

Exousia
out of being

97-1

Buckingham quote

Bengt Holmberg

"PAUL AND POWER, REVISITED

^{Fortress Press 1980}
The 10th Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 1978 the Panama Canal Treaty was ratified, and Jim Jones and his followers committed mass suicide in Guyana. Soccer superstar Pelé played his final game, Leon Spinks both defeated and was defeated by Muhammad Ali, and the Washington (D.C.) Bullets won the NBA championship. Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* won the Oscar for best motion picture, and Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours* won the Grammy for best album. Bengt Holmberg's doctoral dissertation, *Paul and Power*, was published, and I enrolled in seminary.

All of these events are somehow related in the great web of history. One more knowledgeable or imaginative than I can explain the connection between Woody Allen and Leon Spinks; I can link only the final two items. Holmberg's book, fully titled *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles*,¹ was one of the first works of biblical scholarship I read as a seminary student. It was in coming to grips with *Paul and Power* that I first became enthused about historical study of the New Testament. On reflection, I now see how profoundly Holmberg's work influenced my own doctoral dissertation, completed here at Oxford in 1989.

When I learned the theme of this conference ('Trinity, Community and Power'), it occurred to me that I might return after all these years to *Paul and Power*, reading this time from the perspective of a seminary professor. How might I now evaluate or supplement Holmberg's findings? I also was interested in doing something that Holmberg himself did not attempt, namely, consider how the study of 'Paul and Power' might be relevant to the contemporary Church. What problems and possibilities, tensions and breakthroughs in Paul's ministry are instructive for us today?

Paul and Power is composed of two, nearly independent sections. Part One is a historical study of the distribution of power within the first-century Church, and Part Two deals with sociological accounts of power and their applicability to the study of the New Testament. With apologies to the author and deference to convention, I shall deal with theory ahead of praxis, that is, with the second half of Holmberg's book ahead of the first.

2. THE SOCIOLOGY OF POWER

As one would expect, Holmberg considers at length Max Weber's pioneering work *Economy and Society*. Weber defined 'power' as

¹ First published by CWK Gleerup (Lund). The Fortress Press edition was published in 1980 (Philadelphia).

...the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests.²

In these terms, the state can be said to have power, but Paul cannot. It is obvious from every Pauline letter (especially the Galatian and Corinthian correspondence) that the apostle continually had to remind or persuade his churches of his right to govern them. Insofar as Paul ruled, he ruled by consent. Therefore, Holmberg prefers to describe Paul's position by means of Weber's subcategory 'authority.' One can exercise authority (that is, one can issue 'orders, admonitions, decisions and rebukes' that 'evoke a positive response' [p. 10]) only to the extent that the *legitimacy* of one's authority is granted. 'And to be legitimate it [authority] must be in accordance with a generally valid, "objective" reason.' (133). Apparently, the most persuasive *ratio* amongst early Christians was proximity to the sacred. Above all, that meant historical and physical proximity to the man Jesus. The disciples (together with James, the brother of Jesus) occupied a place in primitive Christianity that even Paul, who by his own account 'outworked them all' (1 Cor. 15:10), could not supplant (see below). In his favor, Paul could appeal for legitimacy to his direct commission by the risen Christ, which of course he does with frequency (e.g., Gal. 1:1, 11f.; 2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11). It is clear that Paul himself accepted the essential validity of this authority structure; indeed, his very considerable assurance in his position is founded upon it. Nevertheless, Paul's authority was weakened by a number of factors:

- ✓ He was not a member of (as Holmberg quaintly puts it) Jesus' 'staff.' Paul did not have firsthand knowledge of the historical Jesus.
- ✓ He had persecuted the Church.
- ✓ His authority was not unambiguously recognized by the Jerusalem leadership, which viewed Paul's apostleship as secondary to its own.
- ✓ It is likely that Paul and the Jerusalem 'pillar' apostles (notably Peter and James) disagreed about substantial issues of Christian practice (in particular, Paul's idea that Jewish believers should disobey certain food laws in order to maintain table-fellowship with Gentile Christians).
- ✓ Proximate authority was also vested in the Church's traditions about Jesus, under whose authority Paul himself ministered.
- ✓ A risen, living savior is proximate also in immediate, spiritual experience. More than any other factor, the *charismata* of the Spirit both distributed authority amongst believers and challenged conventional role and status expectations. Paul was not the only one who had an experience or possessed a gift.
- ✓ Paul's physical appearance was 'weak', and he was comparatively 'unskilled in speaking' (2 Cor. 10:10; 11:6). In short, he did not *look* like an authority.
- ✓ Paul's very willingness to 'rationalize' (that is, to provide reasons for) his authority meant that it was testable—and hence deniable.

