passage and JOB contain the motif of an otherworldly place. Of course, I am aware that unlike Paul, who was snatched into the third heaven, Job never experienced a heavenly ascent. Nevertheless, it is important to note that an otherworldly place is a motif found in both texts.

4.4. The Motif of Social Adversity

In her study, Katherine E. Southwood focuses on the connection between Job’s body and its impact on his social status. In so doing, she observes that a key feature of JOB is “the persistent focus on the protagonist’s body in pain and how this changes the social dynamic between Job and his friends” (Southwood 2020, p. 1). For example, she focuses

on Job 19:13–22, examining how Job’s physical vulnerability was explicitly connected to the breakdown of his social world. As Southwood (2020, p. 149) observes, this passage contains “a prolonged description of how Job’s social circumstances have changed, focusing especially on his body and the types of reactions it elicits even among his family and most intimate friends”. Commenting on this passage, she (Southwood 2020, p. 151) further articulates the following:

The servant is the powerful one who can choose to help or ignore the master who explicitly begs for help. The maidservants don’t see a master, but a foreigner in Job. The resident stranger in Job’s house does not recognize that Job is the host. Here is a figure that has truly lost all social status and recognition in society. However, what is particularly tragic about the speech is the depiction of the loss of affection and acknowledgement from those who one might have expected to be closest to Job: his wife, his siblings, his intimate friends.

As seen, JOB demonstrates that the protagonist’s physical vulnerability was tightly bound up to a breakdown of his social world.

Significantly, such was also the case with Paul. As Section 2 of this article demonstrated, Paul’s body was tightly bound to his social circumstances. The super-apostles strategically targeted Paul’s noticeable weakness in appearance (10:1, 10), saying that his personal presence was “base” (ταπεινός) and “powerless” (ἀσθενής) and that his speech was “contemptible” (ἐξουθενέω). In doing so, they charged that Paul’s vulnerability evinced his lack of authority. Significantly, Paul’s remark in 2 Corinthians 12:10 further demonstrates that his physical vulnerability had a negative impact on his social status: “I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with troubles, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ” (NET).

4.5. The Motif of Affluence

JOB introduces its protagonist as an extremely wealthy individual who lives in the land of Uz. JOB 1:1 states “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. And that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil”. Driver and Gray (1921, p. 5) aver “The recurrence of the numbers seven, three (in sum, ten), and of five and five (again, in sum, ten), symbolize the perfection of Job’s wealth”. In fact, the author of JOB depicted the protagonist as ἦν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος εὐγενὴς τῶν ἀφ’ ἡλίου ἀνατολῶν (v. 3 [LXX]).²⁵ Although the greatness of Job can be understood in terms of material wealth (Pope 2008, p. 7), some suggest that it also includes wisdom because Easterners “were noted for their great wisdom treasured up in proverbs, songs and traditions” (Carter 1968, p. 26; cf. Seow 2013, p. 268; Smick 2010, p. 712; Pope 2008, p. 7). If so, then the author “apparently conveys a subtle hint of the superior wisdom of Job” (Carter 1968, p. 26). According to this reading, the nature of Job’s affluence encompasses either quantity (the richest person) or quality (the wisest person)—or both.

Interestingly, Paul was the greatest man in the Christian community in terms of the revelations that he received from Christ (καὶ τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων; 2 Cor 12:7). As James Buchanan Wallace (2011, p. 266) points out, the word ὑπερβολή “could refer either to the superiority of the revelations or the abundant number of revelations, and either translation is feasible”. The former case accents the quality of revelations, whereas the latter case emphasizes the quantity of revelations (Baird 1985, p. 653. Cf. 2 Cor 12:14; 13:1–2). Although many scholars opt for the latter case (Wallace 2011, p. 266; Garland 1999, p. 518), one should be open to the possibility that ὑπερβολή encompasses both characteristics—quality and quantity—of revelations (Scott 2011, p. 227). Whatever the case may have been, it is clear from the context that the revelations that Paul received by Christ were significant.

