

Textual Analysis Portfolio – Romans 5:12-21 & Philippians 2:1-11

Romans 5:12-21 and Philippians 2:1-11 are key passages that detail Paul's views of Jesus and the role he plays in salvation. The two passages are remarkably linked, in that Philippians emphasises the obedience of Christ in life, whilst Romans similarly focuses on Christ's obedience in death (Wright, 1978, p.74).

Romans 5 has been seen as "a pivot on which the letter's argument turns" (Elliot, 1990, p.226), transitioning from the rhetoric in chapters 1-4 to that of 5-8. The passage in question has been described as "one of Paul's most complex passages, grammatically and theologically" (Wright, 2013, pp.106-07). The Philippians passage, known as the *Carmen Christi*, is a major example of Paul's transmission and reworking of early Christian tradition (Brown, 1996, p.491; Martin, 1967, p.315), though there are some scholars who affirm that it is original to Paul (e.g., Holloway, 2017, p.115). Both passages are essential for understanding Paul's anthropology, his doctrine of the atonement, and his Christology.

Romans 5:12-21 – Adam and Christ

12 – *"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned"* – Having established Abraham as a model for faith in Romans 4, Paul begins his discussion on the origin and spread of sin. Translational issues affect the interpretation of 5:12 with many scholars noting that the sentence *"...and death through sin, and so death spread to all men..."* appears to be missing a main clause before "and so" (καὶ οὕτως). Some have suggested that Paul simply broke off his construction of the sentence (e.g., Cranfield, 1968, pp.326-28) whilst others argue from comparisons to Paul's contemporaries and later church fathers that καὶ οὕτως should be rendered as "even so" or "in the same way" (Harring, 2018, pp.735-38). The chiasmic structure of the four clauses in the verse would seem to demonstrate at least some consistency in Paul's thinking here, with sin entering the world and death occurring because of sin, thus death proliferating in the world because of sin (see Moo, 2000, pp.181; Porter, 1991, p.671). The traditional translation insinuates that all men have no choice but to sin

because of Adam's sin, whilst alternative translations place a heavier emphasis on the death brought about by the sin of Adam's descendants. Neither translations appear to fully grasp Paul's idea of dual culpability for the existence of sin: both that of Adam and of future humanity. It is therefore preferable to view this passage as saying, "while it is true that humans die because of the sin of Adam, it is also true that death is a just outcome in view of the fact that all of sinned" (Witherington & Hyatt, 2004, p.147).

13 – *"for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law."* – Here Paul appears to create a syllogism, perhaps with the intent of showing that, despite there being no law before Moses, those living before Moses still suffered death, and thus there must have been some kind of law even before it had been given to Moses (see Poirier, 1996, p.352). This is therefore an emphasis on Paul's belief that the law brings about knowledge of sin, but that there is still a universal law that all men will be judged by, even if there is no awareness of it (cf. Rom. 1:18-20, 2:14, 3:20, 4:15, 7:10; 1 Cor. 15:56). The word "counted" (ἐλλογεῖται) is a rare word in the New Testament only occurring again in Philemon 18, where Paul speaks about the financial "charge" incurred by Onesimus fleeing from his master. This suggests the use of "commercial rather than forensic language" (Witherington & Hyatt, p.147, n.22). It is not a case of God ignoring sin because the law has not come yet, rather as a wilful violation of the law, which could not occur yet as the law had not been given. As F. F. Bruce puts it, "Sin manifests itself in the form of specific transgressions when there are specific commandments to be transgressed" (1985, p.134).