not presidential

Most of the remainder of Section Two contains a challenge to Weber's decidedly negative characterization of the 'institutionalization of charismatic authority' (e.g., the movement from

² Max Weber. *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Society*, vol. 1-3. Ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. New York: 1968. P. 53. (Quoted in Holmberg, p. 126.)

Jesus to established Church). This is a fascinating and—in view of the tendency of modern scholars to reprimand the so-called 'Jesus movement' and to distance it theologically from the church of Jerusalem—a refreshing analysis. Holmberg's essential point is that institutionalization is a natural and even necessary part of any charismatic (in the Weberian sense) movement, since such movements have at their heart a new vision of society that must be grounded in new social relationships. In important ways, the 'Church' already was institutionalizing during the ministry of Jesus, not least in the association of the Twelve. Reading Holmberg, one realizes by contrast just how thoroughly the anti-institutional sentiment of the 1960's and 70's has penetrated professional biblical scholarship. Like it or not, there is no curtain of 'happily ever after' to draw over the Jesus-as-Robin-Hood story. For many, the Church is an inconvenient fact that must be explained away, often as tragic sequel. Their leader may have had a vision ('rob from the rich and give to the poor'), but the remaining 'merry men and women' of the Robin movement were in it for themselves (cf. Weber's analysis). I have always thought, as Holmberg's work helps to confirm, that 'historical Jesus' questions are at heart 'historical Church' questions; our Jesus is their Jesus passed through a historical filter of our own design. From my perspective, the principle failing of historical Jesus books is that they so seldom offer an explicit and credible account of what is, after all, the primary datum, the first-century Church.

3. THE PRACTICE OF POWER ("AUTHORITY")

The first half of *Paul and Power* deals with three main topics, summarized (and extended by my own observations) below: (1) Paul's relationship to the Jerusalem church, (2) Paul's understanding and use of his own authority, and (3) the distribution of power (read 'authority') in the Pauline churches.

A. PAUL AND THE JERUSALEM CHURCH

Holmberg makes a convincing argument that while Paul disagreed with the 'pillar apostles' on some points, he was never fully independent of their authority. At the 'Jerusalem Conference' (Gal. 2; Acts 15), Paul and Barnabas submitted for the apostles' approval the Antiochene practice of admitting uncircumcised Gentiles. Wrote Paul, 'I laid before them...the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, *in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain*' (Gal. 2:2). The status of the mother church is confirmed in the subsequent 'Antioch Incident' (see my *Hellenists and Hebrews*, Chapter Four). At stake was not Gentile admission (*contra* F. C. Baur) but the conditions surrounding mixed table-fellowship, a matter not settled by the council in Jerusalem. A delegation from the Jerusalem church succeeded in convincing the Antiochenes ('even Barnabas,' Gal. 2:13) that Jewish believers as Jews ought to continue to observe food laws, a perspective with which Paul vehemently disagreed. It appears that Paul lost the argument and soon departed, severing his partnership with Barnabas and abandoning Antioch as his missionary base. While Paul could *claim* an equal calling and status (his slant on the Jerusalem agreement; Gal. 2:7-8), it is clear that he did not actually possess authority equal to that of either Peter or James. In Galatians, he was in the awkward position of simultaneously asserting independence and admitting subordination. Holmberg finds a similar dynamic at work in the Collection; however Paul might 'spin' the story, he is fulfilling the request of the Jerusalem church (Gal.

2:10) and admitting its propriety (Rom. 15:27).

Paul's (at least implicit) acknowledgment of the primacy of the Jerusalem church is evident in numerous other passages. For example, in...

