

# Ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα (2 Corinthians 4:13): Paul's Christological Reading of Psalm 115:1a LXX

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RICHARD B. HAYS HAS ARGUED THAT, from early on, Christians read certain psalms as utterances of Christ.<sup>1</sup> He notes that the NT offers ample evidence of this hermeneutical convention. Paul, the Synoptic writers, John, and the author of Hebrews all make use of this interpretive tradition.<sup>2</sup> What leads Hays to conjecture that this convention was already established as tradition in early Christianity—predating even Paul—is that the NT authors employ it without offering any explanation or justification; they simply do so without comment. Hays proceeds to argue that in Rom 15:9 Paul intends Christ to be the speaker of the words cited from Ps 17:50 LXX. Specifically, Hays contends that the apostle cites this verse in order to allude to the *entire* narrative of the psalm, especially vv. 47-51. The cited line refers to singing praise among the Gentiles but ultimately evokes “the image of a suffering and vindicated Christ.” According to Hays, the reason why David’s songs

<sup>1</sup> Richard B. Hays, “Christ Prays the Psalms: Israel’s Psalter as Matrix of Early Christianity,” in *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 101-18. With the exception of adding a brief introduction and conclusion, this article is a reprint of his “Christ Prays the Psalms: Paul’s Use of an Early Christian Exegetical Convention,” in *The Future of Christology: Essays in Honor of Leander E. Keck* (ed. Abraham J. Malherbe and Wayne A. Meeks; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 122-36. I cite the more recent version.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Rom 15:3 (quoting Ps 68:10b LXX); Matt 13:35 (Ps 77:2a LXX); Mark 15:34 (Ps 21:2a LXX); Luke 23:46 (Ps 30:6a LXX); John 2:17 (Ps 68:10a LXX); Heb 2:12 (Ps 21:23 LXX); and Heb 10:5-7 (Ps 39:7-9a LXX).

can be read christologically is that Jesus as Messiah embodied the very destiny of Israel.<sup>3</sup>

Before presenting his interpretation of Rom 15:9, Hays suggests that 2 Cor 4:13 might be another instance of “christological ventriloquism.”<sup>4</sup> There Paul cites Ps 115:1a LXX—ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα.<sup>5</sup> In this article, I argue that the apostle in fact *does* make the psalmist’s words a self-testimony from the mouth of (the risen) Jesus. Section I offers an exegesis of 2 Cor 4:7-15, in which the interpretive key is found in Paul’s christological reading of Psalms 114–115 LXX. Section II then demonstrates how this interpretation illuminates other parts of 2 Corinthians, an important test of the viability of my thesis.<sup>6</sup> As will be seen, this study strengthens another of Hays’s claims, namely, that Jesus’ πίστις (“faithfulness”) lies at the heart of the narrative christology that the apostle’s writings presuppose and upon which they rest.<sup>7</sup>

## I. The Christological Reading of Psalm 115:1a LXX in 2 Corinthians 4:13

In order fully to appreciate Paul’s allusion to Ps 115:1a LXX, it is necessary to work through 2 Cor 4:7-15.<sup>8</sup> This passage is part of Paul’s extended *apologia* for his manner of exercising apostleship (2:14–7:4). It follows immediately upon

<sup>3</sup> See Hays, “Christ Prays the Psalms,” 111-17. The quotation is from p. 116.

<sup>4</sup> Hays, “Christ Prays the Psalms,” 108-9. The quoted phrase is from p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> The *NAB* is typical in rendering this phrase as “I believed, therefore I spoke.” As will be argued below, this translation misses an important nuance in Paul’s presentation.

<sup>6</sup> I read 2 Corinthians as having literary integrity in its canonical form. As Frank J. Matera (*II Corinthians: A Commentary* [NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003] 29 n. 24) observes, the pendulum of scholarly opinion has swung back to assuming the letter’s unity. Matera offers a good discussion of the problems of partition theories and makes a good case for the literary integrity of 2 Corinthians (pp. 24-32).

