

CHAPTER 3

Heralds and Partners: The Structure of Pauline Mission

A study of mission-commitment within the Pauline communities rightly begins with an investigation of Paul's missionary *self*-conception, that is, what he considered to be his own missionary duty. This will provide an important point of departure, and of comparison, for the analysis in the second half of the present chapter of the apostle's understanding of the mission duty of his converts.

1. Paul, the gospel and his colleagues

One activity emerges from the Pauline epistles as the central, and all-consuming, mission duty for Paul, that of 'preaching the gospel' (εὐαγγελίζομαι). For Paul, this is the 'default' missionary idea, as the following survey of the apostle's usage of the term makes clear. As shall also become apparent in Chapter Five, the notion of 'heralding the gospel' takes us behind Paul to a rich eschatological tradition within Judaism itself.

1.1. The frequency of εὐαγγελ- in Paul

While the language of 'gospel' is not exclusively Pauline it is distinctively Pauline. Eighty two of the New Testament's one hundred and thirty four instances of εὐαγγελ- are found in the Pauline corpus: 49 nouns and 19 verbs in the primary epistles; ten nouns and two verbs in the secondary, with the cognate noun εὐαγγελιστής appearing twice in the secondary epistles. This compares to just twenty eight occurrences in Luke-Acts (26 verbs and 2 nouns), the body of texts with the next most frequent use of the term. This is not to say that the term is distinctly Pauline, for it appears across the spectrum of New Testament literature – in Mark, Matthew, Hebrews, the Petrine epistles and Revelation. The root is absent from the Johanine material and from the epistle of James.

Of all the proclamation words found in the Pauline literature εὐαγγελ- is clearly the most important for the apostle, as a comparison with three other communication terms in the corpus reveals. Λαλέω/λαλιά appears 60 times, 54 in the primary epistles and 6 in the secondary. Διδάσκω/διδαχή occurs 55 times, 22 of which are in the primary epistles and 33 in the secondary. Κηρύσσω/κήρυγμα occurs 27 times, 21 of which occur in the primary epistles and just 6 in the secondary.

The frequency with which Paul uses εὐαγγελ- in an absolute sense — taking no explanatory object — further underscores the importance of the term for the apostle: 28 of the 49 uses of the noun¹ and 13 of the 19 uses of the verb² in the primary epistles appear absolutely.³

1.2. Gospel as dogma and activity

Seventy percent (49 out of 68) of the occurrences of εὐαγγελ- in the primary epistles are nouns. In the secondary epistles the ratio is higher (14 out of 16). The noun often emphasizes the *content* of Paul's missionary message rather than its proclamation. Given the 'received' nature of the Pauline kerygma (Gal 1:6-8; 1 Cor 15:3-7; Rom 1:3-4; and the disputed 2 Tim 2:8) this is not surprising. However, this feature of Paul's use of εὐαγγελ- should not be exaggerated. Many have pointed out that Paul regularly uses the noun to express the activity of preaching the gospel rather than its content.⁴ The *nomen actionis* or noun of agency accounts for more than a quarter of Paul's uses of the noun in the primary epistles.⁵ Taking into account the 19 occurrences of the verb in the primary epistles, it emerges that approximately half of Paul's uses of εὐαγγελ- connote the activity of preaching the gospel. Thus, while it is true that Paul was

¹ 1 Thess 2:4; Gal 1:6, 1:11, 2:2, 2:5, 2:14; 1 Cor 4:15, 9:14 (twice), 9:18 (twice), 9:23, 15:1; 2 Cor 8:18, 11:4; Rom 1:16, 10:16, 11:28; Phil 1:5, 1:7, 1:12, 1:16, 2:22, 4:3, 4:15; Col 1:5, 1:23; Phlm 13.

² Gal 1:8 (twice), 1:9, 3:8, 4:13; 1 Cor 1:17, 9:16, 9:18, 15:2; 2 Cor 10:16; Rom 1:15, 10:15, 15:20.

³ This compares to 8 of the 14 uses of the noun and neither of the two uses of the verb in the secondary letters.

⁴ See O'Brien, P. T. "Thanksgiving and the Gospel in Paul." *New Testament Studies* 21 (1975): 144-155 153; Bultmann, R. *Theology of the New Testament*. Translated by Kendrick Grobel. Vol. 1. London: SCM, 1965, 87; Furnish, V. P. "Prophets, Apostles and Preachers: a Study of the Biblical Concept of Preaching." *Interpretation* 17, no. 1 (1963): 48-60, 52-53.

⁵ 1 Thess 3:2; 1 Cor 9:14b; 2 Cor 2:12, 8:18, 10:14; Rom 1:1, 1:9, 15:16, 15:19; Phil 1:5, 2:22, 4:3, 4:15; Phlm 13.

concerned with the ‘confessional’ content of his gospel, the advancement of this gospel through proclamation features just as prominently.⁶

1.3. Gospel and Paul’s commission

So dominant is this language within the apostle’s missionary self-conception that whenever the purpose of Paul’s commission is explicitly mentioned εὐαγγελ- terminology appears almost without exception.⁷ In each of these contexts, εὐαγγελ- appears not by accident but as the explicit summation of Paul’s apostolic career. To evangelize “constituted his apostolic calling.”⁸

1.4. Gospel as missionary speech

Εὐαγγελ- consistently refers to the apostle’s *primary announcement* of God’s actions in Christ, rather than the ongoing ‘pastoral’ (or secondary activity) of nurturing congregations to maturity. This should not be understood as a perpetuation of C. H. Dodd’s rigid distinction between *kerygma* and *didache*.⁹ I am simply drawing attention to the linguistic reality that εὐαγγελ- connotes ‘news’: whether the news is ‘preached’ or ‘taught’ is incidental. This accords with the clear pattern of usage evident

⁶ For Paul, the conceptual distance between verb and noun is virtually non-existent. Each has precisely the same referent. The many passages in which Paul interchanges between verb and noun make this clear: Gal 1:6-11; 1 Cor 9:14-18; 1 Cor 15:1-2; 2 Cor 10:14-16; 2 Cor 11:4-7; Rom 1:9-16; Rom 10:15-16. Compare also Gal 1:16 with 2:7.

⁷ 1 Thess 2:4; Gal 1:15-16; 1 Cor 1:17, 9:14, 15:9-11; 2 Cor 4:1-5; Rom 1:1, 1:9, 1:14-15, 15:17-20; Col 1:23-27; Eph 3:1-6; 1 Tim 1:11; 2 Tim 1:11. Two exceptions are to be found. In 1 Tim 2:7 εὐαγγελ- does not appear. That it is assumed, however, is clear from the use of κήρυξ and διδάσκαλος and from the parallel passage in 2 Tim 1:10-11 where εὐαγγελ- does appear. Titus 1:1-3 speaks only of κήρυγμα not of εὐαγγέλιον.

⁸ Litfin, D. *St. Paul’s Theology of Proclamation: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric*. Vol. 79, *SNTS Monograph Series*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 188.

⁹ Dodd, C. H. *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972. A more detailed and nuanced analysis of the types of early Christian communication – which is to some degree set against Dodd’s proposal – is presented in McDonald, J. I. H. *Kerygma and Didache: The Articulation and Structure of the Earliest Christian Message*. Vol. 37, *SNTS Monograph Series*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980. McDonald proposes a four-fold structure for New Testament teaching and preaching: *paradosis*, or the faithful transmission of rather static Jesus-traditions in the light of Scripture; *propheteia*, or the heralding within or without the congregation of the core elements of this tradition; *paraclesis*, or the task of the ‘homilist’ concerned to encourage holy living among the faithful; *paraenesis*, which is “supremely didactic” (127) in the sense that its aim is to *inform* more than to *inspire*.

across the spectrum of Greek literature where, in Jewish, pagan and Christian writers, the term always refers to an announcement which is ‘news’ to those who hear it.¹⁰

This is not to say that the vocabulary is precisely equivalent to the modern term ‘evangelize’ – which often simply refers to a one-off, proselytizing message – nor is it suggesting even that εὐαγγελίζομαι for Paul is oriented exclusively toward the initial conversion of individuals. The apostle’s conception of both preaching and conversion appears to be more complex than that. Nevertheless, the evidence does suggest that the proclamatory activity marked out by εὐαγγελ- was a foundational one. Once a community of believers exists, the terminology of εὐαγγελ- becomes inappropriate as a designation for the activity and/or content of religious instruction within the church.¹¹ ‘Gospel’ thus becomes retrospective language, recalling the message once delivered, a message that is now to be ‘remembered’, ‘held-fast’ and ‘lived-by’ but never ‘evangelized’ (εὐαγγελιζέσθαι) within the church itself.¹²

¹⁰ On the basis of the evidence in classical literature, the NT and the Apostolic Fathers, C. A. Evans has shown that εὐαγγελίζομαι was viewed nowhere in early Christianity (Pauline or otherwise) as a pastoral activity for the benefit of the congregation. Evans, C. A. “Preacher and Preaching: Some Lexical Observations.” *JETS* 24, no. 4 (1981): 315-322. So also, Litfin, *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation*, 195-197.

¹¹ Although the lines between ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ proclamation may seem blurred, the distinction is usefully articulated – without explicit reference to the εὐαγγελ- root, however – by Paul himself in 1 Cor 3:6-11: Paul ‘plants’ and ‘lays a foundation’, whereas Apollos ‘waters’ and ‘builds’.

¹² Bowers, *Paul's Understanding of his Mission*, 81-103, and O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 61-65, have disputed the above conclusion, arguing on the basis of Eph 3:8 and Rom 1:15 that εὐαγγελ- for Paul covers the “whole range of evangelistic and teaching ministry” (O’Brien, 62). However, the adjective ἀνεξιχνίαστος (‘inscrutable’ or ‘fathomless’) in Eph 3:8 qualifies πλοῦτος and carries no adverbial force with respect to εὐαγγελίεσθαι. The writer is not saying that the ‘evangelizing’ task is inexhaustible (so O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 63), only that Christ’s riches are ‘fathomless’. In reference to Rom 1:15, P. Stuhlmacher (*Der Brief an die Römer*, 27-30; Stuhlmacher, “The Purpose of Romans,” 236-37) and others (Käsemann, *Romans*, 20; Byrne, *Romans*, 50-51) have argued that v.15 does not describe Paul’s present desire to preach the gospel in Rome but his past intention to have been “erster Missionszeuge” in Rome (Stuhlmacher, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 29.). Stuhlmacher rightly notes that v.15 is the conclusion of vv.13-15 and that the phrase ἐμὲ πρόθυμον ... εὐαγγελίσασθαι simply refers back to v.13 and explains Paul’s original, though unsuccessful, plan to reap a harvest in Rome. The pronoun ὑμῖν, therefore, is general and retrospective (Stuhlmacher, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 27-28). Schreiner (*Romans*, 53.) has objected that the aorist infinitive εὐαγγελίσασθαι cannot be forced to imply a past tense since aorist infinitives rarely imply anything about the time of the action expressed in the verb. This is true but only strengthens Stuhlmacher’s case since his point is that v.15 is without any temporal marker and finds its time reference only in the aorist indicatives of v.13, which express a

Of the 68 occurrences of εὐαγγελ- in the primary epistles, 38 refer explicitly to ‘missionary’ announcements of the gospel.¹³ On only two occasions does Paul use εὐαγγελ- of announcements which are clearly non-missionary. In 1 Thess 3:6 the verb is used of Timothy’s report concerning the Thessalonians’ faith and love in Christ. It is possible Paul is simply using εὐαγγελ- in the mundane sense of ‘bringing news’.¹⁴ However, this would be singularly unusual in the Pauline corpus.¹⁵ The more likely explanation is that Paul intends something of a pun.¹⁶ In any case, while 1 Thess 3:6 may not be described as a ‘missionary’ use of εὐαγγελίζομαι, it is still obviously a ‘primary’ announcement. That is, the news Timothy brought to Paul was ‘new’.¹⁷ The same can be said for the use of προεὐαγγελίζομαι (‘preach the gospel beforehand’) in Gal 3:8. The message preached to Abraham was obviously not the ‘missionary’ message but it was clearly ‘news’ to the patriarch.

past (unsuccessful) condition. L. Morris, *Romans*, 65, moreover, takes the pronoun ὑμεῖς as a general reference to the recipients *as Roman residents* rather than *as Christians*. In other words, the phrase καὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς ἐν Ῥώμῃ is to be rendered something like ‘also to you Romans’. So also, Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 103.

¹³ 1 Thess 1:5, 2:2, 2:4, 2:8, 2:9, 3:2; Gal 1:6, 1:7, 1:8 (twice), 1:9, 1:11 (twice), 1:16, 2:2, 2:7, 4:13; 1 Cor 1:17, 4:15, 15:1 (twice); 15:2, 2 Cor 2:12, 10:14, 10:16, 11:4, 11:7 (twice); Rom 1:15, 10:15, 10:16, 15:19, 15:20; Phil 1:5, 1:12, 4:15; Col 1:5, 1:23.

¹⁴ Examples in Greek literature include: Theophrastus *Characters* 17.7.1; Plutarch *Caius Marius* 22.3; *Moralia (Sayings of Kings and Commanders)* 184; Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 1.28.37; *Lives of the Sophists* 2.572.12.

¹⁵ That this non-technical use of the verb appears in what is *perhaps* the earliest extant letter of Paul is not of great significance in light of the plentiful ‘technical’ use of the verb in Galatians, a letter which may well have been written earlier than 1 Thessalonians: so, Bruce, *Galatians*, 43-56; Fung, *Galatians*, 9-28; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 72-88 (of the introduction); or a short time after, Dunn, *Galatians*, 7-19; Martyn, 19-20.

¹⁶ At the beginning of the section, Timothy – whom Paul was sending to the Thessalonians to establish them in the faith – was described as God’s fellow worker in (the proclamation of) the gospel (3:2 – συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ). A play on words just four verses later, describing Timothy’s returning report as a ‘gospel’ announcement, would be quite appropriate and recognizable to the first hearers.

¹⁷ Schutz believes Paul here has a much broader understanding of εὐαγγελίζομαι than we often reckon on. He suggests that in Paul’s mind the activity designated by εὐαγγελίζομαι includes not only the message announced but the message received and confirmed. He believes something like this might also account for the unusual use of the phrase ‘word of the Lord’ in 1 Thess 1:8 (ἄφ’ ὑμῶν γὰρ ἐξήχηται ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου) to refer to the widespread report concerning the Thessalonians’ reception of the gospel. Schutz, J. H. *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*. Edited by M. Black. Vol. 26, *S.N.T.S Monograph Series*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, 35ff. This text will be dealt with at a later point.

The remaining occurrences of εὐαγγελ- in the primary epistles are cursory and so elude classification.¹⁸ Whether one judges these as connoting primary or secondary announcements depends not on their immediate context but on one's reading of the wider linguistic issue.

We are led, then, to the following significant conclusion. With the possible exception of Rom 1:15 (see footnote 12 above), wherever the sense of εὐαγγελ- is clear in Paul it *always* connotes a 'primary' announcement. We are thus justified in insisting that, for Paul, the language of 'gospel' is the language of missionary proclamation. This accords with the consistent pattern of usage outside the New Testament wherein, as note above, εὐαγγελ- connotes an announcement of 'news'.

The striking frequency and important contexts in which the apostle uses the root εὐαγγελ- elevates the present enquiry beyond that of an arbitrary word study. The language of εὐαγγελ- takes us to the heart of Paul's self-identity as a 'missionary' and, as we shall see, thus provides a window into his conception of the role of both his colleagues and his converts in the eschatological mission to which he felt called.

1.5. Paul's colleagues and the preaching of the gospel

Paul conceived of his co-workers' involvement in mission as similar to his own. They too were to 'herald the gospel'. The sheer frequency of references to such gospel-workers throughout the Pauline corpus provides an illuminating point of comparison (or rather contrast) for our subsequent investigation into Paul's understanding of his converts' participation in the proclamation of the gospel.

