

Was Timothy in Prison with Paul?

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Paul and Timothy are almost inseparable. The letters to Philemon and the Philippians are addressed from both Paul and Timothy and appear to be sent from prison. This makes most sense if both are in prison, especially given the risk inherent in naming an accomplice who remains free. And when Paul is in prison, Timothy is not sent anywhere. Could it be that Timothy was in prison alongside Paul? The personal tone and content of both letters nonetheless reflect concern only for Paul, what he has done and what will happen to him. No one cares about Timothy, so Timothy is probably not in prison.

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1. Partners in Crime?

Timothy is named as co-sender in both of the letters of Paul which appear to have been written during some form of imprisonment. This raises the question as to whether Timothy is alongside Paul *in* prison, or merely on location with Paul and supporting him.

Paul's letters give the impression that Timothy was the apostle's closest and constant companion (1 Thess 1.1; 2 Cor 1.1; Phlm 1.1; Rom 16.21).¹ Therefore one must wonder under what circumstances Paul could be arrested in the company of Timothy, while Timothy is somehow allowed to remain free.² 2 Cor 1.8–11 recounts the hard times – even unto death – that 'we' (Paul and Timothy) experienced in Asia.³ If Paul's life or liberty is under threat, surely so too is Timothy's.

1 Timothy is in transit during 1 Cor (1 Cor 4.17; 16.10). He is absent from Galatians. Timothy is the ostensible recipient of two independent letters written in Paul's name, another aspect which reinforces the extent of the strength of the tradition linking the two.

2 Unless Paul is placed in chains while Timothy is on one of his journeys.

3 A. Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen: Die Kommunikationsstruktur des Philipperbriefs im Spiegel seiner Abfassungssituation', *NovT* 55 (2013) 140–67, at 150 n. 45: 'Das durchgängige "wir" in 2 Kor 1.8–11 spricht für eine Gruppe. Als Mitabsender wird auch hier Timotheus genannt. Wer sonst noch dazugehörte, ist fraglich.'

In Acts Timothy joins Paul and Silas before they head to Macedonia (Acts 16.1–15), but then disappears from the narrative as Paul and Silas are imprisoned in Philippi (16.16–40) and continue to Thessalonica (17.1–9) and Berea (17.13), only to reappear as Paul is sent on to Athens by himself (17.14–15). Timothy rejoins Paul at Corinth (Acts 18.5) and only by implication was present during Paul's stay in Ephesus (19.22). He appears to join Paul on his return journey towards Jerusalem (Acts 20.4). At no point therefore does Luke-Acts have Timothy in prison, even in Philippi when Silas is locked up.

The postscript to Hebrews however provides a report of Timothy's *release*: γινώσκετε τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν Τιμόθεον ἄπολελυμένον, μεθ' οὗ ἐὰν τάχιον ἔρχηται ὄψομαι ὑμᾶς (Heb 13.23). The only realistic candidate for the first person singular in this passage is Paul. So there is here at least the echo of a tradition of Timothy in prison.⁴

Is it possible that Timothy was also imprisoned alongside Paul? Is this the situation that is reflected in either or both of Paul's prison epistles? What do the letters themselves suggest?

For an examination of the position of Timothy in the prison epistles, the order, date and location of Philippians and Philemon are not central to the question.⁵ Whether Timothy is in prison with Paul is not dependent on an imprisonment in a particular city or a particular date.⁶ In any case, we never discover *how* Paul ended up in prison.⁷

4 J. Graf, *Der Hebräerbrief* (Freiburg: Herder, 1918) 275 n. 2, and E. Grässer, *An die Hebräer* (EKKNT 13.3; Zürich/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benzinger/Neukirchener, 1997) 411 n. 29, both point to instances in early Christian literature in which ἀπολύω can mean 'send off' (Matt 14.15; Mark 6.36 par.; Acts 19.41; 18.25).

5 The debate on the order, date and location of Paul's prison epistles knows no end. M. Gielen, 'Paulus - Gefangener in Ephesus?', *idem, Paulus im Gespräch - Themen paulinischer Theologie* (BWANT 186; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2009) 15–48, at 19–38, has called into serious question the scholarly tendency towards Ephesus. Nevertheless, Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 149–50 and 'Letter from Prison as Hidden Transcript: What It Tells Us about the People at Philippi', *The People beside Paul: The Philippian Assembly and History from Below* (ed. J. A. Marchal; Atlanta: SBL, 2015) 107–40, at 117–18, continues to argue for Ephesus. U. Schnelle, 'Paul's Literary Activity during his Roman Trial', *The Last Years of Paul* (ed. A. Puig i Tàrrach, J. M. G. Barclay and J. Frey; WUNT 352; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015) 433–51, is a recent advocate for Rome as the place of imprisonment and composition. D. Gerber, 'Paul's Literary Activity during his Roman Trial: A Response to Udo Schnelle', *The Last Years of Paul*, 453–68, responds to Schnelle's proposals with a note of caution.

6 There is a (subconscious?) tendency with many who place the letters in Rome to imply that Paul is aware that the end of his life or career is approaching, to the extent that he is able to foresee his own (non-canonical!) death. The rhetoric in Philippians and Philemon cannot be read in the same way as 2 Timothy, a letter probably written after the death of Paul. In both letters Paul at least claims to hope for release (Phlm 22; Phil 1.19, 25–6; 2.24).

7 R. Cassidy, *Paul in Chains: Roman Imprisonments and the Letters of St. Paul* (New York: Crossroad, 2001) 55–67 suggests the accusation of treason (*maiestas*).

One pertinent issue is however the unity of Philippians.⁸ The now traditional division of the letter into three (Phil A, Phil B and Phil C)⁹ is balanced by a resurgence of arguments for the integrity of the canonical letter to the Philippians.¹⁰ Overall there is surely enough evidence that all three ‘sections’ of Philippians represent *Paul* in prison: the *θλίψις* and support of Phil A,¹¹ the unmistakable references to confinement in Phil B,¹² and perhaps the undertones of a final testament in Phil C.¹³ Indeed those who posit unity for Philippians may do so because the content all fits well within a situation of imprisonment. The canonical letter to the Philippians has however only one prescript.¹⁴ It is here that Timothy is named as co-sender. An obvious objection would be that Timothy cannot be