- ✓ 1 Cor. 11:16 and 14:34, where 'we see the apostle correcting practices in the Corinthian church with regard to the "practice" (συνήθεια) of the Jewish Christian church' (50);
- ✓ 1 Cor. 14:36, where Paul speaks of the 'word of God' that proceeded from Jerusalem (see Rom 15:19, which 'shows how natural it was for Paul to regard Jerusalem as the source of the word of God' [50]);
- ✓ 1 Thess. 2:14 (if authentic; see *H&H*, pp. 36-37), which commends the character of the 'churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea';
- ✓ 1 Cor. 15:3-11, where Paul places himself last within a closed group of apostles commissioned by Christ.

Overall, I find Holmberg's historical reconstruction as convincing today as I did almost two decades ago. The one area where I substantially disagree concerns the identity of Paul's opponents. Holmberg accepts the traditional (that is, going back to Baur) association of the Galatian Judaizers and Corinthian 'super apostles' with the Jerusalem church. As I have argued elsewhere (*H&H*, pp. 152-73), I find this identification problematic. Certainly, I do not accept the notion (which, to be fair, goes beyond Holmberg) that the Jerusalem Church sponsored a systematic anti-Pauline counter-mission.

B. PAUL'S UNDERSTANDING AND USE OF AUTHORITY

Paul had what we today might call a 'robust self-image.' As Krister Stendahl demonstrated in his celebrated essay 'Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West',³ self-examination was not exactly Paul's strong suit. But it is not necessary to delve into Paul's psyche to understand a principle reason for his confidence: he was appointed by Christ himself. That commission encouraged him to liken himself, not only to the disciples, but to figures such as Isaiah and Jeremiah (Gal. 1:15, Rom. 1:1). He assumed that he and his associates preached God's word, not their own (1 Thess. 2:13), that 'God [was] making God's appeal through us' (2 Cor. 5:20).

Paul also assumed authority by virtue of his role as church founder. 'For though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many parents [²¹'fathers']. Indeed, in Christ Jesus I became your parent through the gospel' (1 Cor. 4:15). It is interesting that Paul did not assert dominance over all Gentile churches. To be sure, Paul wrote at least one letter (Romans) to a church that he did not found, but it is deferential to the local leadership in a way unparalleled in Paul's other correspondence (e.g., in Rom. 1:11-12).

In addition, Paul grounded his authority in his experience of the Spirit, although he was

³ *HTR* 56 (1963): 199-215.

exceeding reluctant to make such an argument 'officially', not because of a perceived deficiency (although his inability to overmaster his 'thorn in the flesh' made him vulnerable on this point), but because such considerations are rightfully secondary (see especially 2 Cor. 11-13). In his own mind, of much greater consequence in legitimating his authority was his behavior, in particular, his ceaseless labors and continual suffering for the sake of the Gospel. He articulates this claim in passages that are among the most dramatic and powerful in all of his letters (e.g., 1 Cor. 4:8-13; 2 Cor. 6:3-10; 11:21-12:21). It is here that I find Paul's treatment and use of authority most persuasive.

Paul exercised his authority in person, through emissaries, and (thankfully, for our sake) by letter. Paul expected from the members of his churches recognition, obedience, and (at least in certain cases) financial support. Needless to say, had these obligations always been met, Pauline scholars would have much less to study. When challenged, Paul sought to persuade, and when persuasion failed, he had few sanctions to administer. He wrote at one point that he might come to Corinth with a 'stick,' but the threat is unlikely a literal one (1 Cor. 4:21; see also 2 Cor. 13:1-4)! The most concrete punishment, the shunning of the persistently disobedient (1 Cor. 5:9-11), was indirect and required the cooperation of the church. The most radical penalty is surely that prescribed in 1 Cor. 5:5, the handing over of an individual 'to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.' Note that here, too, the action is indirect; it is Satan who does the destroying. (One could argue that even in this example the punished had to consent to the legitimacy of the punisher's authority.)