4.6. The Motif of Boasting

In the prologue of JOB, two scenes of the heavenly council appear wherein a conversation between God and the satan takes place. In the first scene (JOB 1:6–12), YHWH boasts about his exemplary servant Job for being blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning

away from evil (v. 8). In the second scene (2:1–6), YHWH renews his boast about Job, repeating that Job is a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil (v. 3). Moreover, during these council meetings, YHWH calls Job “my servant” (τοῦ παιδός μου [LXX]; עבדִי [MT]) and depicts him as an exceptional man whose excellency outshines all on the earth (1:8; 2:3). C. L. Seow (2013, p. 275) helpfully remarks the following:

Individuals designated as servants of YHWH are typically (1) recipients of divine promise and blessings freely given, like the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and King David (e.g., Gen 24:14; 26:24; 2 Sam 7:5; 2 Kgs 19:34; 20:6; Ezek 28:25; 37:25), or (2) people who have been faithful to the tasks to which they have been called, as Moses (e.g., Num 12:7; Josh 1:2), Isaiah (Isa 20:3), and especially the anonymous Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah (e.g., Isa 42:1, 19; 44:1). Job belongs with these “servants of YHWH”.

Hence, JOB unmistakably portrays its protagonist as a righteous man *par excellence* of whom YHWH has many reasons to boast.

As discussed previously, 2 Corinthians also contains the motif of boasting: Paul boasts of things that exhibited his weakness because they not only resembled those of Christ but also united him with Christ. Lim’s lexical observation is instructive (Lim 2009, p. 162) in the following:

Καυχήσομαι appears 37 times in the NT with the highest concentration in the Corinthian correspondence (6 times in 1 Corinthians and 20 times in 2 Corinthians) particularly with 2 Cor. 10–13 (17 times). In this letter, the word καυχήσομαι appears 20 times. Two other boasting word groups, καύχημα and καύχησις, also have the highest concentration in 1 and 2 Corinthians.

Based on this observation, Lim concludes “On a lexical level, these statistics strongly suggest that the theme of boasting is dominant in 2 Corinthians, with its strongest expression found in chapters 10–12”.

The motif of boasting is especially prevalent in 2 Corinthians 12:1–10. Here, Paul mentions his extraordinary experience—his ascent to the third heaven and Paradise—but then says that he would rather choose to boast in his weakness: Ἡδιστα οὖν μᾶλλον καυχήσομαι ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις μου, ἵνα ἐπισκηνώσῃ ἐπ’ ἐμὲ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ Χριστοῦ (v. 9b). As Wallace (Wallace 2011, p. 278.) notes, the ἵνα in this sentence “can explicate only the main verb of the independent clause—καυχήσομαι”. According to this reading, Paul is boasting in weakness in order that Christ’s power may dwell in him. Here, Paul adds another benefit of his vulnerability: it hosts Christ’s power in his body. In this regard, according to Paul’s understanding, his vulnerability (1) resembled that of Christ (10:1), (2) united him with Christ (13:4), and (3) hosted the power of Christ in his body (12:9). Hence, for Paul, his weakness served as his reason for boasting in Christ. What is significant for our study is that, in both accounts (i.e., JOB and the Corinthians passage), a *third person* is the object of boasting. In 2 Cor 12:2–5, Paul boasts not in himself but in the unidentified seer, to whom Paul attributes the revelations. In JOB, YHWH boasts not in himself but in his exemplary Job.

4.7. Summary

In this section, I demonstrated that there are six similar motifs between JOB and 2 Corinthians 12:1–10. Namely, both texts contain the motifs of (1) a supernatural adversary, (2) physical suffering, (3) an otherworldly place, (4) social adversity, (5) affluence, and (6) boasting. One or two similar elements would be too little to argue for the presence of an allusion. However, six similarities make it likely that a genuine relationship exists between the two texts. This suggests that the second criterion for determining the existence of a genuine allusion—both texts should have word agreement or a rare concept in common—is also met. Thus, Paul’s audience would have heard in the passage a clear allusion to JOB: both protagonists were rich in what God had given them; both encountered

a supernatural adversary in the course of their lives; both were physically beaten by the adversary; and, as a result, both experienced social adversity.

If this approach is valid, what is the meaning of the text in light of the verified allusion? As mentioned, the third criterion for determining the existence of a genuine allusion is that the verified allusion should provide a fuller meaning of the text. In what follows, I will demonstrate that the Joban allusion in 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 provides a rationale for how the Corinthian passage might have been interpreted in the minds of Paul’s audience.