- 8 The unity of Philemon is surely beyond doubt! Theories on Philippians as a compilation build on the various apparent endings in the letter (Phil 3.1a; 4.4-7, 8-9, 20-3) and the unusually early placement of travel plans (Phil 2.19-30).
- 9 Phil A (Phil 4.10-20) is a formal receipt and note of thanks for financial support. Phil B (Phil 1.1-3.1) is a post-trial, pre-verdict letter from prison. Phil C (Phil 3.2-4.1) is an attack on opponents and a defence of Paul’s mission. The assignment of Phil 4.2-9, 21-3 is still a matter of some debate. See e.g. B. D. Rahtjen, ‘The Three Letters of Paul to the Philippians’, *NTS* 6 (1959/60) 167-73. The evidence from the Epistle of the Laodiceans – which draws on Phil 1.1-3.1; 4.8-9, 20-3 – is treated by P. Sellew, ‘Laodiceans and the Philippians Fragments Hypothesis’, *HThR* 87 (1994) 17-28. L. Bormann, *Philippi: Stadt und Christengemeinde zur Zeit des Paulus* (NovTSup 78; Leiden: Brill, 1995) 115, provides a table of researchers’ views on these verses.
- 10 For views which maintain the unity of the canonical letter, see e.g. T. E. Pollard, ‘The Integrity of Philippians’, *NTS* 13 (1966/1967) 57-66 and D. Garland, ‘The Composition and Unity of Philippians’, *NovT* 27 (1985) 141-73. P. Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians: Philosophical Sources and Rhetorical Strategy* (SNTS.MS 112; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 7-33, provides a detailed survey of the arguments for unity.
- 11 L. Bormann, ‘Reflexionen über Sterben und Tod bei Paulus’, *Das Ende des Paulus: Historische, theologische und literaturgeschichtliche Aspekte* (ed. F. W. Horn; BZNW 106; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001) 307-30, at 319: ‘Phil A is ein knappes Dankschreiben für eine Unterstützung, die Paulus von den Philippem in der Bedrängnis (4,14 *θλίψις*) erhält.’
- 12 Bormann, ‘Reflexionen’, 319: ‘Phil B reflektiert noch deutlicher die Situation der Haft (Phil 1,7.12-17). Es muß Verhöre und einen regelrechten Prozeß gegeben haben, denn Paulus spricht von “der Verteidigung des Evangeliums” (1,7.16).’
- 13 A. Standhartinger, “Join in imitating me” (Philippians 3.17): Towards an Interpretation of Philippians 3’, *NTS* 54 (2008) 417-35, at 420, objects to the term ‘Kampfbrief’ or ‘polemical letter’, as it ‘does not sufficiently determine the purpose of writing letter C’. She proposes, at 427-32, reading Phil 3 within the context of early Jewish testament literature.
- 14 S. Porter, *The Apostle Paul: His Life, Thought, and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016) 275, has recently highlighted the inconsistency in claims that early Christians were at once expanding Paul’s thoughts with interpolations and excising much of his correspondence in order to allow compilation: ‘There seems to be an inherent contradiction between retentions of Paul’s writings as valuable and instructive, and expunging some portions. By today’s standards we may think that openings and closings (and other portions now unknown to us?) are not as important, but this merely begs the question: can we say that they were not important for the early church, especially with the innovative Pauline opening, the occasionally theologically

assumed to be co-sender for all three letters. Yet Timothy's faithful presence at Paul's side is such that any attempt to delineate his presence or absence among the supposed three letters to Philippi is bound to speculation. It is therefore surely appropriate to consider the role of Timothy in Philippians as a whole, for it should be demonstrated consistently that he is or is not in prison, regardless of whether one reads Philippians as one letter or as three.¹⁵

The prison epistles also betray no movement of Timothy. Whereas in 1 Thessalonians (3.2, 6) and 1 Corinthians (4.17; 16.10–11) Timothy has been sent on visits to the communities, here he is not the messenger (it is Epaphroditus in Phil 4.18; and possibly Onesimus in Phlm 10¹⁶).

Timothy is also a named co-sender in 1 Thessalonians and 2 Corinthians. Yet there is a great difference in tone between these and the prison epistles. When Timothy is listed as a co-sender in 1 Thessalonians, the entire letter is written in the first person plural, from 'us' to 'you'. 2 Corinthians begins with the same 'us'-to-'you' relationship in the Thanksgiving (2 Cor 1.3–12), before several more complex shifts in person. In the prison epistles Paul writes from the very beginning in the first person singular.¹⁷ In Philemon he provides his own personal appeal in the matter of Onesimus; in Philippians he provides consolation during a difficult time. They are thus *grammatically* Paul's most individual letters, and yet both come with Timothy as a co-sender.

It could therefore be that the grammatical formulation of the two letters is the most important factor to consider with regard to Timothy's situation. As Craig Wansink observes, 'The letters to the Philippians and Philemon provide a window of vision into how Paul's imprisonment influenced the way in which he communicated with his churches.'¹⁸ The switch in tone reflected in the personal letter written in the first person singular may thus be one result of Paul's circumstances. Wansink also notes: 'Although "imprisonment" sometimes is used as

expanded description of the sender or addressee, and the benedictions and grace formulas? This is doubtful.'

15 While it would, for example, be possible to imagine Timothy in prison with Paul in Phil B but not in Phil A or C, or indeed any combination of these, a more comprehensive and less speculative proposal would treat the status of Timothy across all three. In this way, if the argument convinces, it can apply to all of Philippians.

16 S. Winter, 'Paul's Letter to Philemon', *NTS* 33 (1987) 1–15, argues for Onesimus as an emissary from the church, rather than as a runaway slave.

17 In Colossians, a probably pseudepigraphical prison epistle ('I am bound' /δέδεμαι, Col 4.3) which names Timothy as co-sender (1.1), the thanksgiving proceeds in the first person plural (1.3–14). The only fellow prisoner named is Aristarchus: Ἀρίσταρχος ὁ συναϊχμάλωτός μου (Col 4.10).

18 C. Wansink, *Chained in Christ: The Experience and Rhetoric of Paul's Imprisonment* (JSNTSup 130; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996) 12.

a rubric by which to group epistles together, Paul's actual imprisonment is rarely seen as having had any concrete effect on these letters.¹⁹ Yet, as we shall see, Paul is writing to those who are concerned about him, and no one seems to care about Timothy.

I will therefore look at the issue of Paul's circumstances 'in chains' before turning to the prison epistles for evidence about Timothy, both in what is said about him and what is *not* said. This includes the uses of the first persons singular and plural.

2. Paul's Imprisonment

Paul never communicates where he is being held.²⁰ In Philippians he writes of chains (οἱ δεσμοί μου, Phil 1.7, 13, 14, 17). In Philemon he writes of chains (οἱ δεσμοί, Phlm 10, 13), and furthermore describes himself as a prisoner (Παῦλος δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, 1); Ephraim is a co-captive (Ἐπαφρᾶς ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου ἐν Χριστῷ, 23).²¹ Paul never mentions a prison (δεσμοτήριον or φυλακή), only his 'enchainment'. He mentions prisons in 2 Corinthians (6.5: ἐν φυλακαῖς; 11.23: ἐν φυλακαῖς περισσοτέρως). Both these references come within a *Peristasenkatalog*.

A further issue is how Paul remained in prison, given the propensity for Roman governors to allow bail to be posted. Only the governor had the authority to condemn or acquit²² and the criterion for bail was not the citizenship or status of the accused, but the severity of the crime²³ and the whim of the governor.²⁴ Anyone could apply for bail,²⁵ including the poor²⁶ and even the very poorest.²⁷

19 Wansink, *Chained in Christ*, 14.

20 Gielen, 'Paulus - Gefangener in Ephesus?', 38: 'Nirgendwo in seinen Briefen nennt Paulus den Namen eines Haftorts.' Gerber, 'Paul's Literary Activity', 468, opines with some humour: 'If he had only thought of dating his letters!' Ignatius differs from Paul in always giving his location in his letters, both those from Smyrna (*Eph.* 21.1; *Magn.* 15; *Trall.* 12.1; *Rom.* 10.10) and those from Troas (*Phld.* 11.2; *Smyrn.* 12.1; *Pol.* 8.1). This may be because he is in transit, which could suggest that Paul was not.

21 Cf. Rom 16.7, in which Paul describes Andronicus and Junia/Julia as having been fellow-prisoners. It is unclear whether Mark, Aristarchus, Demas or Luke were also imprisoned; see, e.g. Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 155 n. 71.