As indicated above, Paul often thought of his converts as his spiritual children, and his letters evidence his considerable affection toward them. Consequently, he likened his instruction to a parent's attempts to bring a child to maturity and self-sufficiency (pp. 78-79). If possible, Paul preferred to request or advise rather than to command (as in 1 Cor. 7:3, 8, 28, 38; 8:8-10; 10:25-28; 2 Cor. 8:8-10; & Philem. 8-10, 17, 21). Similarly, he was capable of distinguishing between his will and a 'command of the Lord' (1 Cor. 7:25, 10). Clearly, Paul was 'able to choose between different degrees of normative force...and...he does not necessarily use the maximally available degree' (p. 85). His ideal is expressed in 2 Cor. 1:24: 'Not that we lord it over your faith; rather, we are workers with you for your joy'.

C. THE DISTRIBUTION OF AUTHORITY IN THE PAULINE CHURCHES

On first encounter, one might be surprised at the mention of so many other Christian workers in Paul's epistles. Indeed, 'more than one hundred names are associated with the apostle in Acts and the Pauline letters' (one might add, a considerable number of whom were women). Of these, twelve stood in long-term relationship to Paul, five of whom were 'in explicit subordination to Paul' (Erastus, Mark, Timothy, Titus, and Tychicus; p. 57). In other words, Paul participated in a much larger missionary enterprise, and he worked both with his own 'team' (whose constituency was fluid) and, on occasion, with other, autonomous Christian leaders. Paul was not the lone wolf/ranger (depending on one's perspective) of popular portrayal.

Within Paul's churches, persons gained and exercised authority in various ways. Some possessed a specific spiritual gift (e.g., prophecy or speaking in tongues) that gave them prominence and, with it, undoubtedly some measure of status and authority. It is striking that

alongside such miraculous endowments Paul listed more mundane, 'natural' gifts, such as exhorting, teaching, giving, and administering (Rom. 12:5-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-10; 28-31). One notes both the degree to which ministry was shared and the extent to which offices within the local church had not yet been formalized. (Undoubtedly, the two facts are not unrelated.)

Based on 1 Cor. 12 (the body metaphor) and similar texts, it would be possible to conclude that the exercise of authority in the Pauline churches did not reflect the status and power structures of the wider society. That conclusion would not be accurate. The evidence strongly supports what we might otherwise have guessed to have been the case: the wealthier (and better educated, better connected) members tended to dominate, not least because the churches met in their homes, and they alone had the resources (both in time and money) to support the Church's work. It is interesting that of all the Corinthians, Paul baptized only Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:14-15), who, perhaps not coincidentally, happened to have been among the wealthiest and most prominent members of that congregation (p. 106). (Holmberg agrees with Theissen's conclusion that 1 Cor. is addressed primarily to that church's wealthy members, the 'strong' of chapters 8 and 9; p. 85.)⁴ To what extent Paul either fostered or challenged (or *both* fostered and challenged) this development is important to ask but difficult to answer.

4. SOME OBSERVATIONS AND POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

I shall offer a few observations below that might serve as starting points for our discussion. The list is exploratory rather than exhaustive; I trust that others will contribute ideas and bring questions of their own to the conversation.

A. PAUL AND WESLEY

I thank your ladyship for the information concerning the Methodist preachers. Their doctrines are most repulsive and strongly tainted with impertinence and disrespect towards their superiors, in perpetually endeavouring to level all ranks and do away with all distinctions. It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl the earth.

- from a letter of the Duchess of Buckingham to the Countess of Huntingdon⁵

I had not previously considered the many parallels between Paul and Wesley. Both were comparatively well educated, and neither was truly impoverished; nevertheless, neither's authority was inherited or institutionally based. (In fact, both exercised authority outside of, even over against, the established religious order, whose legitimacy neither repudiated.) Both came in time to labor primarily outside of the cultural, religious, and social sphere of

⁴ Gerd Theissen. 'Die Starken und Schwachen in Korinth.' *EvTh* 35 (1975): 155-72.