5. Essential Interpretive Link: The Vulnerable Job and the Vulnerable Paul

As mentioned previously, the super-apostles used Paul’s physical vulnerability, which was expressed by his somatic markings, as a tool to attack his authority as a legitimate leader. Since Paul’s contemporaneous Corinthian audience, who lived in the honor-shame culture of the Greco-Roman world, understood the scars on one’s back as insignia of humiliation and submission, Paul might have felt it was necessary to provide some explanations in order to defend his apostolic authority. In order to accomplish this task, he drew a parallel between himself and Christ, providing three reasons for boasting of his vulnerability: it (1) resembled that of Christ (10:1), (2) hosted the power of Christ in his body (12:9), and (3) united him with Christ (13:4).

The information gathered in this article suggests that in addition to this Paul–Jesus parallel, the audience might have perceived another parallel between Paul and another well-known, vulnerable, but honorable figure—the Patriarch Job (2 Cor 12:1–10). The larger context of 2 Corinthians seems to provide a rationale for how this additional parallel likely functioned in the minds of the audience: Paul attempted to identify Job’s *internal integrity* with his own, thereby subtly telegraphing to his audience that his vulnerability, which mirrors that of the righteous Job, should not be used as a tool to dismantle his apostolic authority. In order to support this proposal, I depict several salient points in JOB.

5.1. Job, the Prototype of Paul

Recall that Job was a man of calamities and scars, as was the case for Paul. However, JOB unmistakably reveals from the outset that its protagonist is a supremely righteous man in the eyes of YHWH. The narrator begins the book by praising how praiseworthy of a person Job is: “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. And that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil” (JOB 1:1). YHWH in the first divine council scene also boasts of Job’s integrity: “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and turns away from evil” (v. 8). Notice that YHWH’s statement mirrors the narrator’s description of Job, further depicting Job’s integrity. Then, YHWH in the second divine council scene makes another boast about Job’s faithfulness: “Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a pure and upright man, one who fears God and turns away from evil. And he still holds firmly to his integrity, so that you stirred me up to destroy him without reason” (2:3). Therefore, the readers know that the multiple calamities that the satan brought against Job in the prologue had nothing to do with Job’s wrongdoings. Consequently, the physical vulnerability of and resultant scars on Job’s body should not be understood as signs of his lack of authority.²⁶

Unfortunately, Job’s friends were not able to perceive what was going on in Job’s life. They misjudged him, attempting to connect his somatic vulnerability to his moral degradation. For example, Eliphaz questioned “Call to mind now: Who, being innocent, ever perished? And where were upright people ever destroyed? Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble reap the same” (4:7–8). Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu also doubted Job’s integrity, viewing that his calamities must have been related to Job’s possible sins of which he should repent. For Job’s friends, his suffering and somatic markings were the signs of God’s retribution against his wicked deeds (8:20; 11:14–15, 17; 34:11). Consequently, Job lost his social status and dignity.

Such an ironic phenomenon was inevitable because Job's integrity was only known to the heavenly council (i.e., YHWH, the sons of God, and the Satan) and the audience of the book but not to Job's friends. Naphtali Meshel (2015, p. 56) articulates this well.

Yhwh, the Satan, and the reader, of course, know that Job was meticulously blameless, and that his suffering is the result of a heavenly wager. They are thus privy to information unavailable to Job and his friends, who have not read the text and were not present in the divine councils of Chapters 1–2. As a result, throughout the dialogue Job's "friends" claim that if Job is suffering thus, it must be due to some action on his part. Job, however, knows (unlike the friends) that he has been righteous all along, and so denies his friends' allegations, repeatedly claiming: "It is nothing that I have done!"

However, the final chapter of JOB confirms that the protagonist was a righteous and faithful man before YHWH. In this chapter, YHWH vindicates Job, proclaiming that the friends had spoken wrongly and restoring his fortune and family to him. The final verse of JOB even says that the protagonist lived a long and full life and then died in peace (42:16). Hence, Job's righteousness and integrity were vindicated by YHWH in both the prologue and epilogue of the book.

Here, an interesting question arises: Did YHWH remove the scars from Job's body when restoring his circumstances? Since the text is silent about this issue, one can suppose that Job might have carried some of those scars for the rest of his life. If this was indeed the case, then the people in Job's social sphere would have read his scars as a mixed story—one that portrayed Job's vulnerability *and* integrity.