22 J.-U. Krause, *Gefängnisse im Römischen Reich* (HABES 23; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1996) 64.

23 Krause, *Gefängnisse*, 67, 72.

24 Krause, *Gefängnisse*, 74 (cf. John 19.10).

25 Krause, *Gefängnisse*, 67.

26 Krause, *Gefängnisse*, 72: 'Ein Angehöriger der Unterschichten, und selbst ein Sklave, konnte der Untersuchungshaft sehr wohl entgehen, wenn er nur den Schutz eines mächtigen Patrons genoß.'

27 Krause, *Gefängnisse*, 69: 'Bürgenstellung war auch den Angehörigen der einfachen Bevölkerungsschichten möglich, um der Inhaftierung zu entgehen. Es wäre also irrig, die

One papyrus reports of a wife being left in prison in her husband's place!²⁸ This meant that many managed to avoid *Untersuchungshaft*.²⁹ The propensity for accepting bail money was not based only on financial grounds; accusations were made by private citizens (there was no public prosecution 'service'), and so only by means of bail could one avoid prisons becoming full of the victims of unwarranted complaints.³⁰ In practice this meant that even an accusation of a capital crime did not inevitably mean imprisonment,³¹ but also for civil or fiscal law a payment of bail would often be necessary for the defendant to avoid prison.³² Thus the circumstances of bail postings were 'ohne Zweifel recht großzügig'.³³ This raises the question as to why Paul was unable to post bail, or why bail was refused. The only tenable solution is that Paul was chained on the wishes of the governor, who had almost absolute power.³⁴ One possibility is therefore that Timothy was bailed while Paul was held.

Then there are the conditions of imprisonment. Paul appears to refer to physical chains³⁵ and his use of the verb κείμωι (Phil 1.16) almost implies discomfort.³⁶ Support from outside prison was crucial. Provision of food was minimal,

Inhaftierungspraxis in der römischen Kaiserzeit allein auf die Frage der Zugehörigkeit zu den Oben- bzw. den Unterschichten zu reduzieren.' See *ibid.* n. 31 for a list of examples from papyri. P. Arzt-Grabner, *Philemon* (Papyrologische Kommentare zum Neuen Testament 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003) 75 n. 21, gives P.Oxy. II.354 (23 CE) as an example.

28 P.Mich. 1.87 (8–9): εἰ δὲ τι σοὶ φαίνεται, καταλίψω τὴν γυναῖκα ἐν τῷ δεσμοτηρίῳ περὶ ἐμοῦ, ἕως ἂν ἐπισκέψη περὶ ὧν μοι ἐνκαλοῦσι.

29 Krause, *Gefängnisse*, 68.

30 Krause, *Gefängnisse*, 68: 'Die Strafverfahren wurden in aller Regel auf private Anklagen hin eingeleitet ... Nur durch die Bürgenstellung konnte verhindert werden, daß sich die Gefängnisse mit Opfern unbegründeter Anklagen füllten.'

31 Krause, *Gefängnisse*, 67.

32 Krause, *Gefängnisse*, 71.

33 Krause, *Gefängnisse*, 72.

34 Arzt-Grabner, *Philemon*, 74: 'Wie antike Quellen zeigen, waren die Präefekten, denen in den Provinzen im Rahmen ihrer Coercitions-gewalt das Recht zustand, Unruhestifter inhaftieren zu lassen, bei der Ausübung dieses Rechtes keineswegs wählerisch. Angeklagte wurden häufig gefoltert, bei Schuldspruch drohte Zwangsarbeit, Verbannung oder gar die Todesstrafe. Auch die städtischen Organe waren ermächtigt, (potentielle) Unruhestifter zumindest für eine gewisse Zeit in Haft zu nehmen.'

35 Cassidy, *Paul in Chains*, 72; Arzt-Grabner, *Philemon*, 76. Cf. Acts 16.24, which describes imprisonment in an innermost room with the prisoners' feet bound in wooden stocks (ἔβαλεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν ἐσωτέραν φυλακὴν καὶ τοὺς πόδας ἡσφαλίσατο αὐτῶν εἰς τὸ ξύλον).

36 Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 148 and 'Letter from Prison', 115.

so prisoners were reliant on assistance from family or friends.³⁷ Paul clearly receives visitors. There is support from the Philippian Christians³⁸ for an apostle imprisoned in a different city.³⁹ There is possibly also support from the community around Philemon: Onesimus may have been sent to visit Paul.⁴⁰ Timothy may likewise have been as close as possible and providing Paul with support. Yet there is at best only a hint at this in the letters. The references which come closest are οὐδένα ἔχω ἰσόψυχον (Phil 2.20) and ὡς πατρὶ τέκνον σὺν ἐμοὶ ἐδούλευσεν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον (Phil 2.22). While these imply assistance and proximity, they do not necessarily reflect support for a prisoner.

When Paul is imprisoned in Acts his time in gaol is brief and it has little or no effect on him.⁴¹ Acts 28.16 even suggests a form of house arrest, an unlikely scenario for a provincial Jew like Paul.⁴² Paul's situation was probably far less comfortable. Research into ancient prisons helps only to a certain degree, as Paul does not reveal under what circumstances he is being held.⁴³ It seems prudent to posit neither comfort nor destitution in Paul's case, for neither is justified in his

37 Arzt-Grabner, *Philemon*, 75: 'Zwar stand den Insassen offiziell eine Gefängniskost zu, die aber so kärglich war, dass sie zum Überleben kaum ausreichte. Wer nicht von Verwandten oder Freunden versorgt wurde, musste hungern.' See for example P.Petr. II.19.2 (3rd cent. BCE), P.Cair.Zen. III.59520 (263–229 BCE), SB XIV.11639 (248 BCE), P.Vind.Eirene 3 (post-250 BCE), SB XVI.12468 fr. 1 (post-250 BCE), P.Polit.Jud. 2 (ca. 135 BCE), BGU VIII.1847 (50 BCE (?)). Cf. Cassidy, *Paul in Chains*, 43–51.

38 Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 154 and 'Letter from Prison', 122–3: prisoners needed the support of family and friends for food, and there was often bribing of prison guards; the community in Philippi supported Paul, possibly leading to the imprisonment of Epaphroditus (cf. Epaphras in Phlm 23).

39 Is Paul also receiving support from a local Christian community? Is it particularly significant that the community in Philippi is supporting Paul? Bormann, *Philippi*, 161–205, examines the relationship between Paul and the Philippian community in regard to ancient social conventions.

40 Winter, 'Paul's Letter to Philemon'. P. Arzt-Grabner, 'Analyse der Paulusbriefe auf dem Hintergrund dokumentarischer Papyri', *PzB* 3.2 (1994) 99–114, at 111, however, points to the vocabulary linked with property: 'Für eine Sklaven wird also hier [P.Heid. II.212 = SB VI.9532] jener Begriff verwendet, der besonders häufig das Zurückschicken geschuldeten Geldes oder die Übersendung bestellter Waren beschreibt. Dieses verdinglichte und besitzmäßige Verständnis eines Sklaven kennt und verwendet auch Paulus!' H. Förster, 'Die Bitte des Paulus für den Sklaven Onesimus: Semantische und syntaktische Überlegungen zum Philemonbrief', *NovT* 60 (2018) 268–89, understands the letter to Philemon as an 'I.O.U.' for the services of Onesimus.