In 1 Thess 1:5 Paul qualifies τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ('the gospel') with the pronoun ἡμῶν ('our'), thus describing the co-signatories (Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy – 1:1), and perhaps others, as heralds in the recent 'evangelization' of Thessalonica. Moreover, in 2:7 these 'evangelists' are designated 'Christ's apostles' (Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι),¹⁹ who

¹⁸ Gal 1:23, 2:5, 2:14; 1 Cor 9:12, 9:14 (x2), 9:16, 9:18 (x3), 9:23; 2 Cor 4:3, 4:4, 8:18, 9:13; Phlm 13; Rom 1:1, 1:9, 2:16, 11:28, 16:25; Phil 1:7, 1:16, 1:27, 2:22, 4:3.

¹⁹ The plurals here (including ἀπόστολοι) are not 'non-real' or 'authorial' plurals, they refer to the co-signatories as fellow missionaries in the Thessalonian mission. So also, Richard, *Thessalonians*, 109-10; Best, *Thessalonians*, 99-100; Bruce, *Thessalonians*, 31. A similar usage of the plural is observed in 2 Cor 1:19 wherein Paul refers to the message which was δι' ἡμῶν κηρυχθείς. The plural is explicated in the following clause as δι' ἑμοῦ καὶ Σιλουανοῦ καὶ Τιμοθέου. Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 99-100, agrees that the plural is 'real' but insists that ἀπόστολοι includes only Paul and Silvanus, not Timothy, since the latter had not seen the risen Christ. This lays too strict a definition on the term ἀπόστολος for this early period. The ambiguity of

along with Paul ‘speak’ (2:2), ‘share’ (2:8) and ‘proclaim’ (2:9) the ‘gospel’ of God’. In 1 Thess 3:2 Timothy is singled out for mention as the ‘colleague’ (ἀδελφός) of the missionary team and the ‘co-worker’ (συνεργός) of God²⁰ in the preaching of the gospel.²¹ In Phil 2:22 Paul once again affirms the credentials of Timothy as one who heralds the gospel in concert with the apostle himself.²²

In Gal 1:6-9 Paul uses gospel-language in relation to the preaching of his missionary opponents (6b, 8a, 8b, 9b).²³ In Gal 2:7 (in language reminiscent of 1 Thess 2:4), Paul readily associates ‘gospel’ language with the preaching of Peter and probably with the other ‘pillars’ as well. In 2:9 Barnabas is also included among those with a commission to herald the gospel.²⁴

Paul’s use of the term in 1 Thess 2:7 is hardly consonant with such a ‘fixed meaning’. See the discussion of ‘apostle’ in the following chapter.

²⁰ The phrase συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, though found only in D* 33 Ambrosiaster et al, is preferable to διάκονον τοῦ θεοῦ (a A P et al) as it is clearly the more difficult reading and also best explains the origin of the other readings. Several commentators understand the phrase as meaning a man working together with God (Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 128; Bruce, *Thessalonians*, 61; Richard, *Thessalonians*, 140, 150-51; Best, *Thessalonians*, 132-33). 1 Cor 3:9 (θεοῦ γὰρ ἔσμεν συνεργοί) is presented as a parallel usage. However, both texts may simply mean that Timothy and Apollos, are Paul’s co-workers, ‘belonging’ to God. In the case of 1 Cor 3:9 this interpretation fits well with the other two genitive constructions in the verse (θεοῦ γεώργιον, θεοῦ οἰκοδομή ἔσπε) and better suits Paul’s point about the cooperation of Apollos and Paul in different God-assigned tasks. The sense of ownership appears to be implied by the genitive in 1 Thess 2:7 as well (Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι). On the question of the relative ‘ranking’ of Paul’s co-workers in relation to the apostle himself, see Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 57-70.

²¹ Given the previous references to the proclamation of the gospel throughout this section, the substantive ‘gospel’ should be understood as a *nomen actionis*, highlighting Timothy’s personal involvement in (ἐν) announcing the message. So also, Best, *Thessalonians*, 133; Richard, *Thessalonians*, 151, suggests that while the phrase of ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ includes preaching, it is not exhausted by it.

²² This ‘worth’ consists entirely in Timothy’s service (δουλεύω) together with Paul ‘for the gospel’ (εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον). The evidence noted previously in relation to Timothy’s work for the gospel, combined with Paul’s metaphor of a child working in his father’s business, leaves little doubt that the phrase refers to Timothy as an active partner in the proclamation of the gospel. So also Schenk, *Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus*, 232; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 325.

²³ However, the statement that there is ‘not another gospel’ (v.7) makes clear that Paul uses this language only as an anti-type to his own preaching, which is described in v.11 as τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν ὑπ’ ἐμοῦ. Similar usage of the terminology as a contrast to Paul’s preaching appears in 2 Cor 11:4-6.

²⁴ On the “shrinkage of Barnabas’ role” here in Paul’s account of the Jerusalem conference, see Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch*, 209-10; Martyn, *Galatians*, 216-17.

In 1 Cor 9:1-14²⁵ Paul appeals to an instruction from the Jesus-tradition (cf. Matt 10:10; Luke 10:7) concerning ‘those that preach the gospel’. In context, it is clear that Paul perceives this to be applicable to “the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas” (v.5) as well as to Barnabas and himself (v.6). The same or similar group of ‘evangelists’ is referred to in 1 Cor 15:3-11.²⁶ In Rom 10:15-16, a passage discussed in detail in Chapter Five, Paul similarly refers to a group of Israel-based gospel heralds ‘sent out’ in fulfillment of Isa 52:7.

Epaphras provides yet another example of an ‘evangelist’ entrusted by Paul to extend the apostolic preaching (Col 1:3-8). The endorsement (validation) of this missionary is striking. He is called Paul’s beloved ‘fellow-slave’ (σύνδουλος) a term used only here and in 4:7 in the Pauline corpus, and which reflects the solemn title Paul took for himself.²⁷ This designation and the one which follows (‘servant of the Messiah’ / διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ) are expressions of Paul’s unambiguous confidence in Epaphras as an apostolic analogue in the preaching of the gospel.²⁸ That Epaphras’ ‘evangelistic’ commission included more than just his home town (4:12) of Colossae is suggested by 4:13.

The case of Epaphras is intriguing, for while he clearly engaged in what might be called ‘itinerant’ evangelistic endeavours, the fact that Colossae was his home town and that he appears to have had an ongoing relationship with Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis, raises the question of the existence of localized evangelists appointed to proclaim the gospel. This question will be explored at length in Chapter Four.

²⁵ A detailed discussion of this passage in relation to financial support of mission can be found in Chapter Six.

²⁶ Having introduced the tradition of vv.4-5 with the designation εὐαγγέλιον (v.1), Paul mentions several (groups of) people to whom the risen Christ of the gospel had appeared – Κηφᾶ; τοῖς δώδεκα; πεντακοσίοις ἀδελφοῖς; Ἰακώβω; τοῖς ἀποστόλοις πᾶσιν; and last of all, κάμοί. Three verses later (v.11), these ‘witnesses’ of the gospel are readily described as preachers of the gospel also: εἴτε οὖν ἐγὼ εἴτε ἐκεῖνοι οὕτως κηρύσσομεν καὶ οὕτως ἐπιστεύσατε.

²⁷ δοῦλος – 1 Thess 1:1; Gal 1:10; Rom 1:1; and Timothy in Phil 1:1.

²⁸ The same line of thought is expressed in the phrase ‘on our behalf’ (ὕπερ ἡμῶν) by which Epaphras is portrayed as an apostolic ‘analogue’ working as an extension of the ministry of Paul, apostle of Christ (1:1). The reading ὕπερ ἡμῶν is preferred on the basis of superior Greek evidence (P⁴⁶ a* B A). The reading ὕπερ ὑμῶν has a wide range of witnesses (a² C D² K P Vg Syr Ambrosiaster Chrysostom et al), but may easily be explained as an alteration due to the influence of the description of Epaphras at the close of the epistle (4:12): πάντοτε ἀγωνιζόμενος ὑπερ ὑμῶν. The ὕπερ ἡμῶν is preferred by Barth & Blanke, *Colossians*, 165; Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 23; Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, 54; O’Brien, 15-16. However, ὕπερ ὑμῶν is preferred by Eadie, *Colossians*, 17; and the UBS and NA editions of the Greek text. See Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 552-53.

1.6. *Conclusion: Paul, the gospel and his colleagues*

The above brief survey of Paul's letters has sought to demonstrate and describe the importance of Paul's εὐαγγελ- vocabulary for his understanding of his own role and that of his missionary colleagues. The liberal use of this technical language in descriptions of his co-workers suggests that Paul conceived of their activity as essentially the same as his own. Whether itinerating with him (or on his behalf) or remaining behind in the local church, Paul appears to have envisaged a significant number of men and women working with him to further the gospel through explicit missionary proclamation.

We must now examine Paul's conception of his converts' relation to the gospel. It emerges here that Paul's liberal use of εὐαγγελ- language in relation to co-workers provides a striking point of contrast with that in relation to believers generally. For, contrary to the views of van Swigchem, O'Brien and Ware, nowhere in the epistles are Paul's converts portrayed as those who herald the gospel. This in no way denies the vital missionary significance of Paul's communities – the topic of concern in Chapters 6-10 – but the phenomenon is striking and calls for an explanation.

2. Paul's converts as preachers of the gospel?

Most occurrences of εὐαγγελ- in the primary epistles speak of the gospel in exclusive relation to Paul or/or his missionary colleagues, leaving only about twenty which speak of believers at all in connection with the gospel. Of these, the bulk portrays the relationship as one of *receipt* – converts are those who receive the gospel through the proclamation of appointed functionaries (Paul and/or his co-workers).

Various verbs are used to describe this relationship to the gospel. The gospel 'comes' to them (γίνομαι – 1 Thess 1:5), is 'spoken' to them (λαλέω – 1 Thess 2:2), 'preached' to them (κηρύσσω – 1 Thess 2:9), 'shared' with them (μεταδίδωμι – 1 Thess 2:8), 'handed on' to them (παραδίδομαι – 1 Cor 15:3), or simply 'gospelled' to them (εὐαγγελίζομαι – 1 Cor 15:1). It is something believers 'hear' (ἀκούω – Col 1:5, 23), 'accept' (δέχομαι – 2 Cor 11:4), 'receive' (παραλαμβάνω – Gal 1:9), are 'reminded' of (γνωρίζω – 1 Cor 15:1), 'believe' (πιστεύω – 1 Cor 15:11) and to which (or from which) they 'turn' (μετατίθημι – Gal 1:6), and by which they are saved (σώζω – 1 Cor 15:2).²⁹

²⁹ In the secondary epistles the picture hardly changes. For instance, in 2 Thess 2:14 believers are said to be 'called' through the gospel (καλέω).

Several occurrences of εὐαγγελ- in relation to Paul's converts describe the relationship as one of *fidelity* (ethically or confessionally³⁰) to the message once preached. Doctrinal fidelity is in view in 1 Corinthians 15:2,³¹ where the apostle insists that the Corinthians' receipt of message must be matched by their continued 'hold' upon the same. Precisely the same logic appears in Phil 1:27, 2:16, Col 1:23, Eph 6:15, 17.

Several scholars, however, on the basis of five texts in the Pauline corpus have argued that the apostle expected his converts not only to receive and remain faithful to the gospel but also to proclaim it.³² This evidence must now be reviewed in detail before turning in the final section of the chapter to a theme (evident in two texts) that opens up for us a significant window into Paul's conception of his converts' relation to the promotion of the gospel (κοινωνία εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον).

2.1. *1 Thessalonians 1:8*

For the word of the Lord has sounded forth (ἐξήχηται ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου) from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it.

Several scholars have recently argued that 1 Thess 1:8 is evidence that Pauline Christians (at least in Thessalonica and perhaps elsewhere) engaged in a proclamatory mission similar to, though not identical with, that of the apostle himself.³³ In an article titled, "The Thessalonians as a Missionary Congregation: 1 Thessalonians 1:5-8," J. Ware³⁴ has argued that this text is a unique window into the expectations of Paul vis-à-vis

³⁰ By 'confessional' fidelity I mean a commitment to the content of the received gospel. The distinction between ethical and confessional is merely a way of categorizing the evidence for modern clarity. It is not suggesting that Paul made such a distinction.

³¹ Since Paul states in v.1 that he wishes to make known or remind (γνωρίζω) the Corinthians of the gospel first preached, and since what follows is a formal summary of the gospel, it seems best to understand the verb 'hold' (κατέχω – v.2) as referring, not to *ethical* fidelity to the gospel, but *doctrinal* or confessional faithfulness.

³² A sixth text, Phil 1:14, is occasionally used as evidence of evangelistic activity among local converts. The work of the 'emboldened brothers' mentioned in that passage will be treated in the next chapter since (as will be demonstrated) Paul's reference is to local missionary colleagues not believers in general.

³³ D. Van Swigchem, *Het Missionair Karakter*, 260; Richard, *Thessalonians*, 69-73; Morris, *Thessalonians*, 50-51; Best, *Thessalonians*, 80; O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 111; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 116-17.

³⁴ Ware, J. "The Thessalonians as a Missionary Congregation: 1Thessalonians 1:5-8." *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 83 (1992): 126-131.

congregational involvement in mission. For Ware the γάρ introducing v.8a is ‘significant’:

... for it indicates that in 1,8 Paul is explaining how the new believers became a τύπος for others. They became an example by virtue of the fact that the word of the Lord, which they had received, had in turn sounded out from them. The Thessalonians had not only received the apostle’s message, but were also themselves active in communicating it to others.³⁵

Thus, for Ware, the γάρ of v.8 introduces not the *means* by which the Thessalonians became an example but the *manner* in which they did so.³⁶ From this, Ware and others build a case for the Thessalonians being an example (τύπος) in two ways: in their missionary zeal (v.8a) and in their faithfulness (v.8b). Key here is the phrase in the former clause, ‘the word of the Lord’ (ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου), which is a “synonym for the gospel message, and cannot refer to mere reports of the Thessalonians’ conversion.”³⁷

This reading, however, is undermined by several observations. First, in view of the relative brevity of the Thessalonian ‘visit’ and the apparently short space of time between this visit and the writing of 1 Thessalonians, with Wanamaker³⁸ I find it difficult to imagine how evangelistic activity on such a large scale (reaching throughout Macedonia and Achaia) could have been undertaken by such an unestablished congregation in so short a period of time.³⁹

³⁵ Ware, “The Thessalonians as a Missionary Congregation,” 127.

³⁶ Richard also takes the conjunction as introducing an explanation of the manner in which the Thessalonians were an example to other believers Richard, *Thessalonians*, 49-50.

³⁷ Ware, “The Thessalonians as a Missionary Congregation,” 127.

³⁸ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 83.

³⁹ Though the evidence in Acts 17 about a three-Sabbath ministry in Thessalonica has been seriously called into question by Richard, *Thessalonians*, 3-7, 72, R. Riesner, *Paul’s Early Period*, 358-370, has recently made a compelling case for judging Paul’s stay in Thessalonica to have lasted little more than a month. Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 72, calculates that 1 Thess was written about four months after Paul’s departure. The point of all this is to ask: How could the Thessalonians be proclaiming the word of the Lord in Macedonia and Achaia and in every place by the time Paul wrote his letter to them? How was it possible for a large scale mission (reaching beyond the borders of Greece) to take place in such a short time, by a congregation in such precarious circumstances? One possibility, of course, is that the church sent out a small number of ‘missionaries’ throughout Greece and beyond, but Paul’s praise of the Thessalonians in vv.6-10

Secondly, interpreting the γάρ introducing v.8 as explicating the *manner* in which the Thessalonians became a τύπος to the churches of Greece, fails to do justice to the force of the conjunction ὥστε in the previous verse. In v.6 Paul said that the Thessalonians became imitators of himself and of the Lord precisely in that they received the gospel in the face of great affliction and (despite this affliction) with joy.⁴⁰ The result (ὥστε) of this joyful reception of the gospel in the face of affliction is that the Thessalonians have now become a ‘model’ or ‘example’ to all the believers in the regions of Greece. Thus, the ὥστε leaves us in no doubt in what way the Thessalonians were an example. It was precisely in that when they received the gospel they endured affliction with joy. This reading is suggested not only by the conjunction itself but also by the close relationship between the words ‘imitator’ (μιμητής) in v.6 and ‘example’ (τύπος) in v.7.⁴¹ Paul’s point is that those who became imitators of Paul and the Lord have themselves now become an example (worthy of imitation) for the churches of Greece. Ware’s and Richard’s insistence that the γάρ of v.8 must explain the “ambiguous terminology”⁴² of τύπος is misplaced since, in the flow of vv.6-8, there is nothing ambiguous at all. The γάρ, therefore, explains the *means* by which the Thessalonians became a τύπος throughout Macedonia and Achaia, not the manner in which they did. What follows in the parallel statements of v.8 provides the substance of this explanation, as outlined below.