14 – *"Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one to come"* – The contrast between the sinning of pre-Mosaic people (ἁμαρτήσαντας) and the "transgression" (παράβασεως) of Adam emphasises the difference between the two acts, with the latter specifically occurring under a covenant which thus entails specific punishment. Once again, it does not suggest that the pre-law sins were permissible, especially given Paul's argument in Rom. 1:18-32 where he utilises the progressive degradation of humanity in Genesis (see

Esler, 2004, pp.4-16). Rather, Paul emphasises the “equally pernicious” nature of sin even when it did not occur in a covenantal setting and, by enlarge, he indicts Israel as particularly guilty given that they sinned under the privilege of a covenant with God (Dunn, 1988, p.276). Here also begins Paul’s typological comparison of Adam with Christ, in that Adam both “pointed to and pre-figured what would happen” (Lombard, 1981, p.84). In stark contrast to the frequent first-person plural of 5:1-11, which speaks of how “we” are affected by sin and thus saved, Paul shifts to comment on how sin came to be in the first place – through one man – and how it will be eradicated – through a different man (Leggareta-Castillo, 2014, pp.152-53).

15-16 – *“But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of one man, Christ Jesus, abound to the many! And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification”* – The word “free” in these verses is an addition made by modern translations, most notably the ESV and the KJV. The word χάρισμα is derived from χάρις, meaning “grace,” providing a classic example of Paul’s view that God grants free salvation to undeserving humanity. This is contrasted with the trespass as the means by which the many have died. Paul’s use of the rhetorical question “how much more...” is a diatribe that emphasises the disproportionate comparison of Adam and Christ, showing that the actions of the latter had much more power over the former (Porter, pp.674-75). It is here where Paul’s language begins to become more explicitly universalistic. Paul uses πολλοὶ to describe the “many” that have died by Adam’s aforementioned trespass. Curiously, he does not use the word πᾶν or any of its derivatives, which would be the standard word to suggest universality. Yet surely the “many” being referred to by πολλοὶ is the same as the universal indictment seen in the previous verses and elsewhere in Romans. The question here is whether the function of πολλοὶ in this verse literally means “many” or if it is simply a Semitism that means “everyone.” Moo, for example, opts for the latter, but stops

short of affirming that this verse teaches universal salvation (2000, p.184). A parallel usage, however, can be found in Mark 10:45 where Jesus is described as a ransom for the “many” (πολλῶν). If Paul’s soteriology is anywhere near consistent with that of Mark, it is clear that πολλοὶ does indicate a limit to the number which it refers to. Thus, Paul sees God’s grace as something that is given, whilst the many are subjected to the consequences of the trespass.

17-18 – *“For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification for all men”* –

Here, we are again confronted with extremely universalistic language. We should note that Paul does in fact make use of the aforementioned πᾶν (specifically, πάντας) here to describe both the condemned and the justified. It could be argued that the “all” being spoken of are given either damnation (κατάκριμα) or justification (δικαίωσιν), whereas the trespasses of v.15 are of the “many.” The offer of justification in this passage is different to the man’s subjection to sin. Thus, in Paul’s mind, man has no choice but to sin, but they do have a choice to accept the righteousness offered to them (see Witherington, pp.149-50).

Additionally, in Lombard’s meticulous analysis of the passage, he notes that the structure of the passage emphasises the “otherness” of Christ’s actions against those of Adam, similar to v.14 (Lombard, pp.88-89). It is not as simple as all being condemned and subsequently all being justified. Rather, a replacement occurs in which the deed of obedience carries more power than that of disobedience.

19 – *“For as by one man’s obedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous”* – Christ’s actions are contrasted against those of Adam once again in this verse. Similar to v.15 and 18, we should not be so wooden with Paul’s words here. While it is certainly possible that they reflect a universalistic way of thinking, his interchangeable use of “many” and “all” may simply reflect his own unique application of the Greek language. Furthermore, Bruce notes that the “many” in this passage

may be a direct echo to Isaiah 53:11, in which the πολλοῖς are made righteous by the actions of the Servant (Bruce, 1985, p.136). Nevertheless, there is nothing alone in this passage that can be evidenced against the universalistic understanding of Paul's words. The equation of the "many" with "all" is striking and emphasises Paul's belief in the cosmic power of Christ to break the chains of sin.