41 Standhartinger, 'Letter from Prison', 108–9.

42 Standhartinger, 'Letter from Prison', 110. R. Pervo, *Acts* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009) 678, refers to text D of Acts, in which the centurion makes the decision to allow Paul to remain with one soldier: 'This is clearly fictitious.' He, *ibid.* n. 80, suggests that Josephus' account of Agrippa (*A.J.* 18.188–237) 'may have inspired Luke'.

43 Cassidy, *Paul in Chains*, 37–43, describes various possibilities.

letters. Yet as Paul 'lies' in chains, he appears to become the sole focus of attention for concerned Christians.

3. A Letter from Prison

An important question – which is usually overlooked – is the extent to which a letter from prison involves a risk to the prisoner and his associates. Standhartinger has recently (2013 and 2015) proposed the importance of censorship in a letter Paul is writing from prison. Accordingly, 'a letter written in prison has to reckon with being read by more than the immediate addressees'.⁴⁴ Thus the imprisonment background of the letter may have complicated questions of exegesis due to the polysemy of vocabulary used.⁴⁵ Standhartinger seeks to discover signals in the text of Phil that indicate a message other than what is said explicitly.⁴⁶ In ancient letters from prison there are usually complaints about treatment, appeals for food or clemency and requests for witnesses.⁴⁷ Yet other texts such as hymns of praise, poetry, comedies, testaments or letters are reported to have been written in prison.⁴⁸ But writing in prison was dangerous; such compositions were admissible as evidence against the accused.⁴⁹ This – so Standhartinger – is why much of what is written is allusive or cryptic.⁵⁰ Paul is writing so that the Philippians can understand what his censors cannot.⁵¹ He leaves the censors with the impression that this is nothing but harmless religious nonsense.⁵² Finally, this may also be why so little information concerning the actual trial is provided.⁵³

44 Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', Abstract, 140 and 'Letter from Prison', 113.

45 Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 145: '... dass die Abfassungssituation in einem römischen Gefängnis eine Vieldeutigkeit des Redens und Schreibens bedingt, die die Auslegung des Philipperbriefs seit jeher beschwert.'

46 Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 146: 'Es gibt im Text des Philipperbriefs ... Signale, die auf Inhalte und Botschaften jenseits des offen Gesagten verweisen.'

47 Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 155–6 and 'Letter from Prison', 124.

48 Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 156 and 'Letter from Prison', 124.

49 Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 156 and 'Letter from Prison', 124.

50 Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 160. As examples she gives the references to 'my loyal companion' (Phil 4.3) and 'the emperor's household' (Phil 4.22). She also interprets the *ἐπίσκοποι* and *διάκονοι* as references to those who have been asking after and supporting Paul and Timothy (162). The *ἡμέρα Χριστοῦ* (Phil 2.16) a reference to the trial (164).

51 Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 166, argues that terms such as gospel, prayer, joy and the day of Christ are encoded messages which need not be explained to the community in Philippi.

52 Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 161 and 'Letter from Prison', 130.

53 Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 165–6. She concludes, 166: 'Daher bleiben alle Aussagen über die Situation des Paulus, seinen Prozess, den Haftort, das Verhältnis zur dortigen Gemeinde und seine Zukunftspläne vage. Und ebenso undeutlich bleibt zumindest an der Oberfläche, welche Botschaft Paulus der Gemeinde in Philippi eigentlich mitteilen will.'

There are however problems with this.⁵⁴ Firstly, there is vocabulary which could surely lead to political misunderstanding, terms such as *ἀπώλεια* (Phil 1.28; cf. Phil 3.19) and the entire 'hymn' on 'Jesus' unsurpassed sovereignty'⁵⁵ (Phil 2.6–11). As Cassidy argues, 'in emphasizing that Jesus suffered death by crucifixion, Paul is inevitably drawing attention to the fact that Jesus was put to death by the Roman authorities'⁵⁶ (Phil 2.8; cf. Phil 3.18). Paul's claims to Jesus' exaltation and status as *κύριος* and *σωτήρ* are provocative and dangerous.

A further and more immediate risk is the naming of friends and possible accomplices. Epaphroditus is a *συστρατιώτης* in Phil 2.25, as is Archippus in Phlm 2. Is the use of this military term not rather risky? The danger would naturally extend to Timothy, the named co-author, and to the other colleagues. Can we really understand Paul as endangering his friends in this way?

Finally, in both letters Paul hints at his release (Phlm 22; Phil 1.19, 25–6; 2.24). Is this purely a rhetorical offer of hope? Would not such comments provoke a reaction from censors?

Therefore the evidence of Philippians for Paul using possibly coded language and avoiding naming individuals who may be put at risk (Phil 4.3; 4.22),⁵⁷ while at the same time using vocabulary almost certain to provoke and antagonise the regime and openly naming certain colleagues, appears contradictory. The outline of the plan to send Timothy and Epaphroditus to Philippi does not sit well with the idea of Paul hiding his true intentions from censors. Neither Polycarp nor Ignatius seems worried about the risk of naming colleagues in letters from the accused.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the deutero-Pauline prison epistles also see no problem in the idea of the prisoner naming accomplices (Col 1.1, 7; 4.7–17; Eph 5.21–2; 2 Tim 1.2, 5, 16; 4.9–21), though these of course build on other letters of Paul. Therefore the naming of a colleague in a letter from a prisoner obviously did not constitute a scandal to the extent that later Christian prisoners and pseudepigraphers would avoid it, the former out of concern for friends or the latter out of a concern for verisimilitude. The only reference to a colleague that may come as a surprise in these circumstances is therefore in the prescript. It is here that Paul risks incriminating Timothy.⁵⁹ Unless, that is, Timothy is also in prison.

54 Cassidy, *Paul in Chains*, 166–7, raised the question of censorship but then asked (apparently rhetorically), 'Did Paul's letter pass uncensored because Epaphroditus ... carried it past Paul's guards?'

55 Cassidy, *Paul in Chains*, 179.

56 Cassidy, *Paul in Chains*, 181.

57 Standhartinger, 'Letter from Prison', 128–9.

58 Polycarp names 'Crescens' (*Phil.* 14). Ignatius names 'Polycarp' (*Eph.* 21.1 and *Poly.*), 'Polybius' (*Trall.* 1.1), 'Crocus' (*Rom.* 10.1), 'Burrhus' (*Phld.* 11.2), 'Philo', 'Gavia', 'Alce', 'Daphnus' and 'Eutecnus' (*Smyrn.* 13.1–2), 'Attalus' and 'Alce' (*Pol.* 8.2–3).

59 As Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 159 and 'Letter from Prison', 128, accepts.

4. Timothy in the Prison Epistles

The evidence for Timothy's situation in the prison epistles is twofold. Firstly, there are the concrete references to Timothy in the letters: what do these state explicitly and what do they imply? Secondly, and by nature more speculatively, there is the question of the focus on Paul in both letters: what is *not* said about Timothy and what can we infer from this lack of interest?