<sup>7</sup> See Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) esp. 119-207.

<sup>8</sup> I am grateful to *Analecta Biblica*—especially to Peter Brook, S.J., the Administrative Director of Publications—for permission to make use of exegetical arguments from my recently published *The Character of Jesus: The Linchpin in Paul’s Argument in 2 Corinthians* (AnBib 158; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2005). In section I of this article, I draw from materials found in *Character of Jesus*, 146-68 and 247-58. Here I condense and bring together disparate exegetical pieces from that book in order to develop, in response to Hays, a sustained argument for Paul’s use of an implicit narrative christology in 2 Cor 4:13. In doing so, I attempt to heed the invitation to young scholars recently issued by N. T. Wright (*Paul: In Fresh Perspective* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005] x): “I hope [this work on Paul] will at least stimulate those with fresher minds and more youthful energy to do better, perhaps by sparking off some ideas with those in particular who are at an early stage in their careers and have the opportunity to study Paul intensively for themselves and come up with challenges, modifications, and fresh proposals of their own.”

his argument that he exercises his ministry as part of the “new covenant” (2:14–4:6). This new covenant is marked by “surpassing glory” (3:7–11), a glory that is revealed through “the gospel of the glory of the Messiah” (4:4).<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Paul insists that God is bringing about a new creation by revealing God’s glory in people’s hearts in the face of Jesus (4:6; cf. 5:17).

Beginning in 2 Cor 4:7, however, Paul makes clear that the exercise of ministry in the new covenant is also marked by *suffering*. The apostle claims that he holds “this treasure”—referring to the enlightenment of the gospel of the glory of Christ (4:4, 6)—in “earthen vessels,” a metaphor connoting fragility.<sup>10</sup> What Paul means by “earthen vessels” is developed in 4:10b and 4:11b, where he refers respectively to “the body” and “mortal flesh.” With his literal use of “body language,” Paul asserts throughout this passage that it is principally through his lived experience and actions that he proclaims the gospel most eloquently. Then, in the second half of 4:7, Paul offers *the* crucial insight that he has come to appreciate: it is only through God’s empowerment (ἡ ὑπερβολὴ τῆς δυνάμεως ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ) that he can live out his apostolic calling. The reference to the divine δύναμις (“power”) here foreshadows the more precise description that the apostle will offer in 4:13.

In 2 Cor 4:8–9 Paul poignantly depicts, through a series of participial clauses of manner, just *how* his embodied revelation takes place: “as we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; left in doubt, but not to the point of despairing; persecuted, but not abandoned; thrown down, but not destroyed.” Paul explains that his apostolic calling involves the experience of suffering and the endurance of hardships. Moreover, the apostle’s use of present tense participles—in conjunction with the present tense of the governing verb ἔχομεν (“we have” [4:7])—indicates that his experience of travails and opposition is not merely occasional or episodic but rather is typical and *ongoing*. This ongoing aspect of Paul’s apostolic suffering is reinforced by his use of the temporal adverbs πάντοτε (“always”) in 4:10a and ἀεί (“constantly”) in 4:11a.<sup>11</sup>

The initial impression given by Paul’s brief *peristasis* catalogue in 2 Cor 4:8–9 is that he plays the role of *passive* sufferer. A look, however, to the apostle’s more expansive hardship catalogues later in the letter (6:4–10 and 11:23–33; cf. 12:10)

<sup>9</sup> All translations of the biblical text, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

<sup>10</sup> Determining the precise antecedent of first person plural pronouns throughout 2 Corinthians is a vexing interpretive problem. See Maurice Carrez, “Le ‘Nous’ en 2 Corinthiens,” *NTS* 26 (1980) 474–86; and David Filbeck, “Problems in Translating First Person Plural Pronouns in 2 Corinthians,” *BT* 45 (1994) 401–9. I take the antecedent in 2 Cor 4:7–15 to be Paul and his co-workers, Timothy and Silvanus; cf. 4:5 and 4:12 with 1:19. For the purposes of this article, I refer here only to *Paul*.