20 – *"Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more"* – Here we are confronted with Paul's puzzling view of the law. It is clear from Paul's own life that he struggled to find the place of the law in his new theology and whether or not it is something positive (cf. Rom. 7:7-12) or negative (cf. Galatians 3:10-13, 4:5). Paul is explicit here when he affirms how the law came into human history which caused sin to become more apparent. He uses another rare word, παρεῖσθαι, to describe how the law came in. Paul uses this word only once more in Galatians 2:4 to describe the "false brothers" who had secretly snuck into the Galatian congregation. Witherington suggests that this word connotes a form of intrusion (2004, pp.150-51). Though we should be cautious given the rarity of this word, it would seem to suggest that Paul believes the law was where it should not be. At the very least it, reinforces his well-established idea that the law was insufficient in achieving the goal that Christ accomplished, thus establishing his whole argument regarding the law in Galatians. For Romans, on the other hand, Paul intends to show the inappropriateness of the law by demonstrating it increases sin so that the grace of Christ can overflow (ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν).

21 – *"so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* – Paul brings his discussion of the dominion of sin full circle. The "reign" of sin that he first mentioned in v.14 is brought to an end by Christ. Because death has already occurred as the "divinely willed outcome of man's disobedience" (Dunn, p.348), the power of sin ceases for the believer once the resurrection of the dead occurs. Those who are saved via Christ's righteousness are then beyond the

reach of death. The replacement of v.17-18 is manifest here where grace now reigns where sin once did.

Philippians 2:1-12 – Jesus, the Form of God

1-2 – *“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind”* – As Paul mentioned at the first chapter of this letter, his situation was dire, having been imprisoned (either in Rome or Ephesus). The love and affection the Philippians showed him brought him such fulfilment, he wished to see it abound within their community. The purpose of this passage is paraenetic in nature (Bird & Gupta, 2020, p.41; Brown, p.493). It serves as an appropriate transition in the later “Christ hymn” of v.6-11 which Paul utilises for his purpose of exhorting the Philippians. The “any” triad here is used to emphasise the role that Christ and the Spirit play in bringing the Philippian community together through spiritually guided ethics (see analysis in Holloway, 111). As we will see again in v.5, similar concepts of the believer’s mind are found in Romans 12:2 and is also picked up by the author(s) of Ephesians 4:20-23 and Colossians 3:10. This revolves around a central Pauline theme regarding newness, regeneration, and recreation in the believer.

3-4 – *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others”* – Paul once again emphasises the love and unity he wants to see from the Philippians. The deliberately ethical nature of these introductions will lead into the example of Christ in the subsequent verses (Holloway, p.260 & 267). His words against “selfish ambition” are notable for going against the grain of traditional values concerning personal achievement in the ancient world. The honour-shame dichotomy was an important factor in the lives of virtually all ancient people, especially those in the Graeco-Roman world.

To deny oneself of the successes of their own efforts (which is not the object of Paul's condemnation, rather the subsequent pride that comes from it) strikes at the core of ancient class struggle and social distinctions (see discussion in Bird & Gupta, pp.68-71). These are overturned and replaced with a new system of cosmic honour, one that places the honour of others over the honour of one's self. This will subsequently play into the portrayal of Jesus in the Christ Hymn, where primacy is given to Jesus' descending from a place of ultimate honour to that of a lowly servant for the purposes of salvation.

5-6 – *“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped”* – The exhortations of the previous four verses had a focus on the Philippians “being of the same mind” (v.2). In verse 5 we see another reference to the “mind” that Paul wants from them, but this time is qualified as the mind “which is yours in Christ Jesus.” This transitions smoothly into the traditional material found in v.6, where the “Christ hymn” begins. The two most puzzling words in this verse are “form” (μορφή) and “grasped” (ἄρπαγμόν). The “form of God” that Christ takes on here has been widely interpreted from meaning God's substance, nature, inner character, status, or a way of thinking (see outline in Bird & Gupta, pp.77-79). Whilst all these models are plausible, another solution sees the “form” as identical to the “image” of God. Charles Talbert observed that there is antithetical parallelism employed in this verse along with the “form of a servant” in v.7 and his self-abasement in v.8. Talbert also sees similar wording in Paul's Adam/Christ typology in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15. This, accordingly, emphasises the theme of Christ's subordination, thus underscoring his obedience as the ideal human figure who has uniquely fulfilled the image of God (Talbert, 1967, 146-52). While Talbert's thesis has not been completely accepted, his general thesis of seeing this verse as paralleled to the subsequent verses speaking about Christ's human form is likely the correct way to read the structure of the hymn: Christ is in the form of God (v.6)/the likeness of men (v.7); he does not grasp at being in the form of God (v.6)/he is found in the same fashion of man (v.7); he empties himself (v.7)/he humbles himself (v.8);