4.1 *The Evidence from References to Timothy*

4.1.1 *Philemon*

Παῦλος δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφός (Phlm 1)

The letter to Philemon begins straight away with the reference to chains in Παῦλος δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. Philemon (and Apphia and Archippus) must have known that Paul was in prison, as he reveals almost nothing of his circumstances.⁶⁰ In the case concerning Onesimus, 'it is the very fact that he is bound, and not any specific attribute of his chains, that is fundamental to his letter'.⁶¹ Thus Paul is able to play on his situation as a prisoner right at the beginning of his letter, and as Peter Arzt-Grabner observes, it must have been peculiar to read someone describe himself as a 'prisoner'.⁶²

In Philemon there are greetings from Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke (Phlm 23-4), yet Timothy is the only one with Paul who is mentioned in the prescript. Of all of these, Epaphras is the only one designated a 'fellow prisoner' (ὁ συναχμαλώτης μου). The body of the letter is however written in the first person singular (Paul) addressing the second person singular (Philemon?), concerning a third person (Onesimus).⁶³

60 Cassidy, *Paul in Chains*, 69.

61 Cassidy, *Paul in Chains*, 75-6.

62 Arzt-Grabner, *Philemon*, 71: 'Das Besondere am Paulustext ist sicher, dass hier δέσμιος als Selbstbezeichnung begegnet. Paulus spielt damit auf seine reale und aktuelle Gefangenschaftssituation an. Durch die Attribution Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ wird darüber hinaus deutlich, dass Paulus darin sogar ein besonderes Prädikat sieht. Am Beginn einiger seiner anderen Briefe bezeichnet er sich an vergleichbarer Stelle als ἀπόστολος ... Für seine Leserinnen und Leser muss es zweifellos eigenartig gewesen sein, dass sich jemand als "Gefangener" vorstellt.'

63 S. Porter, 'Is Critical Discourse Analysis Critical? An Evaluation Using Philemon as a Test Case', *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament: Approaches and Results* (ed. S. Porter and J. Reed; JSNTSup 170, StNTG 4; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999) 47-70, at 57: '[A]lthough the letter prescript includes two people, only the first-person singular, not the first-person plural, is used from Philemon 4 on. It is clear that Paul is the primary speaker and writer of the letter, referring to himself by name (Phlm. 9, 19), and as an old man/elder (Phlm. 9).' He continues, *ibid.*: 'Noteworthy also is that, though three people are addressed in the adscript, reference is to the second-person singular from Philemon 2 on.' While

Paul's stock formula 'God our father' is in the prescript (Phlm 1) and 'our Lord Jesus Christ' possibly in the autograph (Phlm 25).⁶⁴ There are however instances of the first person plural (FPP) which may refer to Paul and Timothy together. The prescript contains an address to Philemon as ὁ συνεργός ἡμῶν (Phlm 1) and Archippus as ὁ συστρατιώτης ἡμῶν (Phlm 2).⁶⁵ These appear to be FPP references to Paul and Timothy, given the collegial tone employed.⁶⁶ The only other possible occurrence of the FPP is Phlm 6:

ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου ἐνεργῆς γένηται ἐν ἐπιγνώσει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν/ὑμῖν εἰς Χριστόν

that the *κοινωνία* of your [sing.] faith may become effective in the knowledge of all the good in us/you for Christ.

The manuscript evidence on ἡμῖν/ὑμῖν is divided.⁶⁷ Commentators likewise cannot agree.⁶⁸ Yet even if we opt to read ἡμῖν in Phlm 6, it remains unclear to whom this FPP refers.⁶⁹ The lack of agreement in commentaries and indeed in

Archippus is a possible though unlikely candidate, the masculine form ἀδελφὲ (Phlm 7, 20) appears to rule out Apphia.

64 In Phlm 25, for 'our' Lord: A C D Ψ 0150, *Byz* and *Lect*, among others. For 'the' Lord: κ P 075 and Jerome, among others.

65 Apphia is 'the sister' and thus does not require an FPP pronoun. However, the anonymous 'brother' of 2 Cor 8.22 (but *not* the anonymous 'brother' of 2 Cor 8.18!) and Timothy in 1 Thess 3.2 both receive the designation 'ἡμῶν'. Cf. also Timothy in Heb 13.23.

66 J. Gnlika, *Der Philipperbrief* (HThKNT 10.3; Frieberg: Herder, 1968) 15: 'Als "unser Mitarbeiter" wird [Philemon] in die Gruppe der Missionare ehrend eingereiht und in das Verhältnis Paulus/Timotheus aufgenommen.' J. Fitzmyer, *The Letter to Philemon* (AB 34C; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 87: 'Paul uses the plural "our", meaning that Philemon was a collaborator of Timothy and himself.' For Fitzmyer (88), the same also applies to Archippus.

67 For ἡμῖν: A C D Ψ 048 0150, *Byz*, *Lect*, among others. For ὑμῖν: Ψ⁶¹ κ F G P 075, among others. A minority of texts have no pronoun.

68 E. Lohmeyer, *Die Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser und an Philemon* (KEKNT 9; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964¹³) 176 n. 2, argues for ὑμῖν, as Paul does not write in the FPP of himself and his addressees in the thanksgiving of his letters. Fitzmyer, *Philemon*, 98, opts for ἡμῖν, pointing out that the second person plural 'is questionable at this point in the letter, where the second singular otherwise predominates'. E. Lohse, *Die Briefe an die Kolosser und an Philemon* (KEKNT 9.2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968) 272 n. 1, and subsequently P. Stuhlmacher, *Der Brief an Philemon* (EKKNT; Zürich: Benzinger, 1975) 33, had also read ἡμῖν as original, with cross-reference to Rom 8.4.

69 Interpretations vary. Winter, 'Paul's Letter to Philemon', 4, understands Paul and Timothy (and the others with Paul): '[This] refers to the specific event of Onesimus being sent to "us". (The first person plural means Paul, Timothy, and the others mentioned in vv. 23–24.)' On the other hand, Fitzmyer, *Philemon*, 98, reads a Christian plural: '[I]t clearly refers to Christians in general who have put their faith in the risen Christ.' Lohse *Briefe*, 272 n. 1, suggests Paul is connecting with his addressees (you and I). Gnlika, *Philipperbrief*, 37 n. 21,

manuscript evidence reflects the difficulty of this verse. If Paul is referring to himself and Timothy at this point, he has managed to confuse both ancient copyists and modern scholars. The reference is vague.

In any case, even if we do read Timothy in these FPPs, there is nothing revealed in them about his status as a (non-)prisoner. The closest we come are the FPPs of Phlm 1–2 which imply some level of communality between Paul and Timothy. Where the plural is used, it is in connection with a shared Christian identity, and not with current circumstances.

4.1.2 *Philippians*

Παῦλος καὶ Τιμόθεος δούλοι Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (Phil 1.1a)

Philippians begins with a balanced presentation of co-senders; the only status-marking feature is the order in which the two appear (cf. 1 Thess 1.1). And only here among Paul's letter is a co-sender included in a plural predicate: δούλοι. As Samuel Byrskog notes:

Paul is mentioned first, but there is no further qualification pointing to his special prominence ... Elsewhere in the Pauline letters we never find a co-sender included in the apposition together with Paul. If an apposition is added to the co-sender, ἀδελφός is normally used.⁷⁰

And in this instance Paul does not refer to himself as a prisoner at all. He refers to his chains for the first time in the thanksgiving. Paul appears to look back on a trial that has taken place.⁷¹ Yet he is almost as vague in Philippians as in Philemon as to the circumstances of his imprisonment. The only references that might help are ἐν ὄλω τῷ πραιτωρίῳ (Phil 1.13)⁷² and οἱ ἐκ τῆς Καισαρος οἰκίας (Phil 4.22). Wherever he is held, a considerable amount of time has passed, as is indicated by the reports concerning Epaphroditus: the Philippians have heard of Paul's imprisonment, sent a gift (Phil 4.18), and learned of Epaphroditus' illness and become distressed (Phil 2.26), news of which has reached Epaphroditus and

comments: 'Der Wechsel zur 1. Ps. Plur. kennzeichnet wiederum die persönliche Note des Schreibens.'