Thirdly, v.8 does not say that the Thessalonians were the agents of the ‘word of the Lord’, merely that they were the point of departure for the Word (‘from you’ / ἀφ’ ὑμῶν). Had Paul intended to imply that the Thessalonians were themselves involved in the proclamation of the Word we might have expected ‘through you’ (δι’ ὑμῶν) or ‘by you’ (ὑφ’ ὑμῶν).⁴³

concerns the activity of the whole congregation, not just that of a smaller, representative number among them.

⁴⁰ That the imitation refers primarily to the great affliction the Thessalonians endured is confirmed by Paul’s comments in the next chapter in which he again praises the Thessalonians as ‘imitators’ (this time of the churches of Judea) precisely in that they endured suffering from their countrymen: 1 Thess 2:14.

⁴¹ These two words (or their cognates) appear in connection with one another elsewhere in the Pauline corpus: Phil 3:17; 2 Thess 3:9.

⁴² Richard, *Thessalonians*, 70.

⁴³ A parallel is found in 1 Cor 14:36 – ἢ ἀφ’ ὑμῶν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξηλθεν; It is clear Paul is not asking the Corinthians if they thought themselves to be the agents of the outward spread of the Word of God but simply if they thought themselves to be the

A large part of Ware's article is devoted to explaining why Paul does not formally make the Thessalonians the agents of the gospel proclamation and why, apart from this single verse, Paul never seems to speak of congregations engaging actively in missionary speech. He suggests it has to do with Paul's desire to distinguish theologically between the operation of the gospel in his own ministry and that within his congregations. In Paul's ministry, Ware argues, "Paul stresses the power of God at work in him to preach the gospel," whereas "in his description of the Thessalonians' communication of the message he emphasizes the power of God by which the word itself was active."⁴⁴ Thus, the message worked through Paul as he preached it, but when he left a place it continued to work through those who had believed his message. This distinction, according to Ware, explains why apart from this single verse Paul never seems to speak of congregations engaging actively in mission. For Paul, he insists, speaking of congregations as active in gospel preaching would be inconsistent with the apostle's view that the preaching of the gospel was entrusted uniquely to him and only derivatively – as an operation of the powerful gospel upon the congregation – to Christians more generally. P. T. O'Brien also believes this accounts for the "relative paucity of references to Christians engaging in evangelism."⁴⁵ One could perhaps sustain this argument if there were suitably clear (if only occasional) references to gospel ministry on the part of the congregations. But the dearth of evidence of this type undermines the need to explain the silence in this or any other text. It remains that 1 Thess 1:8a describes the Thessalonians merely as the point of departure for the 'Word of the Lord', not as its agent.⁴⁶

geographical point of its departure. In other words, he is asking if they are presumptuous enough to believe they were the Word's 'home base.'

⁴⁴ Ware, "Thessalonians", 129.

⁴⁵ O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 127-128, 138.

⁴⁶ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 108, believes Paul has already alluded to the Thessalonians' preaching of the gospel in the words: ὑμῶν τοῦ ἔργου τῆς πίστεως καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης (v.3). He rightly notes that ἔργον and κόπος often designate the task of mission (1 Thess 3:5; 1 Cor 3:8, 13, 14, 15, 9:1, 16:10; 2 Cor 10:15, 11:23, Phil 1:22, 2:30. See above my discussion of "ἔργον as 'Mission-Partnership'"). However, first, that Paul often uses ἔργον and κόπος in a missionary sense should not obscure the fact that he also regularly uses ἔργον in the ethical sense of a (good or bad) 'deed' (1 Cor 5:2; 2 Cor 9:8; Gal 6:4; Col 1:10, 3:17; Rom 2:15, 13:3. Κόπος is used of manual labour in 1 Thess 2:9 and the parallel passage, 2 Thess 3:8). Secondly, that ἀγάπης is attached to κόπος in v.3 probably lays the emphasis upon the brotherly love which features throughout the epistle (3:6, 3:12, 5:8, 5:13). Thirdly, the pairing of πίστις and ἀγάπη observed in 1:3 reappears in 3:6 with a clear 'ethical' meaning. Fourthly, the precise triplet of πίστις, ἀγάπη and ἐλπίς observed in 1:3 reappears in 5:8 without a hint of a missionary significance. This same pair and triplet appear throughout Paul with a decidedly religio-ethical sense (1 Cor 13:13; Gal 5:5; Col 1:3-4; Eph 1:15; 2 Thess 1:3). Fifthly, it is not without significance that the parallel passage in 2 Thess 1:11 suggests the writer of 2 Thessalonians understood ἔργον πίστεως (in 1 Thess 1:3) in the sense of good works, not mission. So also 2 Thess 2:17.

Fourthly, from v.6 through to the end of the chapter, Paul is singularly occupied with the widespread reputation of the Thessalonians for their response to the gospel in the face of affliction. It is not easy to see how a brief and allusive aside about the missionary activity of the Thessalonians subsequent to Paul's visit fits into this rhetorical intention. The logical tension of Ware's view becomes especially awkward in the transition from v.8a and *b* to the connected clauses which follow (vv.8c-9): "so that (ὥστε) we have no need to speak about it. For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you." According to Paul, the result (ὥστε) of the Thessalonians' widely known τύπος was that the apostle had no need to say a thing about the congregation to anyone else. Wherever he goes, news of the Thessalonians has already arrived.

What is reported concerns Paul's εἴσοδος, a word that clearly refers to the initial 'visit' of the Pauline missionary team in Thessalonica, as confirmed not only by the meaning of the word itself ('visit', 'entrance', 'welcome', 'access') but by Paul's use of the term again in 2:1.⁴⁷ The term ὁποῖος ('of what sort') modifying εἴσοδος lays stress on the *kind* of missionary visit that occurred in Thessalonica. It thus recalls the circumstances of the Thessalonians' reception of the gospel described at the beginning of this paragraph (v.6) and also anticipates the further description of the success of the visit in vv.9b-10. The question Ware and others must face is: Why, if the reputation of the Thessalonians were two-fold in v.8 (mission and faith), does the report about the Thessalonians in v.9 concern only one aspect of this reputation, namely, the sort of reception the missionary team experienced?

Fifthly, the repetition of the geographical reference – 'Macedonia and Achaia' – in v.7 and v.8 suggests that the same audience is meant in both cases. Since v.7 clearly identifies the audience as 'all the believers', the people of Macedonia, Achaia and beyond mentioned in v.8b are most likely believers also. This fits neatly with the fact that the believing communities of Greece continue to be the subject of v.9. Whatever the precise content of 'the word of the Lord' in v.8a, therefore, the logic of vv.7-9 implies that those who hear (about) the Thessalonians are Christian communities, not unbelieving ones.

⁴⁷ 2:1 – Αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε, ἀδελφοί, τὴν εἴσοδον ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὅτι οὐ κενὴ γέγονεν. Morris, *Thessalonians*, 52, is probably correct in suggesting that εἴσοδος was part of the "common terminology among the early Christians for the success of a mission."

To offer my own interpretation of this intriguing passage: In an attempt to explain *how* the Thessalonians' 'example' became so widely known throughout Macedonia and Achaia (vv.6-7), Paul in 1:8a-b refers to the outward movement of rumours or reports among believing communities about the faith(fullness) of the Thessalonians. This interpretation reads the phrases 'the word of the Lord' (ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου – v.8a) and 'your faith' (ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν – v.8b) as synonymously parallel, something which is suggested by several factors. First, it must be observed that Paul's contrast or extension in v.8 (οὐ μόνον ... ἀλλ' ...) is not between 'the word of the Lord' and 'your faith toward God'⁴⁸ but between 'Macedonia and Achaia' and 'every place'.⁴⁹ That a geographical contrast is the focus of Paul's sentence is further suggested by the placement of 'from you' (ἀφ' ὑμῶν] in the first position of the sentence, bringing emphasis to the geographical dimension of what follows. One is left with the impression, then, that the phrases ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου and ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν contain a synonymous reference to a 'message' which has traveled not only throughout Macedonia and Achaia but in every place.

Secondly, the synonymous parallelism of the two clauses in v.8 is suggested by the morphology, meaning and sound of the two main verbs in the sentence. Both verbs are 3rd person, singular, perfects, with the prefix ἐξ, and for the first three syllables sound identical to one another.

Thirdly, the entire verse – leaving aside the introductory prepositional phrase ἀφ' ὑμῶν and the conjunction γάρ – is structured chiastically:

movement of message	A ¹	ἐξήχηται
the message itself	B ¹	ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου
place of report	C ¹	οὐ μόνον ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ [ἐν τῇ] Ἀχαΐᾳ
place of report	C ²	ἀλλ' ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ
the message itself	B ²	ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν ἢ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν
movement of message	A ²	ἐξελέγηθεν

⁴⁸ *pace* Richard, *Thessalonians*, 50.

⁴⁹ The placement of the construction οὐ μόνον ... ἀλλ' between the geographical elements of the sentence makes this reading likely, since in the vast majority of the instances of the construction in Paul οὐ μόνον immediately precedes the item to be extended (in this case, Μακεδονία καὶ Ἀχαΐα) and ἀλλὰ immediately precedes the extension itself (in this case, ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ). See, 1 Thess 1:5; 1Thess 2:8; 2 Cor 7:7; 2 Cor 8:10; 2 Cor 8:19; 2 Cor 8:21; 2 Cor 9:12; Phil 1:29; Phil 2:27; Rom 1:32; Rom 4:12; Rom 4:16; Rom 4:23; Rom 9:24; Rom 13:5; Eph 1:21; 1 Tim 5:13; 2 Tim 2:20; 2 Tim 4:8

This structure suggests that Paul intended the two halves of the sentence to be understood synonymously. Only the places of report (C¹ and C²) – modified as they are by the οὐ μόνον ... ἄλλα construction – are set in contrast.

But how may the phrase ‘the word of the Lord’ be understood as synonymous with a report *about* the Thessalonians?⁵⁰ The solution is to be found in the meaning of the verb ἐξηκέω.

2.1.1. The meaning of ἐξηκέω

Found only here in the New Testament, the compound is quite rare in wider Greek literature also, though it appears 8 times in Philo and 3 times in the Septuagint.

Meaning literally ‘sound-out’ the term connotes ‘sounds’ that bellow forth at great volume and which can usually be heard at some distance. Thus, Philo uses the word twice in relation to the thunderous voice of God ‘sounding-out’ from Mt Sinai and audible to the farthest person (*Decalogue* 3.7; 46.2.). In *Flaccus* 39.2 it refers to a mighty shout (πλήθους ἐξήχει βοή) from the midst of a crowd. In *Heir* 15 Philo explains the meaning of ‘shouting to God’ in Exodus 14:14-15 (τί βοᾶς πρὸς μέ;) as supplicating God with loud cries that ‘sound-out’ like a symphony (συμφωνίαν ἐξηχοῦντος). In *Contempl. Life* 80 it refers to the voices of the whole congregation, men and women alike, breaking forth from silence with praises to God (τότε γὰρ ἐξηχοῦσι πάντες τε καὶ πᾶσαι). The term appears especially to be associated with the sounding-out of thunderous ‘noises’. Thus, in Philo’s *Spec. Laws* 2.189 it denotes the sounding-out from heaven (at Sinai) of the trumpet of God (τότε γὰρ ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ φωνή σάλπιγγος ἐξήχησεν), a noise which reached the ends of the earth. In discussing the faculty of ‘hearing’, Philo in *Abraham* 160 refers to the sounding-out of strong winds and crashing thunder claps (βία πνευμάτων καὶ κτύποι βροντῶν ἐξηχώσιν). A reference to the sound of ‘great thunder’ is likewise found in Sirach 40:13 (βροντὴ μεγάλη ἐν ὑετῷ ἐξηχήσει), and in LXX Joel 3:14 God’s ‘valley of judgement’ is said to ‘sound-forth

⁵⁰Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 83, like Chrysostom (*Hom. Thess.* 62.399), has proposed that ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου is an objective genitive and refers to a “report concerning what the Lord has done.” Schutz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, 35ff., similarly interprets ‘the word of the Lord’ as referring to the report about the Thessalonians’ faith but he does so by suggesting that Paul’s understanding of the ‘gospel’ (and the ‘word of the Lord’) is broader than we normally suppose, and includes not only the preaching of the message of salvation but also news of the acceptance of this salvation by converts. Neither view commends itself in the case of 1 Thess 1:8, especially given the proximity of Paul’s mention of the Thessalonians’ reception of ὁ λόγος (= εὐαγγέλιον) just two verses earlier (v.6). An exception to Paul’s fairly consistent use of ‘word of the Lord/God’ to refer to the gospel is found in 1 Thess 4:15, where Paul appears to use a similar phrase in an objective sense – “by a word from the Lord” – to refer to a prophetic revelation of a more pastoral or secondary nature.

noises' (ἤχοι ἐξήχησαν ἐν τῇ κοιλάδι τῆς δίκης), a reference either to the sound of the cosmic phenomena of v.15 or to the thunderous voice of God in v.16. A similar reference to 'great reverberations' (πάταγος ἐξηχεῖτο πολύς) is found in Philo's *Moses* 1.169 in relation to the noise of the charging armies of Egypt. In Polybius' *Histories* 30.4.7 the desperate and tearful cry for peace of some Rhodian officials is rather unflatteringly described as "sounding-out the dying 'swan's-song' (τὸ κύκνειον ἐξηχήσαντες)." Finally, in a somewhat unusual use of the verb, 3 Macc 3:2 makes reference to the sounding abroad of a report hostile to the Jewish people (φήμη δυσμενῆς ἐξηχεῖτο κατὰ τοῦ γένους). This use may well be 'metaphorical', comparing the wide dissemination of a rumour with the sounding-out (to a great distance) of a thunderous noise.

Apart from in 3 Macc 3:2, ἐξηχέω appears always to connote bellowing noises which although emanating from a single point may be heard at some distance. The association of the term with thunderous reverberations and with the voice (and trumpet) of God, in particular, is especially notable.

2.1.2. *The reverberating proclamation of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 1:8*

This usage is illuminating as we turn back to 1 Thess 1:8. In saying that the 'word of the Lord' ἄφ' ὑμῶν ἐξήχηται Paul is not referring to the itinerant missionary preaching of members of the Thessalonian congregation but to a 'thunderous' proclamation of the gospel which took place in Thessalonica itself, the reverberations of which were heard throughout the regions of Macedonia and Achaia and, indeed, in every place. The similarities between this Word of God and that which, according to Philo, thundered forth from Sinai are striking.

When we recall both the context of the passage and the explicit comments in v.5, the meaning becomes clear. Paul previously stated that his preaching had come to Thessalonica 'in power' (ἐν δυνάμει) and that it was as a result of this proclamatory 'power' that the Thessalonians believed (in great affliction) and became an example (v.6) to the believers of Macedonia and Achaia (v.7). These twin themes of the power of Paul's preached 'word' and the resultant wide reputation of the Thessalonians become the precise subject of v.8. So powerful was Paul's proclamation of ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου in Thessalonica that its thunderous reverberations were heard far and wide. It is in this sense that Paul can say, "the Word of the Lord *reverberated* out from you.' What exactly he means by this 'felicitous metaphor', to borrow John Calvin's remark on the text,⁵¹ is explained in the second (and parallel) part of the sentence. These

⁵¹ Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 339.