and he becomes a servant (v.7)/he becomes obedient unto death (v.8). Thus, the beginning of the hymn emphasises Christ's obedience, not necessarily his pre-existence (see discussion in Howard, pp.374-78). The "grasping" in v.6 is no less puzzling. The term only occurs here in the New Testament, and thus we have no comparative usages available. It is translated a plethora of different ways including "exploited," "snatching," or even more abstract actions such as self-assertion, usurpation, or regarding something as a prize (see Wright, 1986, pp.321-44). In general, it is simply referring to Christ refusing the temptation to cling on to his equality with God, thus submitting himself to the purpose of his incarnation. This makes sense in the broader context of the hymn being used as an ethical exhortation.

7 – “but he emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” – The position assumed by Christ here is likely of that of the suffering servant of Isaiah 42. Although Paul does not use the same vocabulary as Isaiah, he does use δούλου for “servant” here, which typically denotes servitude and a lowly position. In the context of the preceding ethical exhortations, Paul is essentially saying to the Philippians that Christ, in his position of equality with God, did not take advantage of it, but instead demonstrated obedience in stooping from his high position, leading to his exaltation. Thus, the Philippians, in their similarly low position, must be humble likewise. This is further elaborated in verses 12-18, after the conclusion of the hymn, for the Philippians to apply the example set by Christ.

8 – “And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” – The first stanza of this verse, “being found in human form,” is a direct parallelism to the previous verses speaking about Christ's form. He is first portrayed as being in the form of God (v.6); then in the form of a servant, performing the duties of a servant to the people he has come to (v.7); and then in the simple human form, in which he accepts his role as a human and accepts the natural consequences of being human: death, which Paul qualifies as “even death on a cross” (Robbins, 1980, p.80). Thus, the structure of these verses outlines Christ's self-abasement and journey to the

cross, characteristic of his radical obedience that Paul is exhorting the Philippians to (Taylor, 2012, p.268).

9 – *“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name”* – Here, the shift to the perspective of God’s exaltation of Jesus is significant, with the conjunction Διὸ transitioning the focus to the result of Jesus’ obedience. Talbert’s aforementioned parallelism study once again finds support here, with the noun ὄνομα and the preposition καὶ both being repeated twice. This brings Paul to a “completeness of thought” in speaking about Christ’s role as the obedience second Adam. Consequently, this means that this verse speaks only of Christ’s human existence (Talbert, 144). On the other hand, it is widely believed that this part of the hymn is being used by Paul to denounce the earthly authorities, especially those of Rome (Horsley, 1997, p.141; Wright, 2000, pp.173-81). Being “above” every other name includes that of Caesar, which serves as a key part of his exhortation to the Philippians to abandon the name of Caesar in favour of Christ.

10-11 – *“so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* – This culmination of Paul’s use declaration regarding Jesus’ divinity is derived from the Septuagint version of Isaiah 45:23. Paul already makes this connection in Romans 14:11, written several years before Philippians, but here he relates it to Jesus (Sanders, 2015, pp.603-04; Taylor, p.269). Additionally, the repeated use of ὄνομα in these passages can also be a stand-in for divine titles such as Lord, Christ, Son, or even God (Bird & Gupta, p.85 n.159). This suggests that Paul intends to identify Jesus with God, but is careful not to conflate the two persons (cf. verses 6 and 9), with the reference to Christ as “Lord” being denoting Christ’s exalted status gifted to him by God (v.9). Thus, Paul is reworking the tetragrammaton found in the Old Testament to make it refer to Christ, whom he now identifies alongside God.

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