70 S. Byrskog, 'Co-Senders, Co-Authors and Paul's Use of the First Person Plural', *ZNW* 87 (1996) 230–50, at 246.

71 Schnelle, 'Paul's Literary Activity', 434: 'A trial has already taken place (Phil 1.7), and Paul counts on a quick decision (Phil 2.23), considers either acquittal or the death sentence to be possible (Phil 1.19–24), but hopes for a positive verdict (Phil 1.25).'

72 Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 149 and 'Letter from Prison', 117, argues that the praetorium is the location of his trial, not his imprisonment.

Paul (Phil 2.26). Of Timothy's movements during this time we know nothing. Perhaps he was in prison.

Does Timothy's inclusion as one of the *δοῦλοι* in the prescript suggest his imprisonment alongside Paul? Interpretations tend to focus on the rhetorical or metaphorical side of this prescript. Byrskog, for example, argues: 'By including Timothy as co-sender, Paul thus wishes to give an initial imprint of the actual message of the letter. Timothy manifests together with Paul *the slave-like mind* which also the Philippians should strive for. This co-sender, the Philippians should realize, also stands behind the letter.'⁷³ Yet is Timothy really that necessary? Paul refers only vaguely to οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ πάντες ἀδελφοί in Gal 1.2 and to no co-sender in Rom 1.1–7 (and to the otherwise unmentioned Sosthenes in 1 Cor 1.1!). Why should Paul choose to back up his authority in Philemon and Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and 2 Corinthians, but not in Galatians or Romans? Furthermore, as mentioned above, the letter to the Philippians is written from the very start in the first person singular. Timothy appears to be not much more than a token colleague.

The use of the term 'slave' in the prescript may on the other hand reflect the situation of the writer(s): hardship, suffering, loss of freedom.⁷⁴ That Paul and Timothy are here named side by side and with the same signifier (*δοῦλοι*) would surely suggest they are in the same situation.

So what do we learn about Timothy in this letter? Firstly, Paul hopes to send him: ἐλπίζω δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Τιμόθεον ταχέως πέμψαι ὑμῖν (Phil 2.19a). The reference to Timothy in the third person, as though he were not a co-sender and in this case is certainly not the author, is already attested in 1 Thess 3.1–6. This is the first indication that he is possibly not imprisoned with Paul and has not been released under bail. Furthermore, it might suggest that Paul is not in dire straits, as he can afford to be without Timothy for a considerable length of time.⁷⁵ Yet Paul is not sending Timothy now, for example with the letter. Paul *hopes* to send Timothy, but he is also *convinced* (πέποιθα) that he himself will come soon (Phil 2.24). Thus this hope of Paul's to send Timothy is not on its own conclusive evidence for Timothy's freedom.

A stronger indication is the reason for Timothy's journey which Paul explains: ἵνα καὶ γὰρ εὐψυχῶ γνοῦς τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν (Phil 2.19b). Paul hopes to send Timothy to Philippi so that he – Paul himself (καὶ γὰρ) – may be cheered by news from them. Paul seems to be the only one in need of cheering.

73 Byrskog, 'Co-Senders', 247 (emphasis added).

74 Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 147 and 'Letter from Prison', 114.

75 Standhartinger, 'Letter from Prison', 124, is less speculative, observing rather: 'Whether [being sent] is an actual possibility for Timothy as long as Paul is imprisoned ..., we again do not know.'

And a further indication is the timing of Timothy's travels: ὡς ἂν ἀφίδω τὰ περὶ ἐμὲ ἐξουστῆς (Phil 2.23b). Timothy's being sent depends on what happens to Paul. It is this clause which really provides the strongest evidence that Timothy's situation is not important.

Nevertheless, it is Epaphroditus who is to be sent, apparently *instead* of Timothy: ἀναγκασθὲν δὲ ἡγησάμην Ἐπαφρόδιτον ... πέμψαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς (Phil 2.25). Paul feels this is necessary. There is nothing to suggest that Epaphroditus and Timothy would travel together. Epaphroditus is to go now, with Timothy possibly to follow. Perhaps, therefore, Timothy's freedom is not yet guaranteed (he is either still in chains, or under bail, or otherwise unable to travel to Philippi).

In the thank-you note of receipt (Phil 4.10–20), Epaphroditus is named as the courier (4.18). Focus remains on Paul (sing.) and his relationship with the Philippians (pl.).⁷⁶ There is no indication that the Philippians have been supporting Timothy or anyone else.⁷⁷

Other than two FPP references to 'our father' in the prescript (1.2) and doxology (4.20), 3.2–4.1 is the only section of Philippians to use the FPP, and yet Paul does so amid a personal testimony.⁷⁸ At first none of these FPPs appears to refer to himself and Timothy as co-senders of the letter. 'We' (ἡμεῖς) who are the circumcision, who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus and who put no confidence in the flesh (Phil 3.3) stand in contrast to 'the dogs, the evil-workers, the mutilation (κατατομή)' (Phil 3.2). The pronoun is emphatic,⁷⁹ but yet again opinions vary as to the referents of this FPP.⁸⁰ The question of Timothy's racial identity and possible circumcision under Paul as reported by Luke (Acts 16.1–3) cannot be brought to bear on Philippians. More saliently, one may ask why Paul, if referring to himself and Timothy in this claim, then

76 Bormann, *Philippi*, 136–60, stresses the centrality of this letter/section in understanding the relationship between Paul and the Philippian Christians.

77 This will be taken up below.

78 J. Reumann, *Philippians* (AB 33B; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) 563, points out that the occurrences of the FPP in Philippians are 'all in Letter C; otherwise only in stock formulas at 1.2 and 4.20 ("God our Father")'.

79 Lohmeyer, *Briefe*, 127: '[V]or der Stärke dieses "Wir" behält das Wort "Beschneidung" nur einen Nebenton.' Cf. also Gnllka, *Philippenerbrief*, 187; W. Schenk, *Die Philippenerbriefe des Paulus: Kommentar* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984) 254; B. Thurston and J. Ryan, *Philippians & Philemon* (Sacra Pagina 10; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005) 113.

80 Proposals have included apostles (H. Koester, 'The Purpose of the Polemic of a Pauline Fragment (Philippians III)', *NTS* 8 (1962) 317–32, at 320–1, with cross-reference to Rom 1.9), or Jewish Christians (D. W. B. Robinson, "We Are the Circumcision", *AusBR* 15 (1967) 28–35), or an authorial plural of Paul himself (Thurston and Ryan, *Philippians & Philemon*, 113), or a general Christian plural (G. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 298), or 'you (pl.) and I' (Lohmeyer, *Briefe*, 127). Reumann, *Philippians*, 568–9, asks the question but does not offer an answer.

gives his own testimony but none for his colleague. The ‘we’ who are the circumcision does not refer to the two senders of the letter.⁸¹

Paul’s biographical reflections lead up to his present situation (Phil 3.5–14). This is followed by paraenetic material which is once again in the FPP (Phil 3.15–17). Paul includes himself among the τέλειοι.⁸² At this point Paul encourages them to become imitators of ‘me’ (sing.) and to observe those who live according to an example they have [in] ‘us’ (pl.). Joachim Gnilka posits that Paul is here referring to himself and Timothy.⁸³ As with the FPP in Phlm 6, this FPP proves the single *possible* reference to Paul and Timothy but is so vague as to allow a variety of explanations among modern commentators.⁸⁴ Paul has been writing about his own life, faith and relationship with the Philippians to such an extent that anyone – including the Philippian addressees – could be forgiven for having forgotten about Timothy by this stage. Nevertheless it remains *possible* – however unlikely – that with this ‘us’ in Phil 3.17 Paul is referring to himself and Timothy as missionaries in Philippi and co-senders of this letter. Paul and Timothy would thus be an example for the Philippians (καθὼς ἔχετε τύπον ἡμῶς), which might suggest that they are in a similar position (arrest) at the time of writing.