‘reverberations’ take the form of reports about the Thessalonians’ ἡ πίστις ἢ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν, that is, about the successful result of Paul’s preaching, reports which are disseminated not only throughout Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place the apostle visits.⁵² This coupling together of ‘thunderous reverberations’ and published ‘reports’ has some affinity with the (metaphorical?) use of ἐξηγέω in 3 Macc 3:2 where it refers to the spreading abroad of reports concerning the Jewish people.

The suggestion that 1 Thess 1:8 contains a small window into the larger reality of active congregational missionary proclamation fails. Paul’s point throughout 1:6-10 is simply to encourage the Thessalonians in the knowledge that their faithful response to the powerful apostolic gospel has been reported throughout Macedonia, Achaia and beyond, and that as a result they have become an example to all the believers of those regions.

2.2. *Philippians 1:27*

Only, live your life (πολιτεύεσθε) in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel (συναθλοῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου).

In Phil 1:25-26 the apostle assures his readers that he wishes to escape death and “remain and continue with you all for your advancement and joy in the faith.” However, lest the Philippians think that their ‘advancement’ and ‘joy’ in ‘the faith’ is dependent upon the apostle’s presence with them, Paul quickly qualifies the statement⁵³ by saying that he wishes to hear of such fidelity regardless of whether or not he visits them (v.27).

P. T. O’Brien has interpreted this paragraph as a reference to the congregation’s gospel proclamation.⁵⁴ In support of this he points to three things: 1) the meaning of πολιτεύομαι as encompassing the *whole* of life (which will include ‘evangelism’) not simply ethics; 2) the meaning of the συναθλέω, which is interpreted via its athletic allusion as striving for the advancement of the gospel; 3) the fact that Paul compares his own struggle

⁵² The point is similar to the hyperbolic statement in Rom 1:9 (again in the context of thanksgiving) where Paul describes the ‘universal’ reputation of the Romans’ faith (ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ – 1:9).

⁵³ This appears to be the force of the word μόνον at the beginning of the paragraph.

⁵⁴ O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 116-117. So also van Swigchem, *Het Missionair Karakter*, 260.

(ἄγών – v.30) – which is obviously oriented toward the missionary advancement of the gospel – with that of the Philippian congregation.⁵⁵

That πολιτεύομαι is a broad term does not mean that it is to be understood in *all* its breadth in every context. It is clear that the word in v.27 has primarily to do with one’s social conduct as a citizen of the gospel community.⁵⁶ Philippians 2:1 begins with the conjunction οὖν, implying that the socio-ethical instruction which follows (concerning Christ-like humility) is the key idea contained in the injunction: “live lives worthy of the gospel.” In fact, the whole unbroken section, of which this exhortation is the head (1:27-2:18), concerns what we might call social ethics.⁵⁷

Winter,⁵⁸ furthermore, has shown how πολιτεύομαι in secular usage⁵⁹ had to do with the nature of citizenly relations within a community, and that the theme of social ‘harmony’ or ‘concord’ was very often attached to πολιτεύομαι.⁶⁰ That the most part of 1:27-2:18 concerns just such social concord within the congregation fits well with this picture.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Ware, *Holding Forth*, 247, follows O’Brien at this point.

⁵⁶ Geoffrion, *The Rhetorical Purpose and the Political and Military Character of Philippians*, 23-29, is probably correct to see this as a hermeneutical key to the letter. By this term Paul wishes to contrast the Philippians’ sense of belonging to a Roman colony with the assurance of their heavenly citizenship. The rhetorical goal of this contrast is to urge the congregation to stand firm as a new society and as an ‘army’ resisting the world around them.

⁵⁷ So, Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 98.

⁵⁸ Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City*, 81-104.

⁵⁹ See for instance Plutarch’s (ca. A.D. 45 – 125) description of the Athenian leading man, Aristides, who oriented his ‘polity’ toward ‘virtue’: Plutarch *Arist.* 25.6 – Ἀριστείδην δὲ πολιτεύσασθαι πρὸς ἀρετήν. This ‘virtuous’ living is then described (25.7) in terms of his kind conduct even toward one of his enemies.

⁶⁰ See also, Winter, “The Problem with ‘Church’ for the Early Church,” 203-217. Brewer, “The Meaning of Πολιτεύεσθε in Phil. 1:27,” 76-83, had earlier argued that πολιτεύεσθαι should be understood within Greco-Roman political usage, wherein the term is used “when conduct relative to some law of life – political, moral, social, or religious – is signified” (80). Miller, “Πολιτεύεσθε in Philippians 1.27,” 86-96, however, has shown that πολιτεύεσθαι also had significant currency in Jewish literature of the period (2 Macc 6:1, 11:25; 3 Macc 3:4; 4 Macc 2:8, 23, 5:16; Josephus *Life* 12) where it refers to living by the legislation of the Torah. Indeed, in *Life* 12 Josephus uses the term of his own Pharisaic way of life: πολιτεύεσθαι τῇ Φαρισαίων αἰρέσει κατακολουθῶν. While Miller offers a helpful corrective for our understanding the possible backgrounds to Paul’s usage of the term in Philippians, it must be admitted that the absence of the term elsewhere in his letters suggests that the Greco-Roman usage (known to the congregation of Philippi) prompted its appearance in 1:27.

⁶¹ So also, Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 55-56. Though πολιτεύομαι is not Paul’s normal vocabulary in ethical exhortations, Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 97, is correct to point to the

O'Brien's reading of συναθλέω in v.27b to mean a positive "united front" for the cause of the gospel is over-interpretive. It is true that Paul uses the same word (in 4:3) to describe the gospel work of Euodia and Syntyche (a point O'Brien does not make), but the word is general enough to refer to whatever 'striving together' the context implies.⁶² In this case, the participle συναθλοῦντες is subordinate to the imperatival πολιτεύεσθε. Indeed, the purposive conjunction (ἵνα) introducing the clause in question demands that "struggling together for the faith of the gospel" be understood as the fulfilment of the command to live worthily of the gospel. The word συναθλέω, like πολιτεύεσθε, in this context primarily has to do with social relations as an expression of fidelity to the gospel. Paul probably chose a verb with 'athletic' overtones, not because he wanted to imply a united advance of the Philippians' missionary endeavours, but simply because this congregational πολιτεύμα was to be lived out in the face of opposition, as the following clause (v.28) makes clear.

It must further be noted that the 'striving together' of v.27b is not for the sake of the gospel itself but for "the faith of the gospel" (τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου), the dative probably implying advantage. The distinction is significant. While it is possible Paul means something like, "strive together to produce in others a faith brought about by gospel preaching," it is more likely the apostle is referring to the Philippians' 'life of faith' arising from the gospel he previously preached.⁶³ This interpretation is suggested by Paul's use of 'the faith' in the preceding paragraph. As noted already, in 1:25-26 the apostle advises his readers of his desire not to die but to "remain and continue with you all for your advancement and joy τῆς πίστεως." Given that 1:27-30 reflects on and qualifies this statement, it seems natural to attach the same referent to ἡ πίστις in both

special currency this term will have had in the prominent Roman colony of Philippi, where πολιτεύμα was taken very seriously. The particular relevance of the word in such a city as Philippi also accounts for the presence of the noun πολίτευμα in 3:20, where again, the word is employed in relation to ethics. It is worth noting the relationship in this paragraph between περιπατεω (a strongly ethical word) and πολίτευμα. Paul's point is that believers' heavenly citizenship should be expressed in the way they conduct their lives.

⁶² In addition, what Euodia and Syntyche strive for is the gospel itself (ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ συνήθλησάν) language which implies the work of preaching the gospel, but in 1:27 Paul speaks of striving for 'the faith of the gospel'. The need for 'exertion' is the same in both cases but the object of the exertion is different: one involves mission, the other fidelity (πίστις).

⁶³ Similarly, Silva, *Philippians*, 95; Vincent, *Philippians*, 34; Witherington, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi*, 53.

sentences.⁶⁴ In other words, Paul's desire to witness the Philippians' advancement with respect to gospel-faith is being expressed in the exhortations of vv.27-30 (and those which follow). Paul's main concern, then, has to do with the Philippians' progress in the life of faith arising from the gospel, in other words, with 'orthopraxis'.⁶⁵

Lastly, the fact that Paul compares his own struggle (ἀγών – v.30) with that of the Philippians does not imply that they too were struggling to proclaim the gospel among the pagans of Philippi. S. K. Stowers has shown how the theme of competition with mutual enemies is a fundamental part of the hortatory strategy of 'letters of friendship' such as Philippians:⁶⁶ "Since ancient friendship is by nature agonistic, Paul's discourse of friendship must emphasize the common struggle against enemies."⁶⁷ The point of Paul's comment in v.30 is that the Philippians' suffering (πάσχειν – v.29) for remaining faithful to the gospel in the face of opposition is consonant with the friendship they have with the apostle, who likewise suffers (for his preaching of the gospel) against similar enemies. To infer from the phrase τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγῶνα that the *cause* of the suffering – namely, the preaching of the gospel – was the same in both cases is to push Paul's language too far.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ So, Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 99.

⁶⁵ So, Witherington, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi*, 53; *pace* Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 57, who sees in ἡ πίστις a reference to the 'creed' of the gospel, or 'orthodoxy'. Timothy Geoffrion, *The Rhetorical Purpose*, 62-65, offers an alternative interpretation of the 'faith' in this context. Given the strong political and military images employed by Paul in these verses, Geoffrion suggests ἡ πίστις is a "technical term for the sealing of a commitment" (63) common in military contexts of the ancient world. Hence, by "the faith of the gospel" Paul means the 'pledge' the Philippians have made to the gospel of Christ as opposed to the gospel of the emperor.

⁶⁶ Stowers, S. K. "Friends and Enemies in the Politics of Heaven: Reading Theology in Philippians." In *Pauline Theology 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon*, edited by Joutte M. Bassler, 105-121. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991. The main elements of such letters are: 1) a strong motif of presence and absence; 2) an emphasis on friendship as 'oneness' and 'sharing'; 3) the importance of 'giving and receiving' as a basic obligation of friendship (the phrase itself is idiomatic for friendship); 4) a stress on the fact that friendship consists of agreement and equality. These qualities are often idealized; 5) an emphasis on a the mutual competition with enemies. The contrast of friends and enemies in these letters is an important part of what makes the exhortations work.

⁶⁷ Stowers, "Friends and Enemies," 114.

⁶⁸ de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, 262-65, argues that the struggle referred to in Phil 1:29 "would have been precipitated by the Christians' withdrawal from the traditional Greco-Roman cults, especially from the Imperial cult." He further notes that

Philippians 1:27-30 is submitted as another example of the believer's relation to the 'gospel' in terms of his/her fidelity to the εὐαγγέλιον. Paul expects the Philippians to live as worthy citizens of the gospel community in the face of opposition from the wider community. The ethical command and its agonistic context are expressed in 1:27-30 but precisely what this will look like becomes clear in the rest of the section (2:1-18), where Paul insists that the humiliation of Christ (proclaimed in the gospel) provides the model and motivation for the congregation's social conduct. The mention at the end of the section (2:15-16)⁶⁹ of the Philippians' clinging to the 'word' of the gospel in the midst of the world's diametrically opposed values creates something of a thematic inclusio with the introductory words of 1:27-30.⁷⁰

2.3. *Philippians 2:15-16*

... so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life (λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες) – in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing (NIV).

this would have been considered 'subversive' by local authorities and would have brought the Philippians into direct contact with Philippian magistrates. It is this clash with Roman authorities, argues de Vos, which lies behind Paul's description of the Philippians' struggle as the 'same' as his own.

⁶⁹ On Phil 2:15-16 see the discussion at the end of the chapter.

⁷⁰ In relation to Phil 1:27–2:16 attention should be drawn to a suggestion of Schenk, *Die Philippenerbriefe des Paulus*, 185-212. Schenk proposes that the 'hymn' of Phil 2:6-11 be read as the Philippian congregation's reworking in their own Greco-Roman language of certain key Pauline themes. They had sent it to Paul for his approval and now by including it in his returning letter (Phil B in Schenk's judgement) the apostle gives his stamp of approval. Schenk thus describes 2:6-11 as "ein Zeugnis philippischer Christologie und Frömmigkeit" (185). As an extension of this thesis, Schenk suggests that the Philippians' motives in all this were 'missionary', that is, that 2:6-11 represents "ein christlicher Propagandatext zur Mission unter Nichtchristen" (210) whereby believers in the Roman colony could communicate Christ's lordship to their fellow citizens. The presence of missionary language (ἐξομολογέω) and the way the hymn seems to subvert Caesar-slogans (ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός) combined with references in the epistle to mission proclamation (1:5, 14-15) commend this reading to Schenk. Furthermore, he believes it explains the presence of both Pauline and non-Pauline elements throughout Phil 2:6-11. The interpretation finds a ringing endorsement in an article by Reumann, J. "Contributions of the Philippian Community to Paul and to Earliest Christianity." *NTS* 39 (1993): 438-57, though no further supportive arguments are offered. The suggestion is utterly plausible but highly speculative.

The reference to “hold[-ing] out the word of life” (NIV – λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες) in Phil 2:16 has been interpreted by several scholars as a reference to congregational missionary speech. O’Brien contends that, in light of the “explosive” force of the ‘Word’ (= εὐαγγέλιον as per 1:5; 1:12; 1:27),⁷¹ this phrase implies that the Philippians are to be “carried along by it as they bear testimony to the lordship of Jesus Christ.”⁷² G. D. Fee has argued similarly but on the basis of verbal and thematic parallels with Dan 12:3.

However, as O’Brien himself concedes, ἐπέχω is on “contextual and linguistic grounds”⁷³ to be understood as ‘hold onto,’ not ‘hold forth’⁷⁴ (or ‘hold out’ NIV), as most commentators agree,⁷⁵ and as the following discussion makes clear.

2.3.1. *The meaning of ἐπέχω*

By far the most common meaning of ἐπέχω outside the New Testament is to ‘restrain’ or ‘withhold’, hence, to *cease* from speaking (Josephus *Ant.* 2.58), to *withhold* one’s judgement (Epictetus *Discourses*, 1.7.6, 1.18.1,

⁷¹ On the question of whether λόγον ζωῆς refers to the gospel see below. For now this will simply be assumed for the sake of interacting with those that argue the text refers to missionary proclamation. It will be shown that even if λόγος = εὐαγγέλιον Paul is not concerned in this passage with congregational missionary proclamation.

⁷² O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 119. In his earlier commentary (O’Brien, *Philippians*, 297) O’Brien does not take the text as a reference to ‘evangelism’.

⁷³ O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 118.

⁷⁴ So, Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 118. Ware, “Holding Forth the Word of Life,” 291-301, has mounted a full-scale defence in favour of reading ἐπέχω as ‘holding forth’. He successfully demonstrates what scholars have long accepted, namely that the verb can convey the notion of extension. His insistence, however, that “the verb ἐπέχω does not bear the sense *hold fast* in any ancient passage, and the etymology and usage of the word ... in fact preclude such a meaning” (300), must be rejected. His citations are comprehensive but heavily interpreted in the direction of his conclusion. Very close attention is paid to the various nuances of the preposition ἐπι (and in particular to the idea of ‘extension’) at the expense of fair consideration of the meaning of the root verb ἔχω (‘have’, ‘hold’, ‘keep’).

⁷⁵ Schenk, *Die Philippenerbriefe des Paulus*, 222-23; Gnllka, *Der Philippenerbrief*, 153; Silva, *Philippians*, 146; Witherington, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi*, 73; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 159; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 103; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 297; Mellick, *Philippians*, 113. See also BAGD 285. In this regard, we may draw attention to the monograph of Timothy C. Geoffrion, *The Rhetorical Purpose*, who has shown that through political and military *topoi* familiar to the Philippians Paul’s central concern in the letter is to call on believers to *remain steadfast* as citizens of an alternative ‘heavenly’ society.