Such a dramatic story of Job might have allowed the audience in Corinth to draw a parallel between Job and Paul. As Section 2 of this article demonstrated, Paul was a man of scars, scars that were carved on his body due to various kinds of hardships. Since his body was tightly bound up to his social circumstances, the super-apostles strategically targeted Paul's noticeable weakness in appearance (10:1, 10). In doing so, they charged that Paul's vulnerability evinced his lack of authority. Paul accepted the super-apostles' charge; however, he argued that his scars also revealed another thing—his integrity. If so, then Paul's scars should not be used to question his apostolic authority because the well-known righteous figure—the Patriarch Job—also demonstrated physical vulnerability but was fully vindicated by YHWH.

5.2. More Than Just a Parallel

There is another important issue that needs to be dealt with: the *differences* between Job and Paul. Put differently, 2 Corinthians, including the passage of our interest, demonstrates stark differences between the protagonists, and two of them are particularly important for our study. First, whereas Job was not informed why he needed to suffer, Paul had the reason for his suffering revealed. Second, while Job was vindicated by God in a public setting, Paul did not receive a public vindication by God.

The first notable difference between Paul and Job is their attitude towards the physical sufferings that they faced. In JOB 3, the protagonist curses the day of his conception and his mother's womb, wishing to darken the day. He even seeks death. In sum, "Job curses his birthday to de-create his life from life to death or light to dark" (Hyun 2013, p. 214). Understandably, Job's negative attitude towards his suffering was due to his ignorance of the divine decree issued by the heavenly council. However, such was not the case with Paul. According to the Corinthian passage, the Lord specifically revealed the purpose and function of Paul's physical vulnerability to him: "My grace is enough for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9a). Interestingly, the Lord's response to Paul's request was presented as direct discourse. This indicates that Paul wanted his audience to think that he literally heard the decree from the Lord. Such a privilege was not given to Job in that YHWH never offered Job the reason or purpose of his suffering. Upon hearing the Lord's revelation concerning his weakness, Paul, who had implored the Lord "three times" that the thorn in his flesh might leave him (v. 8), changed his attitude.²⁷ He

began to boast most gladly about his weakness so that the power of Christ might reside in him (v. 9b). Such a difference between Job and Paul seems to indicate that Paul received a superior revelation to that of Job.

The second crucial difference between Paul and Job is that the event described in the final chapter of JOB—the divine vindication and restoration of the protagonist—is missing from the life of Paul. Put differently, God did not appear and then vindicate Paul in front of his accusers (i.e., the super-apostles and some of the Corinthian congregants influenced by them). This might have allowed the audience to see that the Job–Paul parallel functions as a rhetorical device that demonstrates Paul’s eschatological hope—a hope that, as was the case of Job, God would appear and then openly vindicate him in front of his accusers. 2 Corinthians 5:10 might shed some light on this issue. In this passage, Paul states τοὺς γὰρ πάντας ἡμᾶς φανερωθῆναι δεῖ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα κομίσῃται ἕκαστος τὰ διὰ τοῦ σώματος πρὸς ᾧ ἔπραξεν, εἴτε ἀγαθὸν εἴτε φαῦλον. There are a few things here that deserve our attention: (1) In declaring πάντας ἡμᾶς, Paul himself addresses the Corinthian congregation and presumably his opponents in that church. According to this reading, both the proponents and opponents of Paul were the subjects of Christ’s judgment. (2) The Greek word βῆμα refers to “a raised place or tribune for delivery of speeches in public assembly ... and hence the tribunal of a magistrate or judge” (Dunn 1988, p. 809). So, James D. G. Dunn (1988, p. 809) notes “[T]he βῆμα is in a public place underlines the *openness* of this judgment”. When taking the negative relationship between Paul and his opponents into account, we can understand this passage as Paul’s sending of an indirect message that one day Christ will vindicate Paul, whose body bears τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, in front of all people (Cf. Stettler 2017, p. 57).

Until God publicly vindicates Paul at the judgment seat of Christ, the vulnerable but authoritative apostle decided to be “content with weaknesses, with insults, with troubles, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ”, confessing, “whenever I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:10). Hence, the audience might have perceived that the Paul–Job parallel reflects the apostle’s hope for the Day of the Lord.

6. Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to demonstrate—in light of an audience-critical perspective—that the language and imagery in 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 contain a number of allusions that could draw its audience’s attention to Job. As demonstrated, the Corinthian passage shares six similar motifs with the Book of Job: (1) a supernatural adversary, (2) physical suffering, (3) an otherworldly place, (4) social adversity, (5) affluence, and (6) boasting. Based on these observations, I suggested that the Job–Paul parallel raises the possibility that the audience of Paul might hear allusions from JOB. According to this reading, the parallel functioned in the minds of the audience as a rhetorical device, identifying Paul’s somatic weakness with that of Job—an authoritative figure who also demonstrated physical vulnerability but received public vindication from YHWH—and thus defending Paul’s apostolic authority against the super-apostles’ charge that his vulnerability evinced his lack of authority. This approach also revealed that there are two differences between Paul and Job. First, whereas Job was not informed why he needed to suffer, Paul had the reason for his suffering revealed. Second, while Job was vindicated by God in a public setting, Paul did not receive a public vindication by God. According to my approach, the first difference indicates that Paul received a greater revelation than Job, whereas the second difference shows Paul’s eschatological hope for the Day of the Lord, a day when Christ will appear and openly vindicate Paul in front of all who doubted his leadership. This approach, I believe, aligns well with the themes of Paul’s bodily weakness and his eschatological hope emerging in other parts of 2 Corinthians.

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Notes

- ¹ The scholarship on these elements is too vast to cite here. Some of the notable works are as follows: Schlatter (1934, pp. 666–67); Price (1980, pp. 33–40); Baird (1985, pp. 651–62); Tabor (1986); Morray-Jones (1993, pp. 177–217 (Part 1: The Jewish Sources), 256–92 (Part 2: Paul’s Heavenly Ascent and Its Significance)); Thrall (2000); Abernathy (2001, pp. 69–79); Gooder (2006, pp. 175–89); Rowland and Morray-Jones (2009, pp. 137–41, 341–419); Wallace (2011); Glessner (2017, pp. 15–46); Bowens (2017).
- ² Some scholars have already attempted to understand 2 Cor 12:1–10 in light of JOB. However, they merely made simple connections between the two bodies of literature without developing their arguments further. See Thrall (2000, p. 808); Barrett (1973, p. 570); Klauck (1988, p. 94).
- ³ The methodology employed in this article is the audience-critical approach, focused on reading 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 as it might have been read and/or heard by the believers in the Corinthian church. This approach assumes that meaning is made both in the mind of a text’s author and in an audience’s (i.e., readers’ and/or hearers’) interaction with a text. Hence, rather than seeking what Paul might have intended to say in 2 Corinthians 12:1–10, I explore what Paul’s audience might have received the Corinthian passage as saying. For a general introduction to an audience-critical approach, see Suleiman (1980, pp. 3–45); Dinkler (2019, pp. 25–27). It has been proven that an audience-critical approach is properly understood as a hermeneutical technique, and a number of biblical scholars have applied this technique to the audiences of biblical literature. See Yamasaki (1998); Carter and Heil (1998); Heil (1999, 2005, 2010); Dodson (2009); Gilchrest (2013); Jeon (2020).
- ⁴ Concerning the unity of 2 Corinthians, Bowens (2017, p. 2, n. 6) notes, “The argumentative tone of 2 Corinthians 10–13 causes a number of commentators to view this section as distinct from the previous chapters. However, as the subsequent analysis will show, although Paul’s tenor takes on a harsher character in these final chapters, he repeatedly returns to themes in chapters 1–9. Consequently, much of what Paul says in 10–13 is illuminated by these previous chapters”. I concur with this view.
- ⁵ All English Bible quotations are from the New English Translation.
- ⁶ As Glancy (2010, p. 45) notes, the expression τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ (“the marks of Jesus”) is “widely taken to be a reference to the scars he acquired in the course of his missionary activity, particularly the tracings made by lashes, rods, and stones (Gal. 6:17; 2 Cor. 11:24–25)”. See also 1 Cor 4:9–13 and 2 Cor 6:4–10.
- ⁷ Buol (2018, p. 109) well summarizes, “Having marked the following speech as foolishness, he describes his qualification as a Jew (v. 22) and then as a slave of Christ (v. 23). As soon as he begins his qualification as Christ’s slave, the list of hardships also begins: abundant toils, imprisonments, beatings, being on the verge of death (v. 23). Among the beatings were 39 lashes ‘from the Jews’ on five occasions (that is, synagogue punishment), three beatings with a rod, and a stoning (vv. 24–25). Paul also lists hardships in the realm of nature: shipwrecks, being adrift at sea, lengthy journeys, and troublesome rivers (vv. 25–26)”.
- ⁸ 2 Cor 11:24–25 reads, Ὑπὸ Ἰουδαίων πεντάκις τεσσεράκοντα παρὰ μίαν ἔλαβον, τρις ἑρραβδίσθην, ἀπαξ ἐλιθάσθην.
- ⁹ For the ancient view on battle scars as glorious marks, see Plutarch, *Moralia* 331C; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratorio* 2.15.7; Livy 2.23.4; 45.39.16. However, it should be noted that Glancy (2004, p. 135) admits that “one could argue that martial imagery remains implicit in Paul’s recitation of hardship in 11:22–33, so that the list functions as an overview of adversities Paul has confronted on military campaigns for Christ” (italics mine).
- ¹⁰ For a discussion on honor-shame culture in the Greco-Roman world, see deSilva (2000, pp. 23–93).
- ¹¹ Glancy (2004, p. 115) notes, “Paul never labels his own marks battle scars, nor does he use the language of military engagement to describe his subjection to whip and rod”.
- ¹² Seifrid (2014, p. 376 n. 190) notes, “The adjective that he uses (ταπεινός) is more often associated with a lowly state than with a lowly mind”. See, e.g., 2 Cor. 7:6; 11:7; 12:21; Rom. 12:16. The verb ταπεινός and the substantive ταπεινότης are likewise primarily associated with being humiliated outwardly and a state of humiliation or lowliness. It is interesting to note that Paul’s appearance as weak becomes popularized in the later Acts of the Apostles. For example, *Acts of Paul and Thecla* describes Paul as “a man short in stature, with a bald head, bowed legs, in good condition, eyebrows that met, a fairly large nose, and full of grace. At times he seemed human, at other times he looked like an angel”. See Ehrman (2003, p. 114).
- ¹³ Paul cites Job 5:13 (5:15 [LXX]) in 1 Cor 3:19 and Job 41:11 in Rom 11:35.
- ¹⁴ For a detailed study of this topic, see Brown (2011, pp. 200–27).
- ¹⁵ For a useful summary of previous scholarship on this issue, see Martin (1986, pp. 410–23).
- ¹⁶ The undisputed Pauline epistles contain ἄγγελος in the following places: Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 4:9; 6:3; 11:10; 13:1; 2 Cor 11:14; 12:7; Gal 1:8; 3:19; 4:14. See Bowens (2017, pp. 151–52).
- ¹⁷ Here, I am taking the phrase τῇ σαρκί as a locative dative. See Wallace (2011, pp. 271, 73).
- ¹⁸ Bowens (2017, pp. 163–64) rejects the reading of the “angel of Satan” due to the lack of an exact parallelism. She avers, “Paul’s encounter with the angel of Satan is quite different than Job’s experience. Paul depicts this suprahuman encounter as a battle