⁵ W. E. H. Lecky, *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, New Edition (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1892), III, p. 122.

their birth, which undoubtedly gave a sense of clarity and purpose to their ministry. Both looked to formative spiritual experiences to legitimate their ministry, and both emphasized experience in ways that promoted a surprising measure of egalitarianism amongst their followers. Both came to rely heavily upon the work of subordinates, yet neither relinquished ultimate authority over the groups they founded. Both made heavy demands upon followers, yet neither was entirely autocratic, allowing space for individual discernment about some (albeit secondary) issues.

We also might wish to consider how Paul and Wesley differed in the exercise of authority. Is either a better model? To what extent do similarities such as those mentioned above exist between Paul and contemporary Christian leaders? In what ways does the character of the Church make such similarities inevitable?

B. PHILEMON AS TEST CASE

Whenever we study Philemon in my introductory New Testament classes, a number of students complain that Paul was paternalistic and even coercive. Philemon is a good test case because we can agree that Paul had taken up a good cause, namely, the humane treatment (perhaps even manumission) of the runaway slave Onesimus. In view of that end, some students argue that Paul's means, however rough, were justified. A third group simply admires Paul's art and sees nothing contestable in his method. I propose that we consider Philemon as a concrete example of Paul's use of authority. A few points to note on the attached handout:

- ✓ Paul does not write to Philemon alone. This is a public letter, addressed to 'the church in your house' (v. 2). Obviously, this fact makes Philemon's a public response. It is not just Paul's approval that is at stake.
- ✓ The 'thanksgiving' is a key section in every Pauline letter (that is, with the exception of Galatians, where, not surprisingly, it is absent). In it, Paul often commends his readers for particular attributes (e.g., spiritual gifts in 1 Cor. 1:7) about which he will teach or even correct them later in the epistle. (In some instances, this amounts to 'setting them up to knock them down.')
- ✓ This thanksgiving is carefully constructed: Philemon has made a *start* at sharing his faith, at refreshing the hearts of the saints, at doing 'good.' Note how all of this language is picked up and extended in the remainder of the letter. Will Philemon live up to his reputation?
- ✓ The heavy use of insider (especially familial) language is hardly incidental. Words like 'father...child...brother' put Philemon into a very tight corner, especially when used to remind Philemon of the debt he owes to Paul. (To top it off, Paul notes that Onesimus has been serving him in Philemon's place!)
- ✓ Paul's mention of 'duty' and 'command' (v. 8) is exquisitely calibrated. It simultaneously flatters and threatens.
- ✓ The pathos of Paul's self-description ('old man', 'prisoner of Jesus Christ', etc.) also ratchets up the tension. What sort of person would deny the wishes of this saint?
- ✓ Paul states in v. 22 that he plans to visit Philemon. The intended effect is obvious.

As counter-balance to these points, we should recognize that we are not in a good position to judge how the letter would have been perceived at the time of its composition. My own impression (admittedly, based on limited exposure) is that ancient rhetoric was—by our standards—characteristically flamboyant and hyperbolic. Still, Philemon is read and experienced as scripture today, and contemporary perceptions do matter.

Secondly, we should remind ourselves again that it was necessary for Paul to persuade Philemon. Had Paul sent a direct order, he would have had no power to enforce it. Pastors and other church workers well understand the difficulties and frustrations of working in a nearly all-volunteer organization. They have daily to estimate the coinage of their authority and to calculate how much they might spend on some worthy purpose. If Paul broke the bank, it was because of the value he ascribed to Onesimus. I doubt that Paul would soon have made another request of Philemon.

C. PAUL'S UNIQUENESS

There can never be another first century, and there can never be another Paul. The 'proximity to the sacred' that could legitimate the ministry of Paul (or Peter or James) is not available to us today. In the place of the earliest witnesses is their testimony, the New Testament, in which the Church has located a certain proximate authority. Today, the ability to interpret and exposit (and thus to be in proximity to) scripture is itself a primary form of legitimation. Who has real authority in today's Church? More often than not, it is those who preach and teach powerfully, who can say believably, 'This is the word of God.'