1.28.3; Philo *Drunkness*, 2.5.5; *Eternity* 77.3), to *check* the passions (Josephus *Ant.* 2.53, 3.310; *J.W.* 1.230; Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 3.112; Pausanias *Descr.* 2.18.1), to *hinder* or *hault* an action (Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War* 8.105.3; Pausanias *Descr.* 1.7.2; 1.14.3; Plutarch *Nicias* 10.6; Josephus *Ant.* 10.199, 11.88. *J.W.* 5.363; Philo *Confusion* 105.6), to *prevent* an enemy attack (Chariton, *Callirhoe*, 6.8.5).

The word is sometimes used in the sense of to ‘hold/put forth’: of ideas *presenting* themselves to the mind (Philo *Drunkness* 200.2), of a mother *offering* her breast to her infant (Homer *Il.* 22.83; Pausanias *Descr.* 1.33.7), of *placing* one’s feet on a stool (Homer *Il.* 14.241), of *placing* a wine cup to another’s lips (Homer, *Il.* 9.489, 22.494). However, even here the idea of holding *forth* is not central, since the same usage appears in reference to *bringing* a cup to one’s own lips (*Od.* 16.444), or holding a knife *against* a man’s neck (Euripides *Iph. taur.* 1459). The main thought is probably not ‘hold forth’ but ‘hold upon’, sometimes by extension, sometimes by contraction.

The verb also means to hold a place or position (whether geographically or metaphorically), hence, to ‘occupy’: troops *occupying* a position (Josephus *J.W.* 3.487; 5.303), a building *occupying* the place of a previous one (Josephus *J.W.* 5.186), cloud *covering* the heavens (Philo *Abraham* 43.2; *Moses* 1.176), the sun *holding* central position in the universe (Philo *Heir* 223), all men *occupying* some place in the world (Philo *Dreams* 1.68), to *cover* an area with a sail (Plutarch *Theseus* 25.5).

The verb is also commonly used of ‘gripping’ or ‘taking hold’ of a person or thing. This of course relates to the usage in Phil 2:16. Thus, ἐπέχω is used of calamities *taking hold* of a nation or city (Josephus *Ant.* 2.101, *J.W.* 2.462; Philo *Spec. Laws* 2.87), of a rumour *taking hold* in a city (Josephus *Ant.* 20.145), of poverty *gripping* a band of soldiers (*J.W.* 5.344), of confusion or faintheartedness *taking hold* of men (Josephus *J.W.* 5.543; Philo *Rewards* 76.2; *Dreams* 1.182), of consternation *seizing* the Romans (Josephus *J.W.* 6.180). Sometimes this usage implies a continued hold upon something: a person holding or *continuing* (in) unbelief (Philo *Moses* 1.90), a condition *holding* (true) at a certain time (Philo *Moses* 1.69), God *storing* his gifts for the future (Philo *Posterity* 145), a place *held* (captive) by deep night and endless darkness (Philo *Dreams* 2.133), winter *remaining* for a time (Josephus *J.W.* 4.442), or *keeping* one’s opinion (Philo *Flight* 136 where κριὸς κατεχόμενος is interpreted allegorically as λόγος ἐπέχων).

To this can be added an interesting occurrence in John Chrysostom (*Hom. Phil.* 62.244). In the course of his explanation of Paul’s meaning in

Phil 2:16, Chrysostom states: “As stars *retain* the principle of light, so you do the principle of life” (Οἱ φωστῆρες, φησὶ, λόγον φωτὸς ἐπέχουσιν: ὑμεῖς λόγον ζωῆς). What is significant about this statement is not that Chrysostom interpreted Phil 2:16 in the manner argued above or even that he compared the Christian’s grasp of λόγος with the way stars retain their light. The significance lies in the fact that he, as an ancient Greek speaker, used the verb ἐπέχω of the way stars retain light and then proceeded to compare Paul’s meaning to that. Had common usage of ἐπέχω not already embraced the sense of *to retain* the comparison could not be drawn.⁷⁶

2.3.2. *Philippians 2:16 as eschatological faithfulness*

There are additional reasons for rejecting the reading proposed by O’Brien and Fee. Firstly, the exhortation heading this section quite clearly concerns socio-ethical obedience (v.12), as all commentators agree.⁷⁷ The

⁷⁶ Schenk rightly draws attention to the close parallel between λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες and the exhortation of 1 Cor 15:2 in which the related verb κατέχω is associated with εὐαγγέλιον/λόγος. The connections between Phil 2:16 and 1 Cor 15:1-2 are rather striking: both texts (1) refer to the λόγος of the gospel, to which (2) believers are to cling (ἐπέχω / κατέχω), so that (3) eschatological ‘futility’ (κενός / εἰκῆ) might be avoided. In addition, we could note that clinging to the word is associated with σωτηρία / σώζω in both texts (1 Cor 15:2 / Phil 1:12). Two ancient passages confirm the approximate synonymy between ἐπέχω and κατέχω. In *Flight*, 136.1, Philo offers his interpretation of LXX Gen 22:13 “he found a ram caught in a thicket” (κρίδος δ’ εὑρίσκεται κατεχόμενος). Using ἐπέχω to interpret κατέχω, Philo suggests that this text refers to remaining silent in speculative matters and keeping one’s opinion (to oneself): τουτέστι λόγος ἡσυχάζων καὶ ἐπέχων. Similarly, during the course of his discussion of the phrase λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες in Phil 2:16, John Chrysostom (*Hom. Phil.* 62.244) switches seamlessly between the verbs ἔχω, ἐπέχω and κατέχω, at one point summing up Paul’s meaning as ‘holding life itself’ (αὐτὴν κατέχοντες τὴν ζωὴν).

⁷⁷ There is debate about the precise import of the theologically weighty term σωτηρία and, therefore what it means to ‘work it out’. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 98-99, sees in it the sense of social ‘well-being’ as a congregation, whereas others prefer the usual eschatological sense: Mellick, *Philippians*, 110; Silva, *Philippians*, 136-137; Witherington, *Friendship and Finances*, 71. Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 151-52, insists on both dimensions. Either way, all are agreed that obedience in the present social context of the Christian community is on view in this command. Ware, *Holding Forth*, 271, offers a different interpretation, suggesting that the use of κατεργάζεσθε recalls the “systematic use of cognates of ἔργον through the letter with reference to mission activity, and thus refers to the extension of the gospel through the Philippian community.” This would seem to force a meaning on the basis of faint linguistic associations at the expense of letting the context determine the meaning. The injunction following sets a clear ethical tone: “Do all things without murmuring and arguing ...”

exhortations which follow unpack the meaning of this obedience in a congregational context. Since the phrase in question forms the conclusion to this series of exhortations, a reference to mission would be unexpected, to say the least. It is not immediately obvious how evangelistic proclamation relates to the social cohesion or eschatological well-being to which Paul refers throughout the section. This point is strengthened by the fact that 2:14-18 is actually the conclusion to the central exhortation to ‘live as citizens worthily of the gospel’ (1:27). This entire section of the letter, as noted previously, concerns the socio-ethical demands of the believing community. Mission is not in view.

Secondly, while it is by no means impossible that Paul thought his eschatological boast (v.16b) to be dependent, in part, on the congregation’s evangelistic activity, the fact that precisely the same idea is usually linked directly to the ethical or confessional fidelity of his congregations (1 Thess 2:19; 2 Cor 1:14; Rom 15:17-18), suggests that the same thought is present in Phil 2:16.

Thirdly, O’Brien’s contention that the ‘explosive’ nature of the Word of life (= gospel) implies that the Philippians will not be able to ‘contain’ the message, but rather preach it, is not persuasive. That a word has a particular nuance in certain texts does not warrant giving that nuance interpretive power in all contexts. In fact, it is not even clear that within Philippians itself the words εὐαγγέλιον and λόγος always carry the sense of a powerful personal force. In 1:27a there is no such sense. Even in 1:12 the gospel is not said to ‘advance’ itself, but rather it is the passive object of external forces. In the connected passage that follows (1:14) ὁ λόγος refers simply to the message that is preached by the emboldened ‘brothers’. It is difficult to sustain O’Brien’s point even in these missionary passages.

Fourthly, although Fee ‘wonders’ at the fact that other commentators have failed to see the ‘intertextuality’ between Phil 2:15-16 and Dan 12:3, his own version of intertextuality is not convincing. He begins by rightly noting the strong verbal similarities between the Septuagint’s “the wise shall shine as lights in the sky” (οἱ συνιέντες φανοῦσιν ὡς φωστῆρες τοῦ οὐρανοῦ – Dan 12:3a) and Paul’s “in which you shine like stars in the world” (ἐν οἷς φαίνεσθε ὡς φωστῆρες ἐν κόσμῳ – Phil 2:15). But then, instead of allowing the rest of the Septuagintal passage to impact his interpretation of λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες (Phil 2:16), Fee appeals to the Hebrew version of Dan 12:3b (“those who turn many to righteousness”⁷⁸)

⁷⁸ Dan 12:3b – <yBlr-h* yq@yD]x=m^W

to suggest that what Paul has in mind is a ‘holding out’ of the Word of life which leads others to righteousness, in other words, missionary proclamation. But are we to think that Paul had both Hebrew and Greek versions of Daniel open before him – or that he recalled them both – and that he intentionally molded them together in this most unusual way?

Fee’s helpful identification of the Septuagintal background to Phil 2:15-16 actually undermines his point entirely. A comparison of LXX Dan 12:1-3 with Phil 2:15-16 demonstrates that it is the (Old) Greek version of Daniel, not the Hebrew, which lies behind Paul’s thought:

And at that hour Michael shall pass by, the great angel who takes his stand for the sons of your people. On that day, there shall be trouble such as there has not been from the time of their origin until that day. And in that day all the people – whomever is found written in the book – shall be lifted up on high (ύψώω). ² And across the expanse of the earth many of those who sleep shall be raised up (ἀναστήσονται): some to eternal life, some to disgrace, and some to dispersion and eternal shame (οἱ μὲν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον οἱ δὲ εἰς ὄνειδισμόν οἱ δὲ εἰς διασποράν καὶ αἰσχύνην αἰώνιον). ³ And those who are wise shall shine as the luminaries of heaven (οἱ συνιέντες φανοῦσιν ὡς φωστῆρες τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), and those who are devoted to my words shall be as the stars of heaven (οἱ κατισχύοντες τοὺς λόγους μου ὡσεὶ τὰ ἄστρα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) forever and ever. (LXX Dan 12:1-3. Author’s translation).

Eternal security, or salvation, is clearly the concern of the Daniel text. The writer/editor seeks to assure the faithful of their position on the eschatological ‘day’ (v.1b). ‘Eternal life’ (v.2) in the form of a resurrection from the dead, is promised to ‘some’ on that day. The glory of this resurrection life is described in the parallel clauses which follow as shining like ‘luminaries/stars’ in heaven, and is pledged only to the ‘wise’, that is,⁷⁹ to those who ‘prevail with’ or are ‘devoted to’⁸⁰ the words of God: οἱ

⁷⁹ The parallelism suggests that to be ‘wise’ is synonymous with ‘prevailing with’ God’s words.

⁸⁰ The common meaning of the Greek verb κατισχύω is ‘to prevail’. However, as the regular Septuagintal translation of the Hebrew קָנָה (‘to prevail’; ‘hold firmly to’; ‘devote oneself to’), the idea of ‘devotion to’ or ‘holding firmly to’ the words of God may have been in the translator’s/editor’s mind. So, for instance, in Josh 23:6 we read of being ‘very devoted to observe’ (רַמְּזָה לְאָדָּר מִקְּוִיָּה) the law of Moses, a phrase which is translated in the LXX as, κατισχύσατε οὖν σφόδρα φυλάσσειν. Again, in 2 Chron 31:4 ‘devotion to the law of Yahweh’ (הִתְקַדְּשׁוּ לְיְהוָה) is rendered as, κατισχύσωσιν ἐν τῇ λειτουργίᾳ οἴκου κυρίου. While the editor of Daniel changed the reference to ‘service of the house of the Lord’, the sense of ‘devotion to’ implied by κατισχύω remains. Finally, this sense of ‘devotion to’ may be present in the praise of Josiah found

κατισχύοντες τοὺς λόγους μου.⁸¹ Paul's thought in Phil 2:15-16 could hardly be more consonant. Not only does he describe believers as those who 'shine as lights' in the κόσμος, he does so in the context of speaking about their security on the eschatological 'day of Christ',⁸² assuring them that this privilege belongs to those who hold unto the 'word of life'. Although Paul has ἐπέχω instead κατισχύω and has attached the modifier ζωῆς to λόγος (perhaps under the influence of εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον in Dan 12:2), his point, not to mention his vocabulary, is strikingly similar to that in the Daniel text, warranting the suggestion that Paul's comments are deliberately styled on (the apostle's memory of) the Greek text of Daniel 12. It is the faithful holding of λόγον ζωῆς, expressed through godly conduct, that will ensure the Philippians' endurance to the end, and thus, give Paul his opportunity to boast on the Day of Christ. The exhortation of Phil 2:16 is, thus, the fitting climax to a section beginning with the words: "Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents" (1:27-28a).

It must be conceded that the equation between λόγον ζωῆς and the 'gospel' assumed in so many interpretations (and in my own above) is not certain. Of the 20 occurrences of the anarthrous λόγος in Paul only three (excluding Phil 2:16) signify the message of salvation and in each case grammatical considerations make the noun definite, something that cannot be said for λόγον ζωῆς.⁸³ Moreover, while one occurrence of λόγος in

in Sir 49:3. King Josiah is said to have 'directed his heart toward the Lord (κατεύθυνεν πρὸς κύριον τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ and κατίσχυσεν τὴν εὐσέβειαν.

⁸¹ These 'words' no doubt correspond to the 'ordinances' (πρόσταγμα) which, according to v.4, are to be sealed up in the book of Daniel: καὶ σύ Δανιηλ κάλυψον τὰ προτάγματα καὶ σφράγισαι τὸ βιβλίον ἕως καιροῦ συντελείας.

⁸² The notion of 'shining' in darkness unto the eschatological day is not peculiar to Dan 12:1-3 and Phil 2:15-16. The War Scroll from Qumran contains similar motifs. Note especially *1QWar Scroll* (1Q33) 1.8-9: "And the sons of justice shall shine to all the edges of the earth, they shall go on shining, up to the end of all the periods of darkness; and in the time of God, his exalted greatness will shine for all the eternal times, for peace and blessing, glory and joy, and length of days for all the sons of light."

⁸³ 1 Thess 1:5, 2:5, 2:13, 4:15; 1 Cor 1:5, 1:17, 2:1, 4:10, 12:8, 14:9; 2 Cor 6:7, 8:7; Gal 5:14; Phil 4:15, 4:17; Col 2:23. Strictly speaking λόγος in 1 Cor 15:2 is anarthrous but here the pronoun τίς takes the place of the article (τίνι λόγῳ – "by which word"). Two of the three occurrences of λόγος in 1 Thess 2:13 are attached τοῦ θεοῦ (an obvious subjective genitive) and therefore require no article to make λόγος definite: it is God's Word. This grammatical reality can hardly extend to λόγον ζωῆς in Phil 2:16.

Philippians refers to the missionary message (1:14 τὸν λόγον λαλεῖν) two of the remaining three occurrences do not refer to speech at all but rather to a ‘matter/principle’ (4:15) or a financial ‘account’ (4:17). Such flexibility of usage within the epistle itself warrants caution in discerning the precise referent of λόγον ζωῆς in 2:16, especially in view of the absence of the definite article. It remains a distinct possibility, therefore, that our present text concerns not (clinging to) the word of life but (retaining) the ‘principle’ or ‘fact’ of life itself,⁸⁴ an interpretation which goes back as far John Chrysostom (*Hom. Phil.* 62.244).

Phil 2:16 does not refer to congregational missionary proclamation. Rather, it most likely concerns the Philippians’ devotion to the life of obedience, an obedience which according to Paul will shine amidst a corrupt world. It is possible that Paul hoped such ‘shining’ lives would influence an unbelieving society.⁸⁵ Thus, the phrase may have a certain ‘missionary accent’ but this would have to be thought of in terms of ethics not proclamation,⁸⁶ and the point is made with such ambiguity that Paul can hardly have intended to stress the theme.⁸⁷ In Chapter Nine I will offer a full account of the missionary significance for Paul of his converts’ ethical conduct.