and not as something given to him by God". However, if Paul attempted to make a subtle Paul-Job parallel, as this present article argues, then one should not expect to see an exact parallelism.

- 19 Regarding the relationship between the physical illness of Job and his loss of social status, see Southwood (2020, pp. 148–62).
- 20 Although it is a matter of debate as to precisely what these expressions mean, the context allows us to understand them in connection to Job's body. See Hyun (2013, p. 74).
- 21 One can assume that some of the scars must have permanently remained on Job's body even after healing.
- 22 For an excellent review of previous research on Pauline suffering, see Lim (2009, pp. 1–15).
- 23 Wright (2022, p. 21) suggests that האלילים in the book of Job can be viewed as "the Watchers, whose task it was to watch over the earth and guide all humanity in the growth of civilization" or "the minor deities (אלים) who are part of the heavenly divine council". See also Seow (2013, p. 105).
- 24 For a rebuttal of this view, see Wallace (2011, pp. 17–20).
- 25 MT: גדול מכל בני קדם ("the greatest man in the East").
- 26 Abigail Pelham (2012, p. 204) avers, "Without the prologue—if readers were, in fact, 'left to supply a proper beginning which would illuminate the subsequent dialogue'—we would likely read the book quite differently. We might not, for example, believe Job's claims of innocence".
- 27 The expression "three times" could mean "prayer on three different occasions" or "earnestness". See Gooder (2006, pp. 200–1). Whatever the case may be, it is clear from the context that Paul wants the source of pain to be removed.

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