In Phil 3.20 the claim to ‘our’ citizenship in heaven is again in contrast to those described in the preceding verses (Phil 3.18–19), and hence the emphatic position of the article ἡμῶν.⁸⁵ This may be in parallel to Phil 3.3 as Schenk argues.⁸⁶ It is from heaven that ‘we expect’ (ἀπεκδεχόμεθα) a saviour (σωτήρ).⁸⁷ This could be understood, especially by a censor reading a prisoner’s correspondence, as implying that ‘we’ (Paul and Timothy) are waiting to be rescued/delivered. Yet the subsequent reference to the transformation of ‘our body’ in the singular

81 Schenk, *Philippenerbriefe*, 254–5, also rejects the idea, because he reads the verse in parallel to Phil 3.20.

82 Holloway, *Consolation*, 142.

83 Gnilka, *Philippenerbrief*, 203.

84 Here, there is no way to read the FPP as referring to Paul and his addressees together (‘you (pl.) and I’), as the addressees are encouraged to follow the example. Again, there are those who argue for an authorial plural (e.g. Schenk, *Philippenerbriefe*, 256 n. 26), but Paul is quite capable of identifying himself as an example (e.g. Phil 4.9: ἃ καὶ ἐμάθετε καὶ παραλάβετε καὶ ἠκούσατε καὶ εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοί, τὰῦτα πράσσετε) and he has just now commanded them to become συμμητηαί of himself. Lohmeyer, *Briefe*, 152, speaks of Philippian martyrs as the τέλειοι, yet this is by no means explicit in the text.

85 Koester, ‘Purpose’, 330: ‘Not these people, but we ourselves are citizens of heaven.’ Cf. *ibid.* n. 4: ‘The accentuated position of ἡμῶν also becomes clear now.’ Cassidy, *Paul in Chains*, 172, notes that this implies that the adversaries to whom Paul refers cannot be Christians. Cf. Schenk, *Philippenerbriefe*, 254; Reumann, *Philippians*, 575.

86 Schenk, *Philippenerbriefe*, 254–5.

87 The term σωτήρ appears only here in the undisputed letters of Paul. Koester, ‘Purpose’, 330, suggests: ‘Apparently Paul is quoting an apocalyptic tradition in which the title σωτήρ had a strictly apocalyptic meaning.’

(Phil 3.21a) proves less concrete and less obviously a reference to two prisoners. Here a contrast is being drawn between the body of 'our' humility/abasement and the body of 'his' glory, so Paul is probably not writing of himself and Timothy, rather of 'the body of each individual Christian in the "we"-group'.⁸⁸

Therefore the only occurrence of the FPP in Phil that *could* be understood as reference to an 'us' which includes Timothy is the καθὼς ἔχετε τύπον ἡμῶς of Phil 3.17.⁸⁹ Yet the FPP in general pales into almost complete insignificance in view of the dominant first person singular of the letter. The letter to the Philippians concerns Paul, who writes about himself and his relationship to the Christians in Philippi. The *grammar* of the letters from prison leaves essentially no role for Timothy.⁹⁰

4.2 *The Absence of Timothy*

I will now attempt to demonstrate the absence of Timothy from the content of the prison epistles by highlighting elements in the texts which indicate the exclusive interest in Paul, his situation and his relationship to the addressees.

4.2.1 *Philemon*

In Philemon only Paul is described as a prisoner or as having 'chains'. Furthermore, Timothy plays no role in the issue of Onesimus. After his appearance in the prescript, Timothy vanishes from the letter, as Stanley Porter argues:

Paul's is the only voice heard. Why then is Timothy mentioned? This question has been asked many times in Pauline studies, and given various answers. One answer that has not been given very frequently is that it is a linguistic move of power on Paul's part. That is, Paul speaks not simply for himself but with the support and endorsement of another leader of the Christian missionary movement. Even if the issue is one personal to Paul, he extends it beyond his personal sphere by involving Timothy.⁹¹

Porter also notes that, in the request for a room, Paul is applying the threat of his visit to confirm the implementation of his wishes.⁹² However, in none of the relations exploited in Philemon does Timothy play a part. Paul begins by writing, 'I

88 Reumann, *Philippians*, 579.

89 Byrskog, 'Co-Senders', 246: '[T]he plural [in Philippians is] used to associate with the addressees (3,3.15f.20f.; 4,20). The plural may refer to Timothy (and other co-workers) only in 3,17b, if this is not a literary plural.'

90 Byrskog, 'Co-Senders', 246: 'While Timothy is co-sender, he is nowhere in this letter co-author.'

91 Porter, 'Critical Discourse Analysis', 58. Porter argues, *ibid.*, that this is also the case with the listing of surplus addressees at the beginning and greetings from other Christians at the end of his letter. Paul is also making a statement in taking the pen in hand and writing by himself. This act is 'a move of power', as '[t]he author is not dependent upon others, even upon a scribe'.

92 Porter, 'Critical Discourse Analysis', 60.

thank *my* God, always remembering you in *my* prayers' (Phlm 4).⁹³ He continues, 'I have received much joy and encouragement' (Phlm 7), and 'I, *Paul*, an old man and right now a prisoner' (Phlm 9). The case of Onesimus appears not to concern Timothy at all. Moreover, Paul wants a guestroom to be prepared 'for *me*' (Phlm 22). There is no room for Timothy.

Finally, perhaps the best evidence-from-absence in Philemon is the mention of Epaphras, ὁ συναιχμαλώτός μου.⁹⁴ That Epaphras receives this designation – and Timothy does not – strongly suggests that Timothy is not in prison. If he were, Paul could have written ὁ ἕτερος συναιχμαλώτός μου or, more likely, ὁ συναιχμαλώτος ἡμῶν (in line with the designations of Philemon and Archippus in Phlm 1–2). This reference to Epaphras therefore suggests that Timothy is not in prison.

4.2.2 *Philippians*

This might be understandable in a short, semi-private correspondence such as Philemon, which hopes to address essentially one particular issue. Yet the lack of interest in Timothy also pervades Philippians. Although Phil 1.1 appears to assert the parity of the correspondents, the thanksgiving (Phil 1.3–6) begins similarly to that of Philemon: 'I thank *my* God' (εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου), 'in *my* prayers' (ἐν πάσῃ δεήσει μου), '[I am] praying with joy' (μετὰ χαρᾶς τὴν δέησιν ποιούμενος).⁹⁵ Paul continues by explaining that *he* wants (βούλομαι) to inform the Philippian Christians concerning *his* situation (τὰ κατ' ἐμέ) and its consequences (Phil 1.12).⁹⁶ Yet he is still unsure as to whether *he* should live or die (Phil 1.23–4). He refers to *his* death in sacrificial language.⁹⁷ Paul himself is poured out (σπένδομαι) but rejoices (χαίρω καὶ συγχαίρω) as the Philippians are to rejoice with *him* (καὶ ὑμεῖς χαίρετε καὶ συγχαίρετέ μοι). Timothy is included neither in the libation nor in the rejoicing.