2.4. *Ephesians 6:15*

As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace (καὶ ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης).

The secondary Eph 6:15 also describes believers’ fidelity to the gospel. The connection between 6:13-17 and the divine warrior passage in LXX Isa 59:15b-19⁸⁸ is clear: the warrior of Isaiah dresses in righteousness as a breastplate (ἐνεδύσατο δικαιοσύνην ὡς θώρακα) and places a helmet of salvation on his head (περιέθετο περικεφαλαίαν σωτηρίου ἐπὶ τῆς

⁸⁴ Similar uses of λόγος are found in Phil 4:15 and Col 2:23.

⁸⁵ Calvin so interpreted this passage: Calvin, *Philippians*, 258.

⁸⁶ So also Schenk, *Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus*, 222-23.

⁸⁷ The Jewish texts treating ‘ethical apologetic’ contain far greater clarity than does Paul’s (if, indeed, Paul intended such a reference).

⁸⁸ For a thorough treatment of the significance of this Isaianic background for the writer of Ephesians, see: Neufeld, T. R. Y. *Put on the Armour of God: the divine warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians*. Edited by Stanely E. Porter. Vol. 140, *JSNTSup*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.

κεφαλῆς). The ‘messianic’ Isa 11:5⁸⁹ may also account for some of the language and themes in this passage.⁹⁰

In Isa 59:15-19 it is God (and his Messiah – Isa 11:5) who dresses in the war outfit, not the faithful.⁹¹ So here (6:13), it is God’s own armor and deeds which are referred to, not the personal qualities of his people – τοῦ θεοῦ being read as a subjective genitive. Thus the believer is to put on God’s *truth* (either the truth of the Gospel or God’s ‘faithfulness’⁹²), God’s *righteousness* (in terms of Second-Isaiah it is virtually synonymous with ‘salvation’), his *salvation, faith*, and so on.⁹³ The final item in the list – the sword of the Spirit – is also a reference to God’s action, not the believer’s. It is ‘God’s word’ to people, not the believer’s word about God, as Isa 59:21 makes plain.⁹⁴

The verse has been taken as the writer’s encouragement of believers to engage in the proclamation of the Gospel of peace.⁹⁵ O’Brien proposes four arguments.⁹⁶ First, he insists that the noun ἐτοιμασία “signifies a state of being ready for action,”⁹⁷ which for him must mean readiness to proclaim the gospel. He adds also that εὐαγγέλιον is a noun of agency as

⁸⁹ LXX Is 11:5 – καὶ ἔσται δικαιοσύνη ἐζωσμένος τὴν ὀσφὺν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀληθεία εἰλημένος τὰς πλευράς.

⁹⁰ So Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 767; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 436. Others have sought to account for the imagery with reference to Qumranic material and/or various Greco-Roman military writings of the period. For a good account of the various possible backgrounds to the military language of 6:10-20, see, Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 433-438.

⁹¹ This is emphasized in the opening words of the passage: “The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, and was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm brought him victory, and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness like a breastplate ...” (vv.15b-17a).

⁹² In Isa 11:5 (the waist-belt of) ἀλήθεια translates the Hebrew אֱמֻנָה (‘steadfastness, faithfulness’).

⁹³ See the helpful discussion in Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 201-205: “All the weapons listed denote primarily God’s gifts ...It is not a case of correct usage but of whether or not the divine weaponry has been received or put on” (205). So also, Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 270; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 437; Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 768; Best, *Ephesians*, 598-99.

⁹⁴ Isa 59:21 – “And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord: my spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth.”

⁹⁵ O’Brien titles his chapter on Ephesians 6:10-20, *The Pauline Great Commission*, and translates the verse as “the readiness to announce the gospel of peace.” O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 109-131. So also, Gnllka, *Der Epheserbrief*, 311-12; Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 278; Stott, *Ephesians*, 279-280.

⁹⁶ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 475-79.

⁹⁷ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 477.

it is so often in Paul. The latter point is readily accepted. In fact, it is supported by the fact that Eph 2:17, upon which 6:15 reflects, uses the verbal form. On the former point, it will be shown below that ‘readiness’ is not a natural connotation of ἔτοιμασία. The word implies ‘fixedness’.

Secondly, O’Brien believes the Isaianic background (Isa 52:7) points to the herald’s readiness to proclaim the message. He acknowledges that the text does not contain such a word but adds, “the notion of the messenger’s preparedness to announce the good tidings to Zion is obvious.”⁹⁸ Without knowing what in Isa 52:7 makes the notion of ‘readiness’ obvious to O’Brien, it is difficult to comment. The Isaianic text simply eulogizes over the *fact* of the proclamation not the readiness of the herald to do so. Isa 40:9 is perhaps more conducive to O’Brien’s suggestion since there the herald appears ‘poised’ to proclaim but does not yet do so.

Thirdly, O’Brien points to Eph 2:17 to suggest that the “focus is upon the proclamation of the gospel of peace to those for whom this reconciliation has been won.”⁹⁹ The observation is valid but it cuts both ways. That 2:17 lies behind 6:15 implies that it is *Jesus’* proclamation, not the believer’s, that is in view in the latter passage. The fact that believers are nowhere else in the letter (or the Pauline corpus) portrayed as proclaiming the gospel does not commend the reading proposed by O’Brien.

Fourthly, O’Brien points to Col 4:6 calling it “the parallel passage”. He draws attention to the fact that there Paul exhorts the Colossians to speak graciously to outsiders. This, he believes, encourages a missionary interpretation of Eph 6:15. However, it is debatable that Col 4:6 is in any way parallel to Eph 6:15, since the two passages do not share a single word or part of speech.

Col 4:2-4 finds a parallel in Eph 6:18-20, Col 4:5 finds a parallel in Eph 5:15-16, and Col 4:7-8 finds a parallel in Eph 6:21-22. But Col 4:6 finds no parallel anywhere in Ephesians. It is as if the author of Ephesians has deliberately omitted the ‘missionary’ reference contained in Col 4:6. Indeed, this might also be implied by the fact that while Col 4:5 is ‘missionary’ in its context (“Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time”), the parallel in Eph 5:15-17 contains no reference to outsiders, and (unlike Col 4:2-5) is removed entirely from the section concerning Paul’s missionary activity (Eph 6:19-20).

⁹⁸ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 477.

⁹⁹ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 477.

In light of the above interpretation of God's armour, it is preferable to understand the proclamation of Eph 6:15 as something God or his Messiah has done already for believers.¹⁰⁰ This reading finds support in Eph 2:17. There, in a conflation of Isa 52:7 and 57:19, Jesus is presented as having previously 'evangelized peace' (εὐηγγελίσαστο εἰρήνην).¹⁰¹ Thus, when only a few chapters later the writer employs the phrase 'the gospel of peace' (τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης) the readers "would no doubt be reminded of the notions of peace being preached to Gentiles and peace being preached to Jews in ch 2.17."¹⁰² In other words, that which the Christians are to take up in 6:15 is not their own missionary zeal, but Jesus' prior proclamation of the gospel. Jesus is the one who (in terms of Isa 52:7) announced the news of peace and now Christians are to 'fix' their feet with that proclamation. The mention of 'feet' here should not be taken to imply a reference to missionary 'movement', as if believers were to run out and proclaim the gospel after the pattern of Jesus.¹⁰³ The writer is simply making felicitous use of the reference to ποδῆς in Isa 52:7 and appropriating it within his description of the believer's battle dress. Jesus was the eschatological herald of peace predicted in Isaiah 52:7¹⁰⁴ (Eph 2:17); believers are now to secure their own feet with the content of *his* proclamation.

The phrase 'in readiness' (ἐν ἔτοιμασίᾳ – 6:15), then, is not referring to believers' readiness to declare peace, but to their 'stability'¹⁰⁵ in making a stand¹⁰⁶ for the socio-theological harmony which the *Messiah* announced and created.

¹⁰⁰ While O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 478, acknowledges that the items of the armour correspond to attributes of God (his righteousness, etc), he believes the reference to footwear in 6:15 is "an exception."

¹⁰¹ The Isaianic background of Eph 2:13-17 is thoroughly explored in Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 23-55.

¹⁰² Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 192.

¹⁰³ Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 195, remarks: "The lack of reference to light sandals [of the herald] probably shows that the writer did not identify his audience with the Lord's messenger of Isa 52. Consequently the focus is on the message, not the messenger."

¹⁰⁴ The importance of this Isaianic background for the Pauline concept of 'heralding the gospel' is explored in the following chapter.

¹⁰⁵ On the various translational possibilities of ἔτοιμασία see, Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 797-799. Barth, 770, also opts for the meaning 'stability' or 'firmness'. So, most recently, Best, *Ephesians*, 599-600.

¹⁰⁶ In light of the central exhortation of this section (v.14 – στήτε οὓν), the phrase ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας probably implies 'standing for or within' the gospel.

2.4.1. The meaning of *ἐτοιμασία*

Although the noun *ἐτοιμασία* occurs only here in the New Testament, the usage in the Septuagint establishes quite clearly that the key idea behind the term is not ‘preparedness’ (a meaning attested to just once) but ‘fixedness’.

The noun *ἐτοιμασία* appears 11 times in the Septuagint, only once with the meaning ‘preparation/readiness’. The reference is *Wis* 13:11-12 where we read: “A skilled woodcutter may saw down a tree easy to handle and skillfully strip off all its bark, and then with pleasing workmanship make a useful vessel that serves life's needs, and burn the cast-off pieces of his work to prepare his food, and eat his fill (*εἰς ἐτοιμασίαν τροφῆς ἀναλώσας ἐνεπλήσθη*).”

Throughout the rest of the LXX the noun *ἐτοιμασία* consistently translates the Hebrew *כָּבַד* (‘fix’, ‘establish’) and its related verbs and nouns. The noun *ἐτοιμασία* stands for the verb *כָּבַד* (‘fix’, ‘establish’) on three occasions: in LXX Ps 9:37-38 (MT 10:17-18): “O LORD, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen (*כָּבַד*) their heart, you will incline your ear” (v.17). The LXX changes the sentences so as to create a parallelism which does not exist in the MT. Thus, we read: *τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν τῶν πενήτων εἰσήκουσεν κύριος τὴν ἐτοιμασίαν τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν προσέσχεν τὸ οὖς σου*. Two interpretations are possible. If *ἐτοιμασία* is intended to be synonymously parallel with *ἐπιθυμία* we ought to understand *ἐτοιμασία* in the sense of the ‘cause’ (of the poor). The following verse may support such a reading (“to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed ...”). More simply, however, the noun may just mean ‘establishment’, corresponding closely to the meaning of the Hebrew verb it translates. ‘Readiness’ or ‘preparation’ is not a natural reading. In LXX Ps 64:10 (MT 65:10) we read: “You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it.” The final clause of the LXX translation reads: *ὅτι οὕτως ἡ ἐτοιμασία σου*. While ‘preparation’ is a possible rendering here, more suitable is the word ‘foundation’ understood as a reference to the way God has established the order of creation. Throughout the Psalms this is certainly the normal meaning of the Hebrew verb when used (as here) in relation to the created order (Ps 8:4; 24:2; 65:7; 74:16; 89:3; 89:38; 93:1; 96:10; 119:90). The only exceptions are Ps 68:10 where the meaning is to ‘restore’ the earth after a drought, and 147:8 where the meaning is to ‘give’ the earth its rain. In LXX Ps 64:10 the noun *ἐτοιμασία* (as the translation of *כָּבַד*) is most naturally read as reflecting the idea of a fixed order in creation. In Nah 2:4 *ἐτοιμασία* translates the verb *כָּבַד* but this time it means ‘arranged’ or ‘set in place’ (for war): “The shields of his warriors are red; his soldiers are clothed in crimson. The metal on the chariots flashes on the day when he musters them (*ἐν ἡμέρα ἐτοιμασίας αὐτοῦ / כָּבַדוֹם בְּיָמָיו*).”

The noun *ἐτοιμασία* stands for the cognate noun *מְכוּנָה* (‘fixed place’, ‘foundation’) on two occasions: In LXX Ps 88:15 (MT 89:14) the meaning ‘foundation’ is obvious: “Righteousness and justice are the foundation (*ἐτοιμασία*) of your throne.” Likewise in 2 Esd 2:68 we read: “As soon as they came to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, some of the heads of families made freewill offerings for the house of God, to erect it on its site (*τοῦ στησαι αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὴν ἐτοιμασίαν αὐτοῦ / מְכוּנָה עָלָיו*.” The use of the verb

ἵστημι in relation to ἐτοιμασία has some affinity with Eph 6:14-15. The same combination of terms appears on two further occasions (Dan 11:7, 21. See below).

The noun ἐτοιμασία stands for the cognate noun הַנְּכֹנֶמ (= ‘base’) on two occasions: 2 Esd 3:3 reads: “They set up the altar on its foundation (ἐτοιμασία / הַנְּכֹנֶמ). So also in Zech 5:11 – “To the land of Shinar, to build a house for it; and when this is prepared, they will set the basket down there on its base (ἐτοιμασία / הַנְּכֹנֶמ).”

The noun ἐτοιμασία stands for the related noun יָבֵּ (‘base’, ‘pedestal’, ‘office’) on three occasions in Daniel 11. In 11:7 a new king is said to “stand in the place” of another (στήσεται ... τῆς ἐτοιμασίας); in v.20 a ruler rises up upon the place of another (ἀναστήσεται ... ἐπὶ τὴν ἐτοιμασίαν αὐτοῦ); in v.21 yet another king “stands upon the place” of the former one (στήσεται ἐπὶ τὴν ἐτοιμασίαν αὐτοῦ).

Hence, with the exception of *Wis* 13:11-12, the noun ἐτοιμασία throughout the Septuagint consistently refers to the place upon which (or manner in which – Nah 2:4) something is *fixed*. It is precisely this meaning that is connoted in Eph 6:15, especially since (as in Dan 11:7, 21; 2 Esd 2:68) ἐτοιμασία is connected to the verb ἵστημι (v.14).

Several renderings of the sentence thus emerge. If ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ is read adverbially the emphasis is upon ‘securely’ fastening one’s shoes. The phrase τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης would then be a genitive of origin implying that security comes from the gospel. Alternatively, ἐν may be associative as it regularly is in Ephesians (1:3, 1:8, 2:15; 6:2, 6:4, 6:14, 6:16), producing the meaning “Shod the feet *with* the ἐτοιμασία (understood as a reference to boots as a sturdy foundation) of the gospel of peace.”¹⁰⁷ In this case, the genitive would either be one of origin or of apposition. If the latter, the sturdy footwear would be a reference to the gospel itself, an interpretation which is certainly consonant with the author’s belief that the gospel is the foundation of the church’s faith (1:13; 2:17-22; 3:6). The fact that three of the other items of the soldier’s clothing are described by appositional genitives makes this the preferred reading, in my opinion.¹⁰⁸ In v.16 the writer is thus urging his readers to fasten their

¹⁰⁷ “A better interpretation of ἐτοιμασία, therefore, would be ‘equipment’ or even ‘foundation’ ... to indicate that which enables the feet to stand firmly. The ‘gospel of peace’ would then be understood as the equipment with which the believer’s feet are shod, or the immovable foundation upon which he stands in his conflict with the spiritual hosts of wickedness” (Roels, *God’s Mission*, 218).

¹⁰⁸ v.14 τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης; v.16 τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως; v.17 τὴν περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου. The final item is not described with an appositional genitive but with a subjective genitive (τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος). The writer then qualifies what he means in the words ὃ ἐστὶν ῥῆμα θεοῦ. Something of a three-fold pattern thus emerges throughout vv.14-16: a command to dress; the manner of dress; a theological clarification. The pattern is not perfectly consistent, for in the first line the manner of dress (‘belt’) must be supplied. The substantive ζώνη is surely to be understood given the presence of the verb περιζώννυμι.

feet with the ‘foundation’ or ‘fixedness’ of the gospel of peace preached by Jesus.¹⁰⁹

As the Ephesians secure their footing with the gospel of peace, they will be able to stand against the forces of evil. One cannot rule out the possibility that announcing the gospel to others was, in the writer’s mind, part of such faithfulness, but as it stands the text does not invite such an interpretation: “the reference is far too ambiguous and uncertain to be considered an intentional and positive encouragement to direct preaching of the gospel peace.”¹¹⁰

2.5. *Ephesians 6:17*

Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (δέξασθε καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος, ὃ ἐστὶν ῥῆμα θεοῦ).