D. THE PROBLEM OF 'NATURAL' LEADERSHIP

There is a tension (noted above) between the egalitarianism of Pauline ecclesiology and the fact of Pauline practice. (The same, I am told by my colleague Ted Campbell, may be said of John Wesley.) Whatever Paul's intentions, those of greater means and higher status usually led (note the situation reflected in James 2:1-7). It should go without saying that this state of affairs is not unknown to us today. Speaking as a former pastor, I have seen the problem firsthand. Unquestionably, it is wrong to put the bank president (or seminary professor?) on the Administrative Board because of his or her social standing; nevertheless, it is often the case that 'worldly success' is related to talent and training—attributes that can be of use to the Church. But there is a self-limiting, self-fulfilling quality to this observation. If we look only to those of status and position to lead, we are sure to find no leadership elsewhere.

E. THE LEADERSHIP CRISIS IN AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM

In many places and in various ways, I have been told that our church lacks leadership. Is the complaint justified, or does it simply evidence a misplaced nostalgia, rather like Russians who long for the good-old certainties of Stalinist imperialism? I suspect that the ailment is largely real, although the cure is elusive. Some of the causes, however, are obvious. With our post-Enlightenment skepticism, our Protestant suspicion, and our democratic

individualism, it is a wonder that *anyone* can lead. In a pluralistic church such as ours, it is virtually impossible for any individual to exercise general authority. Perhaps that is not such a bad thing. When we look at who really does have influence in the Church, we might sometimes regret that people are not more, rather than less, critical.

What confers or legitimates authority in today's United Methodist Church? Office? Not to a great extent, if the bishopric is any measure. Not education, if the standing of the seminaries is any indication. Perhaps the church of Paul's day is not unlike our own in this respect. At a time when offices were only beginning to emerge, authority was derivative, conferred from below upon those regarded as Christ's instruments. For most, authority was, in effect, earned. Perhaps our dilemma today is that so few have earned the right to lead. Ordination can confer a measure of institutional power; sacrificial love, devoted service, and spiritual depth are the price of genuine authority. Paul could 'glory' in his sufferings, as rightfully could Martin Luther King Jr. or Nelson Mandela. To draw near to God, to 'be proximate to the sacred', is a dangerous and costly business. Little wonder that so few do it.

5. CONCLUSION

Reading Holmberg at age forty, I am less concerned with issues of historical reconstruction, which are by now familiar. Much more urgent is the matter of Paul's example. Paul did not exercise 'cheap' authority. His position was more burden than benefit, a gift of almost intolerable gravity. It came as neither possession nor right. It was not bestowed by office; it was not communicated by the laying on of hands. It was not the Church's to give, and it was not the apostle's to own. Paul understood that.

Jesus is recorded as having said, 'Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all' (Mark 10:43-44). It is not surprising that Paul might have failed in some respects to live up to this standard. Remarkable are the many ways in which he came close.



ANALYSIS OF PAUL'S LETTER TO PHILEMON

"That the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ" (v. 6)

GREETING (vv. 1-3)

1: Sender(s)
(note titles)

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother.

1-2: Recipient(s)
(note titles)

To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker
to Apphia our (the) sister
to Archippus our fellow soldier

and to the church in your house.

3: Blessing

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

THANKSGIVING (vv. 4-7)

4: Remembrance

When I remember you in my prayers

4: Reason(s) for
Thanks

I always thank my God because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus.

6: Prayer
(& purpose)

I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ:

7: Prayer Partly
Answered

I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

BODY (vv. 8-20)

8: Basis for Request

For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, Yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love and I, Paul, do this as an old man [ambassador] and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus

10: Request

I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. Formerly he was *useless* to you, but now he is indeed *useful* both to you and to me. I am sending him, that is, **my own heart**, back to you. I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your **good deed** might be voluntary and not something forced. Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, no longer a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother--especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

17: Recommendation

So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.

18: Legalities

If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it.

19: Basis for Request
(Round Two)

I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. Yes, brother, let me have **this benefit** from you in the Lord! **Refresh my heart** in Christ.

21: Summation

Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that **you will do even more than I say**.

FAREWELL (22-25)

22: Maintenance of
Relationship

One more thing--prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you.

23: Personal
Greetings

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

25: Benediction/Blessing

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

(RSU)

— = Note special 'insider language'

■ = Note foreshadowing/fulfilling of Paul's request