But it is Timothy who is mentioned next (Phil 2.19–24). As outlined above, it is Paul's own hope (ἐλπίζω) and Paul's own wish to be cheered (ἵνα κἀγὼ εὐψυχῶ); the timing of Timothy's journey depends upon what happens to Paul (ὡς ἂν ἀφίδω τὰ περὶ ἐμὲ ἐξαυτῆς) and better still, Paul himself will come to

93 Porter, 'Critical Discourse Analysis', 64: 'Paul's thanksgiving is uniquely his.' Ibid.: 'In Philemon, Paul uses the thanksgiving to serve his linguistic discursive purposes, by separating his egalitarian words of greeting from the body of the letter, where he utilizes a set of variegated hierarchical words, beginning with bold words of authority and position.'

94 Cf. Aristarchus (ὁ συναιχμαλώτός μου) in Col 4.10.

95 Byrskog, 'Co-Senders', 246: 'In contrast especially to 1 Thessalonians, where the senders are also presented as on the same level, the thanksgiving shifts immediately into the first person singular.'

96 Wansink, *Chained in Christ*, 146: 'Paul emphasizes that his imprisonment has served them in promoting the spread of the gospel.'

97 Bormann, 'Reflexionen', 320.

Philippi (καὶ αὐτὸς ταχέως ἐλεύσομαι). Thus even when the discussion concerns Timothy's journey, it is Paul's perspective alone which is given.⁹⁸ Everything is written from Paul's point of view. 'Finally' (τὸ λοιπὸν), 'my brothers' (ἀδελφοί μου) are to rejoice in the Lord. The writing of this letter is no trouble 'for me' (ἐμοί), writes Paul, speaking apparently alone and for himself (Phil 3.1).

In Phil 3.5-14 Paul gives his own testimony, perhaps the most personal testimony in all of Paul's extant letters. He even refers to 'my' Lord (ὁ κύριός μου) in Phil 3.8.⁹⁹ Perhaps it follows from this that Paul exhorts the Philippians to become imitators of 'me' (Phil 3.17).

Then there is the Philippians' concern for Paul (τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν) which they have longed to show (Phil 4.10). Paul reflects on his mission in Macedonia (Phil 4.15-16). Whether Timothy was part of this does not seem to be important: 'When I left (ἐξῆλθον) Macedonia, no church shared *with me* (μοι) in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone... You sent *to me* (μοι) again and again.' Because of this generosity, 'my' God (ὁ δὲ θεός μου) will fulfil 'your' (pl.) every need (Phil 4.19). Paul is writing as though he were alone in Macedonia, which was surely not the case. This perspective is probably due to the circumstances in which he is writing, circumstances which appear to relate to him alone.

4.3 Timothy Is Doing Alright

This is the tone of the grammar and the focus of the content in both of Paul's letters from prison. In neither case is any concern shown for the situation and well-being of Timothy. Neither in the case of Onesimus nor in the support from Philippi is Timothy's voice to be heard. Unlike Epaphroditus, who was unwell, and Paul himself, who lies in chains, Timothy - presumably - was doing alright.

5. Conclusion

There are many reasons to think of Timothy as imprisoned with Paul. He and Paul are almost inseparable on their missions and in correspondence, and it is hard to imagine how Paul could be arrested while Timothy was not. They appear to have suffered together almost unto death in Asia (2 Cor 1.8-11), and there is perhaps an echo of the idea of Timothy in prison in Heb 13.23. That Paul and Timothy are δοῦλοι together in Phil 1.1 implies a lack of freedom for both. If a letter from prison risks incriminating friends and accomplices, then perhaps Timothy is already in prison. He is after all a co-sender of (at least!) two letters *from prison*. While Paul *hopes* to send Timothy, he appears to send

⁹⁸ The same of course may be said concerning Epaphroditus (Phil 2.25-30).

⁹⁹ See Cassidy, *Paul in Chains*, 185.

Epaphroditus instead, and indeed he is convinced that he himself will soon come to Philippi. Timothy – like Paul – is maybe not free to travel.

The *tone* of the prison epistles and the lack of *content* concerning Timothy however are the strongest indicators that Timothy's life and well-being were not at risk. The focus remains firmly on Paul, his situation (τὰ κατ' ἐμέ in Phil 1.12; τὰ περὶ ἐμέ in Phil 2.23) and his relationships with Philemon and the Philippian Christians. And Paul writes in the first person singular where a plural would surely have been appropriate: Epaphras is *my* (not *our*) fellow prisoner (ὁ συναιχμαλώτός μου in Phlm 23), both thanksgivings are written in the singular (Phlm 4–7 and Phil 1.3–11), and Paul reflects on the support he received during his mission as though he had been working alone (Phil 4.15–16).

Regardless of whether Paul expected his letter to be read by censors, accusers or governors, his choice of vocabulary and style – in stark contrast to the petitions for clemency and release in other ancient letters from prison¹⁰⁰ – must surely reveal to some extent his aims in writing at all. Neither Philemon nor Philippians is an appeal for release or for assistance. In writing a letter from prison Paul sought to appeal on behalf of Onesimus; in writing a letter (or three letters) from prison he sought to reassure his sponsors that he was doing well.

Timothy is clearly with Paul as he writes. Yet there is apparently no need to discuss his welfare, his fate or his views on the matter(s) at hand. The correspondence limits itself to the circumstances, relationships, life, career, authority and vulnerability of *Paul*. Paul's letters from prison are exceptionally personal.¹⁰¹ They show no influence from Timothy at all. It is therefore most likely that Paul is the only one in chains.

100 W. Michaelis, 'Die Gefangenschaftsbriefe des Paulus und antike Gefangenschaftsbriefe', *NKZ* 36 (1925) 586–95, at 591: 'Fast alle antiken Gefangenenbriefe, die uns erhalten sind, erstreben die Freilassung des Schreibers.' Cf. P. Arzt-Grabner, 'Bitte um Hilfe für einen Inhaftierten (ein Ptolemäisches Brieffragment aus der Wiener Papyrussammlung)', *Eirene* 34 (1998) 31–40, at 32–3 and 38, who cites P. Enteux. 84 (285–222 BCE), P. Petr. II.19 (300–200 BCE), P. Cair. Zen. III.59369 (240 BCE).

101 Schnelle, 'Paul's Literary Activity', 451: 'Like no other of Paul's letters, Philippians gives an insight into the apostle's personality. We see his fundamental convictions and his confidence, but also his anxieties and fears.' Standhartinger, 'Aus der Welt eines Gefangenen', 140–1, notes that imprisonment becomes an important motif in pseudepigraphical letters in Paul's name, with reference to Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Timothy and 3 Corinthians. Pseudo-Linus' account of the martyrdom of Paul (CANT 212/BHL 6570) refers to his chains as a common aspect of the apostle: *et Paulus, consuetudinarias sibi pro Christi nomine gestans catenas*; see D. Eastman, *The Ancient Martyrdom Accounts of Peter and Paul* (Writings from the Greco-Roman World 39; Atlanta: SBL, 2015) 150–1.