P. T. O’Brien understands the exhortation of Eph 6:17b as a reference to missionary speech on the part of believers. Following the work of C. E. Arnold,¹¹¹ O’Brien writes draws attention to the *offensive* nature of the image of the ‘sword’:

... it was also a weapon of aggression. The sword of the Spirit is identified with the word of God, and we should be in no doubt that this refers to the gospel (cf. Rom 10:8). At v.15 Paul spoke of the ‘readiness’ of the Christian warrior to make known the gospel. Now he goes a step further and mentions the power by which that gospel is successful, namely, the Spirit ... These are the instruments by which God draws

<u>Command to dress</u>	<u>Manner of dress</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὀσφὺν ὑμῶν	(‘belt’ is understood)	ἐν ἀληθείᾳ
ἐνδυσάμενοι	τὸν θώρακα	τῆς δικαιοσύνης
ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας	ἐν ἔτοιμασίᾳ (‘sturdiness’ of shoes)	τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης
ἀναλαβόντες	τὸν θυρεὸν	τῆς πίστεως
δέξασθε	τὴν περικεφαλαίαν	τοῦ σωτηρίου
(δέξασθε)	τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος	ὃ ἐστὶν ῥῆμα θεοῦ

A similar conclusion about the structure is affirmed by Roels, *God’s Mission*, 218. An alternative pattern – serving a similar interpretation of Eph 6:15 – is proposed by Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 193-94.

¹⁰⁹ In view of the strong theme of ‘peace’ among believers evidenced throughout Ephesians (2:14, 15, 4:3, 6:23) and the fact that this section comes in that part of the letter which deals with socio-ethical instructions (4:17-6:20), it is best to understand 6:15 as urging believers to strive to keep the “bond of peace” (4:3) proclaimed in Jesus’ gospel of peace for Jew and Gentile alike. So also Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 449.

¹¹⁰ Roels, *God’s Mission*, 218.

¹¹¹ Arnold, *Ephesians: Power and Magic*, 111.

men and women into a relationship with himself ...The primary aggressive action the Christian is called upon to take is the spreading of the gospel in the world.¹¹²

That ῥῆμα θεοῦ refers to the message of salvation, or ‘gospel’, is clear. Immediately following the reference to the divine warrior in LXX Isa 59:17-19 comes the promise of a Redeemer (ὁ ῥυόμενος) who will turn ungodliness from Jacob (v.20). This is followed by a reference to God’s (new?) covenant (διαθήκη) which is to be fixed eternally in the mouths of Zion’s redeemed: “‘My Spirit (πνεῦμα) which is upon you and the words (ῥῆμα) which I have placed in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth and the mouth of your offspring,’ says the Lord.” The parallelism between πνεῦμα and ῥῆμα in this text and its close proximity to the warrior passage just two verses earlier make it likely that LXX Isa 59:21 lies directly behind the reference in Eph 6:17b to the “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” That the Redeemer of Isa 59:20 was understood by Paul as a reference to the Messiah himself¹¹³ makes it likely that in the mind of the author of Ephesians the particular ‘word of God’ referred to in Eph 6:17b is that about the redeemer, Jesus, himself.¹¹⁴ It is this ‘word’ the Ephesians are to take up.

Does the reference in Isa 59:21 to the word of God being placed in the ‘mouths’ of the faithful support a missionary reading of Eph 6:17b? Probably not. It should be noted that Isaiah clearly has in view the faithful rehearsal of God’s covenant words in family and liturgical settings. This is precisely what ‘taking up the word of God’ most naturally means in Eph 6:17b, since both liturgical recitation (5:19-20) and family instruction (Eph 6:4) have already featured in the parenthesis of the epistle.

Of course, it may perhaps be argued that the command to ‘take hold’ of this Messianic proclamation implies that Christians are now aggressively to proclaim it themselves. While this cannot be excluded, it is not implied by the text itself since the verb δέχομαι always has a passive meaning in Paul, connoting simply to ‘receive’, ‘accept’ or ‘welcome’ a person or thing, and is almost always associated with accepting the gospel or some other instruction.¹¹⁵ As with Eph 6:15, then, Eph 6:17 refers to a faithful acceptance of the gospel.

¹¹² O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 125.

¹¹³ Paul’s quotation of the text in Rom 11:26 makes this plain.

¹¹⁴ Jesus is portrayed as ὁ ῥυόμενος several times in Paul: 1 Thess 1:10; Rom 7:24-25 (11:26); Col 1:13.

¹¹⁵ 1 Thess 1:6, 2:13; 1 Cor 2:14; 2 Cor 6:1, 8:17, 11:4; Gal 4:14; Col 4:10; 2 Thess 2:10.

The imagery of the ‘short-sword’ (μάχαιρα, as opposed to the longer ρομφαία) need not imply that believers were to go on the missionary offensive,¹¹⁶ any more than the shoes of v.15 imply that Christians are to venture on missionary travels. In any case, as Moritz points out, the fact that the short-sword was used for close range combat tells us nothing about whether such combat was offensive or defensive.¹¹⁷ The interpretation of Arnold and O’Brien is consonant with modern missiological thinking but has little support in the text itself. The principal exhortation of the whole passage (and, therefore, the central strategy for conquering the forces of evil) is, after all, to ‘stand’ (στῆτε).¹¹⁸ In the writer’s mind, the faithful reception of the Word by a believing community is (because it is the word of the conquering Messiah), in itself, a powerful assault on the powers of darkness.¹¹⁹

3. Paul’s converts as *partners* for the gospel

While the passages studied above yield no positive results in the search for evidence that Paul expected his converts to proclaim the gospel, two remaining texts are of great significance for the question of Paul’s congregational mission expectations. Here Paul describes believers as *partners* in the promotion of the gospel.

3.1. *Philippians 1:3-5*

I thank my God every time I remember you ... because of your sharing in the gospel (ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) from the first day until now.

After his introductory salutation (Phil 1:1-2), Paul advises his hearers that they are often the subject of his regular prayers. The specific requests (δεήσις) Paul makes on behalf of the Philippians are not articulated until

¹¹⁶ So Arnold, *Powers*, 278-79.

¹¹⁷ Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 199-200; so also Roels, *God’s Mission*, 217 (footnote 131).

¹¹⁸ διὰ τοῦτο ἀναλάβετε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα δυνηθῆτε ἀντιστῆναι ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ καὶ ἅπαντα κατεργασάμενοι στῆναι. στῆτε οὖν ... 6:13-14a

¹¹⁹ One should also not forget that the enemies assumed throughout this passage (and, therefore, the ones on the receiving end of God’s sword) are not the unbelieving peoples of the world who are in need of salvation, but τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις (6:12).

vv.9-11. The intervening verses (vv.3-8) concern the thanksgiving Paul offers to God for the Philippians whenever he says these prayers. More precisely, vv.3-6 describe the ground for thanksgiving and vv.7-8 explain why Paul is moved to such thankfulness. Verses 3-8 provide some significant insights into Paul's understanding of the believer's relation to his gospel.¹²⁰

The first ground for thanksgiving (v.3b) is the Philippians' *remembrance* of Paul and is an allusion to their support of the apostle, most recently expressed in the gift brought to Paul by Epaphroditus.¹²¹ The second cause of thanksgiving is expressed in v.5: "because of your sharing in the gospel (ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) from the first day until now." This statement is of particular importance for the concerns of this chapter. For here Paul's congregational recipients are described not as passive in connection with the gospel, nor are they merely instructed to live lives worthy of the gospel. Rather they are described as exercising *κοινωνία* in relation to the advancement of the gospel.

Κοινωνία is an important Pauline term, occurring some twenty times in the undisputed epistles and four times in 1 Timothy. When *κοινωνία* is

¹²⁰ The syntax of v.3 is unclear. The phrase ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ μνησίᾳ ὑμῶν may be read as "every time I remember (make mention) of you," since the preposition ἐπί often denotes 'time/occasion' and μνησία often refers to the 'mention' one makes of another in prayer (Romans 1:9). However, O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 41-46, points out that in the Pauline thanksgivings the case which normally follows a temporal use of ἐπί is the genitive (1 Thess 1:2; Phlm 4; Rom 1:10; and Eph 1:16). And on the three occasions ἐπί is used in a causal sense (in the thanksgivings), the case which follows is the dative (1 Cor 1:4; 1 Thess 3:9; and Phil 1:5). Furthermore, O'Brien has shown that in extra-biblical Hellenistic sources whenever ἐπί with the dative appears after εὐχαριστέω "it always expresses the ground for thanksgiving" (*Introductory Thanksgivings*, 43).

¹²¹ So O'Brien, *Philippians*, 60; Peterman, *Paul's Gift From Philippi*, 93-99. It is difficult to decide between a subjective or objective reading of the genitive in the phrase τῇ μνησίᾳ ὑμῶν. It is possible that Paul thanks God for all of his 'memories' of the Philippians. This objective sense would be in keeping with the normal usage, as Vincent points out (*Philippians*, 6). However, a subjective genitive is also possible (Baruch 5:5 speaks of God's remembrance of the Israelites in gathering them into his kingdom: τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ μνησίᾳ). This would make for a neat syntactical and thematic balance with v.5 in which Paul offers his second ground for thanksgiving (τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν). Both causes of thanksgiving in the paragraph would be introduced with ἐπί and the dative followed by a subjective genitive of the persons for whom Paul gives thanks. Thematically, this reading would mean that both clauses refer to the financial contributions of the Philippian church, as the following exegesis will show. In Gal 2:10 Paul uses the verb 'remember' with hints of financial support: μόνον τῶν πτωχῶν ἵνα μνημονεύωμεν, ὃ καὶ ἐσπούδασα αὐτὸ τοῦτο ποιῆσαι.

used with an object in the genitive or dative the meaning is ‘sharing in/with’.¹²² When κοινωνία is used with εἰς and the object in the accusative, as in v.5, the meaning is ‘partnership for the sake of’ or even ‘contribution toward’.¹²³ Peterman, however, has rightly cautioned against giving too concrete a meaning to κοινωνία even when used with εἰς. He insists that in 2 Cor 9:13 and Rom 15:26 κοινωνία should still retain its abstract meaning of ‘partnership’ rather than ‘gift’ or ‘contribution’.¹²⁴ Thus, to retain the abstract quality of the word, κοινωνία εἰς in Philippians 1:5 is best rendered ‘partnership for’ rather than ‘contribution toward’ the gospel.

Clearly, Paul is not thinking of the Philippians’ contribution to the content of the gospel. Εὐαγγέλιον in Phil 1:5 is to be read as a noun of agency, referring to the proclamation of the gospel in and beyond Philippi.¹²⁵ It was previously suggested that approximately thirty percent (14 occurrences) of Paul’s nouns in the undisputed letters (approximately one fifth of all occurrences of the root) express the activity of preaching the gospel.¹²⁶ The key question, then, for the concerns of this study is: What ‘contribution’ did the Philippians make toward the proclamation of the gospel?

For P. T. O’Brien, this ‘active participation in the gospel’ (his translation) is to be understood in the widest sense, involving the Philippians’ “actual proclamation of the gospel message to outsiders.”¹²⁷ In support of this interpretation, O’Brien points to Paul’s statements in 1:27-30 and to the frequently ‘dynamic’ nature of the term ‘gospel’ in Paul’s usage.¹²⁸ The former has already been treated above, and it is difficult to

¹²² 1 Cor 1:9; 1 Cor 10:16; 2 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 13:13; Phil 3:10; Phlm 6.

¹²³ So in 2 Corinthians 9:13 Paul speaks of the Corinthians’ prospective generous participation in the Jerusalem collection as, ἀπλότητι τῆς κοινωνίας εἰς αὐτοὺς καὶ εἰς πάντας. Again, in Romans 15:26 Paul advises his hearers that Macedonia and Achaia were pleased κοινωνίαν τινὰ ποιήσασθαι εἰς τοὺς πτωχοὺς. In both instances, the word κοινωνία clearly connotes a ‘contribution to/for’.

¹²⁴ Peterman, G. W. “Romans 15.26: Make a contribution or establish fellowship.” *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994): 457-463.

¹²⁵ O’Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 24.

¹²⁶ On this point see further, O’Brien, “Thanksgiving and the Gospel in Paul,” 153; Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 87; Corrigan, “Paul’s Shame for the Gospel,” 25; Furnish, “Prophets, Apostles and Preachers, 52-53.

¹²⁷ O’Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 25; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 62-63. A broad interpretation of the phrase is accepted by Fee, *Philippians*, 82-85; Muller, *Philippians*, 40-41; Gniska, *Der Philippenerbrief*, 45.

¹²⁸ O’Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 24-25.

see how the latter necessitates O'Brien's conclusion. That Paul describes the gospel as a powerful force that advances despite opposition is readily conceded (see, Phil 1:12; 1 Thess 1:5),¹²⁹ but all one can infer from this is that whatever role is implied by the word 'partnership', it was one which contributed to the powerful onward march of the gospel. O'Brien's case would be stronger had Paul used *κοινωνία* followed by the noun *εὐαγγέλιον* in the genitive or dative case. As it is, *κοινωνία* + *εἰς* with *εὐαγγέλιον* distances the subjects slightly from the activity denoted by 'gospel'. Paul is saying that the Philippians' 'partnership' was *for* the preaching of the gospel, not *in* the task of preaching itself. Reading *εἰς* as 'for the sake of' in relation to *εὐαγγέλιον* finds numerous parallels elsewhere in Paul.¹³⁰

A reference to 'evangelistic outreach' on the part of the Philippians generally or of individuals within the congregation (such as Euodia, Syntyche, Clement) cannot be ruled out in 1:5. It is more likely, though, that the phrase 'partnership for the gospel' refers, in the first instance, to the Philippians' financial support of Paul's preaching of the gospel, as most commentators agree.¹³¹ Two factors commend this reading. First, on each of the two other occasions Paul uses this particular construction (*κοινωνία* with *εἰς* and the accusative) he does so in direct connection with financial contributions. Although 2 Cor 9:13 and Rom 15:26 refer to contributions toward Paul's Jerusalem collection rather than for Paul's direct missionary needs, the financial context and missiological significance of *κοινωνία* + *εἰς* in those passages provides an unmistakable parallel to Phil 1:5.

Secondly, and more significantly, there are strong verbal and thematic parallels between 1:3-7 and 4:10-19, wherein Paul resumes the theme of financial *κοινωνία* for the cause of the gospel.¹³²

¹²⁹ Gnllka, *Der Philipperbrief*, 44, rightly states: "τὸ εὐαγγέλιον erscheint fast personifiziert."

¹³⁰ 2 Cor 2:12; 2 Cor 9:13; Phil 1:12, 1:16, 2:22; Rom 1:1.

¹³¹ So, Martin, *Philippians*, 64; Silva, *Philippians*, 47; Vincent, 7; Witherington, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi*, 37; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 60; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 19; Barth, *Der Brief an die Philipper*, 18; Muller, *Philippians*, 83; Marshall, *Philippians*, 9-10; O'Brien, *Philippians*, 62, also admits that financial contributions are probably at the forefront of Paul's mind.

¹³² G. W. Peterman has laid out the verbal parallels between 1:3-7 and 4:10-20 in some detail in *Paul's Gift From Philippi*, 91-92.

In 4:10-14 Paul ‘rejoices’ that the Philippians have revived their concern for him¹³³ as evidenced by the ‘gift’ brought to him in prison by Epaphroditus. This financial support is described by Paul as a ‘*partnering together* with him in his trouble’ (v.14),¹³⁴ a description which recalls the words of 1:7.¹³⁵ But the current gift is merely the most recent expression of a ‘partnership’ which had existed between Paul and the Philippian congregation for some time, and so in the following verse Paul remarks: “in the early days of the gospel (ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου), when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me (οὐδεμία μοι ἐκκλησία ἐκοινωνήσεν) in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone (v.15).” The connections between this verse and 1:5 should not be missed: i) the relationship between Paul and the Philippians is again described in ‘partnership’ language; ii) the logic of 4:14-15, with its appreciation of current expressions of partnership and grateful recollection of past ones, is virtually identical to that found in summary form in 1:5 (“from the first day until now”);¹³⁶ iii) this partnership is said to be in direct relation to Paul’s missionary proclamation:¹³⁷ in 1:5 it is described as partnership *for the gospel*, in 4:15 it is described as partnership *from the beginning of the gospel*.

Whatever else may have been meant¹³⁸ by the phrase ‘partnership for the gospel’ we can be confident that it at least (if not primarily) refers to the Philippians’ financial support of Paul and his missionary endeavours.¹³⁹

But what of v.6? The participle πεποιθώς may introduce the third reason or content of Paul’s thanksgiving, namely, his confidence that God will complete what was begun in the Philippians.¹⁴⁰ However, the

¹³³ Paul’s ‘rejoicing’ in 4:10 that the Philippians have ἀνεθάλετε τὸ ὑπὲρ ἔμοῦ φρονεῖν parallels the opening statement of the thanksgiving (1:3) in which Paul spoke of his thankfulness to God for the Philippians ‘remembrance’ of him: Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ μνεΐα ὑμῶν.

¹³⁴ 4:14 – συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει.

¹³⁵ 1:7 – ἐν τε τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου ... συγκοινωνοὺς μου.

¹³⁶ So also, Sampley, J. P. *Pauline Partnership in Christ*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980, 61.

¹³⁷ The phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου in 4:15 leaves no doubt that once again Paul’s use of the noun εὐαγγέλιον connotes the activity of preaching the gospel rather than its content.

¹³⁸ In light of the possible evangelistic role of Epaphroditus and of the importance of congregational delegates more generally (discussed in chapter four), it is possible Paul’s phrase in 1:5 includes a reference to the sending to Paul of the Philippians’ ἀπόστολος.

¹³⁹ A broader reading is insisted upon by Hainz, J. *Koinonia: Kirche als Gemeinschaft bei Paulus*. Vol. 16, *Biblische Untersuchungen*. Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1982, 94: However, Hainz pays insufficient attention to the relationship between 1:3-5 and 4:14-18 and, in fact, treats their respective partnership-language in entirely different sections of his book.

¹⁴⁰ O’Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 25. O’Brien calls this verse “the third and ultimate ground for Paul’s thanksgiving to God,” but he does not explain why we should

repetition of the words ἡμέρας and ἄχρι in v.6b and the use of the participle instead of the preposition ἐπί suggest that v.6 provides not another ground for Paul's thanksgiving but an extension of the thought in v.5. The function of the participle is to introduce a parenthetical reflection on the previous statement. Paul is in effect saying: "I am thankful for your partnership for the gospel from the first day right up to now, being confident, in fact, that it will remain even up to the final day."¹⁴¹ The 'good work' (ἔργον ἀγαθόν) of v.6, then, refers to precisely the same thing as the 'remembrance' (ἡ μνεία) in v.3 and the 'partnership' (ἡ κοινωνία) in v.5, namely, the contributions of the Philippians towards Paul's mission (from the earliest days of the mission, up to the present and into the future).¹⁴²

In this regard, the important research of W. Ollrog proves relevant. He has drawn attention to certain technical terms for mission work, including the associated words ἔργον and κόπος¹⁴³ which regularly designate the gospel 'work/labour' of Paul and others.¹⁴⁴ Given the proximity of a reference to the mission (εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) together with the fact that ἔργον elsewhere in Philippians connotes mission work (1:22, 2:30. Cf. 2:25, 3:2, 4:3), the mention of a 'good work' in v.6 is naturally read as a reference to the Philippians' participation in the task of promoting the gospel. In the first instance, their financial contribution is probably in view.¹⁴⁵

take the participle in this 'ultimate' sense. O'Brien sees the three grounds for thanksgiving as expanding in their reference – from financial help in v.3, to wider gospel activities in v.5, and climaxing in with "the heights of eschatological hope" in v.6 (40-41).

¹⁴¹ So also, Fee, *Philippians*, 83-84.

¹⁴² So Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 21-22. Pace Fee, *Philippians*, 86-87; O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 26, who suggests the 'good work' be understood in a "broad sense" pointing to that "work of grace in their lives which began with their reception of the gospel." Peterman, *Paul's Gift From Philippi*, 104-05, suggests that it includes a reference both to the Philippians' partnership in the gospel and God's work of salvation among them.

¹⁴³ Ollrog, *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter*, 70-75, 171.

¹⁴⁴ 1 Thess 3:5; 1 Cor 3:8, 13, 14, 15, 9:1, 16:10; 2 Cor 10:15, 11:23, Phil 1:22, 2:30.

¹⁴⁵ Ware, *Holding Forth*, 172, 238-41, quite implausibly suggests that v.6 refers to the Philippians' own gospel preaching. This is surely to push the 'technical' terminology too far. That ἔργον connotes the 'task' of mission does not require that the particular work of missionary preaching is always in view. Even in 2:30 the ἔργον of Epaphroditus probably relates principally to his bearing of the gift (as a contribution to the mission): ὅτι διὰ τὸ ἔργον Χριστοῦ μέχρι θανάτου ἠγγισεν παραβολευσάμενος τῇ ψυχῇ, ἵνα ἀναπληρώσῃ τὸ ὑμῶν ὑστέρημα τῆς πρὸς με λειτουργίας. That his 'work' is here portrayed as filling the place of services the Philippians could not give personally

A similar reference to congregational participation in mission-ἔργον appears in 1 Cor 15:58 wherein the apostle exhorts: “Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord (ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ τοῦ κυρίου), because you know that in the Lord your labor (ὁ κόπος ὑμῶν) is not in vain.” The injunction is striking in its brevity and lack of connection with the surrounding context, suggesting that the phrase ‘the work of the Lord’ was well understood at Corinth. Given the many references in the epistle to ἔργον as ‘mission’ (3:8, 13, 14, 15, 9:1) the expression probably carries this meaning in 15:58, a reading commended also by the use of ἔργον in relation to the mission work of Timothy and Paul just a few paragraphs later: “he is doing the work of the Lord (ἔργον κυρίου) just as I am” (16:10). What is particularly interesting about the injunction of 15:58 is that, unlike Phil 1:6, it could not refer to the Corinthians’ financial support of the apostle: Paul refuses such contributions from Corinth.¹⁴⁶ The expression must therefore carry a generalized sense, designating mission work in its entirety.¹⁴⁷ What particular mission activities will have constituted for the Corinthians ‘the work of the Lord’ can be decided only after a thorough study of Paul’s congregational mission expectations.¹⁴⁸

I submit that the expression ἔργον ἀγαθόν in Phil 1:6 is parallel with κοινωνία εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον and designates the task of promoting the gospel. Here the context suggests principally a financial reference but it may not be limited to this.¹⁴⁹

The significance of Phil 1:5 for the present study is clear. Although Paul nowhere in his letters describes converts as personally engaged in the *proclamation* of the gospel, in this text he comes quite close, describing his friends at Philippi as intimately involved in gospel outreach: Paul is herald and the Philippians are partners. John Chrysostom, who interpreted this text as a reference to the Philippians’ financial assistance of the

suggests preaching is not the primary referent, since in what sense could Paul have expected the Philippians to preach with/for him in Rome?

¹⁴⁶ A full account of Paul’s financial relationships with his churches appears in chapter four.

¹⁴⁷ Ollrog, *Paulus und seiner Mitarbeiter*, 75.

¹⁴⁸ To pre-empt the findings of chapters 4-5 this ‘work’ may have included ethical and verbal apologetic, financial support of missionaries (other than Paul in the case of the Corinthians), prayer for mission, social integration with unbelievers and open public worship.

¹⁴⁹ The reference in v.7 to ‘sharing’ with Paul in ‘the grace’ (συγκοινωνούς μου τῆς χάριτος) may continue the theme of financial missionary partnership. This reading is strengthened by the observation that in 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 the articular noun χάρις three times refers to congregational financial contributions. Of particular relevance to Phil 1:7, furthermore, is the way χάρις and κοινωνία are placed in apposition in 2 Cor 8:4. The multidimensional nature of χάρις in 2 Cor 8:1-7 is discussed in Harrison, J. R. “Paul’s Language of Grace (χάρις) In Its Greco-Roman Context.” Ph.D., Macquarie University, 1996, 260-265.

apostolic mission, describes well the significance of Paul's deliberate choice of words in Phil 1:5:

Great is that he here witnesseth of them, and very great, and what one might have witnessed of Apostles and Evangelists (ὅπερ ἄν τις ἐμαρτύρησεν ἀποστόλοις καὶ εὐαγγελισταῖς). Ye did not, because ye were entrusted with one city, he saith, care for that only, but ye leave nothing undone to be sharers of my labors, being everywhere at hand, and working with me, and taking part in my preaching.¹⁵⁰

A similar congregational contribution to the advancement of the gospel (εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον), and one that is also called 'partnership', is visible in 2 Cor 9:13.

3.2. 2 Corinthians 9:13

... men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ (τῇ ὑποταγῇ τῆς ὁμολογίας ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ), and for your generosity in sharing with them (κοινωνίας εἰς αὐτούς) and with everyone else (NIV).

Here the apostle describes the Corinthians' generosity in the matter of the Jerusalem collection as a submission/obedience belonging to their Christian confession. While the εἰς in the second part of the clause may point to the object of the submission¹⁵¹ or to the object of the confession,¹⁵² another interpretation is preferred. Paul may mean that the Corinthians' 'submission to their confession' is 'for the sake of the gospel of Christ.' In other words, their generous involvement in the Jerusalem collection somehow benefits or advances the gospel.¹⁵³ As noted previously, such a reading of εἰς in relation to εὐαγγέλιον finds ample support in a number of Pauline texts.¹⁵⁴ In addition, as Thrall concedes, the verb ὁμολογέω, as

¹⁵⁰ *Hom. Phil.* 62.184. The translation is that of Philip Schaff, *NPNF*¹, vol.13, 185.

¹⁵¹ So, Calvin, *2 Corinthians*, 125.

¹⁵² Therefore in the sense of ὁμολογέω ἐν (Matt 10:32). So, Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 445-446; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 293; Lenski, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 1184-85. Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 123, believes ὁμολογία is to be understood not as Christian confession but in its legal sense as a "public act involving a document which codifies the transaction."

¹⁵³ So Betz, *2 Corinthians 8-9*, 124.

¹⁵⁴ 2 Cor 2:12; Phil 1:5, 1:12, 1:16, 2:22; Rom 1:1.

a confession of faith, is nowhere in the NT followed by εἰς with the accusative of the content of faith.¹⁵⁵

The coordinate clause which follows in 2 Cor 9:13b explicates the notion of ‘confessional obedience for the sake of the gospel’ in terms of financial *partnership*: ἀπλότητι τῆς κοινωνίας εἰς αὐτοὺς καὶ εἰς πάντας. The parallel with Phil 1:5 is striking: both passages speak of congregational contribution to the work of the gospel as an expression of κοινωνία. The double use of εἰς in this clause (“for them and for all”) is further suggestive of the interpretation offered above in relation to ὁμολογία εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον.

But how can contributions to Paul’s Jerusalem collection be regarded as ‘for the gospel’? K. F. Nickle¹⁵⁶ in his study of Paul’s collection suggests that the ‘theological’ significance of the collection for Paul moved in three directions, all of which may be understood as promoting Paul’s gospel. First, it was considered an act of ‘charity’ arising from the past teachings of Jesus and from the fundamental convictions of the Pauline gospel, with its emphasis on the sacrifice of Christ. Thus, participation in the collection was a living out of these gospel-convictions.

Secondly, the collection was understood by Paul as an expression of the ‘unity’ of the church made up of Jews and Gentiles, a special concern of the apostle’s ministry. The collection, then, was a means of establishing the equitable socio-religious partnership between Gentiles and Jews that was proclaimed in Paul’s gospel.¹⁵⁷

Thirdly, Nickle discusses the ‘eschatological’ significance of the collection, wherein the Jewish “expectation that all the nations would stream to Zion to worship the true God” finds its fulfilment,¹⁵⁸ and so “the witness of the Gentile delegates to the reality of their reception of redemption would, by provoking jealousy among the Jews, revitalize the hitherto ineffectual mission to Israel and prompt their acceptance of the gospel.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Thrall, *2 Corinthians*, 590. Thrall himself, however, takes εἰς as equivalent to ἐν in Matt 10:32. The evidence of Paul’s usage of εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον (referred to previously), however, should take precedence in my opinion.

¹⁵⁶ Nickle, K. F. *The Collection: a study in Paul's strategy*. Vol. 48, *Studies in Biblical Theology*. London: SCM Press, 1966.

¹⁵⁷ cf. Rom 9:25-32 and 15:26-27. On the Greco-Roman conventions of giving and receiving as it bears upon this dimension of the collection, see: Peterman, “Romans 15.26,” 457-463.

¹⁵⁸ Nickle, *The Collection*, 138. On the allusions to the pilgrimage motif (Isa 55:10; Hos 10:12) in 2 Cor 9:9-11, see: Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 291-292; Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 423-426. See also our discussion of the motif in chapter one.

¹⁵⁹ Nickle, *The Collection*, 136.

It is especially in this sense, noted also by D. Georgi,¹⁶⁰ that the phrase εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ in 2 Cor 9:13 may be understood as a congregational contribution toward the cause of the gospel.

In addition we note the view of R. P. Martin who suggests that the Gentile gift (in which the Corinthians participate), if acceptable to the Jewish brethren, is an apologetic vindication of Paul's gospel, with its insistence on the validity of uncircumcised believers in the family of God.¹⁶¹

4. Conclusion: the structure of Pauline mission

Paul usually portrayed believers as passive in relation to the preaching of the gospel. The great majority of instances in which a relationship between believers and the gospel is mentioned, describes this relationship as one of *receipt* – believers are those who have been converted through the gospel preaching of others. Several other passages speak of an ongoing connection between believers and the gospel in terms of fidelity (ethically or confessionally) to the εὐαγγέλιον. Two texts in the Pauline corpus – Phil 1:5 and 2 Cor 9:13 – depict a relationship between believers and the gospel that may be regarded as ‘missionary’. The concept of ‘partnership’ found in these texts provides an important window into the apostle's conception of his converts' role in the gospel-mission and will be explored at length in chapters six through ten.

For now, a striking conclusion may be drawn. For Paul, the heralding of the gospel was of central importance for his conception of the mission duty of both himself and his colleagues. When one turns to the apostle's descriptions of his converts' relation to this language, however, an entirely different picture emerges. Nowhere are believers portrayed as responsible for or engaged in the task of proclaiming of the gospel. One cannot avoid the impression that Paul did not understand his converts' role in the advancement of the gospel as the same as, or even as similar to, his own. The above study lends exegetical weight to the historical judgement of Kenneth Latourette many years ago:

¹⁶⁰ Georgi, D. *Remembering the Poor: the history of Paul's collection for Jerusalem*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992, 99-102.

¹⁶¹ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 294. Critical of the eschatological interpretations of the collection, Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*, 268-304 proposes Paul's discussion of the project is to be understood in its ecumenical dimension and is to be set against ancient notions of reciprocity.

[It] would probably be a misconception to think of every Christian of the first three hundred years after Christ as aggressively seeking converts. Such pictures as we have of these early communities in the New Testament and in the voluminous writings of these centuries warrant no such conclusion. In none of them does any hint occur that the rank and file of Christians regarded it as even a minor part of their duty to communicate their faith to others.¹⁶²

The above conclusion, however, in no way denies or diminishes the involvement of Paul's converts in mission activities other than 'gospel-proclamation' – see Chapters 6-10 – but the fact that this, the apostle's central missionary idea, is not evidenced in relation to the activity of the 'rank and file' calls for an explanation. The following two chapters seek to do just that.

¹⁶² Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* 1, 117.