<sup>11</sup> See Steven J. Kraftchick, “Death in Us, Life in You: The Apostolic Medium,” in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 2, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (ed. David M. Hay; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 156–81, here 173.

reveals a more complex picture.<sup>12</sup> These passages not only enumerate sufferings that happen to Paul; they also list afflictions that he imposed on himself for the purpose of bringing the gospel to others. For instance, in 6:5b and 11:27 Paul refers to his decision to labor with his hands and to forgo meals and sleep in his commitment to bring the gospel to others (cf. 1 Thess 2:9; 1 Cor 4:11-12a). I suggest that one keep both aspects of Paul's suffering in mind—those that he (passively) endures and those that he willingly takes on—as we work our way through 2 Cor 4:7-15. Indeed, the logic of 4:10-12 requires that we do so.

In 2 Cor 4:10a Paul offers a climactic participial clause that summarizes and interprets his ongoing experience of suffering: “as we always carry in the body the dying/putting to death (νέκρωσις) of Jesus.” Two noteworthy features stand out. First is Paul's use of the unadorned name “Jesus.” The apostle refers simply to “Jesus” five times in the span of five verses (4:10-14—according to p<sup>46</sup>, six times; moreover, another instance of Jesus' unadorned name occurs in 4:5).<sup>13</sup> Paul normally combines the name Jesus with the messianic title “Christ” and/or the title “Lord.” When, however, the apostle refers solely to the personal name “Jesus,” the emphasis is on Jesus' *human* identity and character.<sup>14</sup> The cluster of instances of the unadorned name “Jesus” in 2 Cor 4:10-14 is critically significant.

This leads to the second noteworthy feature of 4:10a: Paul aligns his own experience of suffering and endurance of hardships with the *story* of Jesus—specifically, with the graphic image of Jesus being put to death (νέκρωσις τοῦ Ἰησοῦ).<sup>15</sup> Once again, Paul's use of the present tense participle περιφέροντες (“we carry”) and the adverb πάντοτε (in prominent first position) indicates that he is

<sup>12</sup> For more on Paul's use of “hardship catalogues,” see Robert Hodgson, “Paul the Apostle and First Century Tribulation Lists,” *ZNW* 74 (1983) 59-89; and John T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence* (SBLDS 99; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).

<sup>13</sup> This represents nearly one-third of the instances of the unadorned name “Jesus” in the Pauline writings. See Rom 3:26; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3 (2x); 2 Cor 4:5, 10 (2x), 11 (2x), 14; 11:4; Gal 6:17; Eph 4:21; Phil 2:10; 1 Thess 1:10; 4:14 (2x).

<sup>14</sup> See John W. Pryor, “Paul's Use of Ἰησους—A Clue for the Translation of Romans 3:26?” *Colloquium* 16 (1983) 31-45. For example, Paul elsewhere names Jesus as the one whom God has raised from the dead (Rom 8:11; 1 Thess 1:10; 4:14), just as he does in 2 Cor 4:14. Even more striking are the references to “the wounds of Jesus” (στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ) in Gal 6:17 and “the faithfulness of Jesus” (πίστις Ἰησοῦ) in Rom 3:26.

<sup>15</sup> Pace, e.g., Margaret E. Thrall (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* [2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1994, 2000] 1. 331-32), who, on the basis of Rom 4:19, argues that Paul refers in 2 Cor 4:10a to Jesus' state of “deadness.” For reading νέκρωσις as denoting death as a process, as “putting to death,” see BDAG, s.v. νέκρωσις, 1. In addition, see *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (ed. Bruce W. Longenecker; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) for essays arguing for and against Paul's use of “story” or “narrative.” Longenecker's volume is limited to Romans and Galatians.

talking about a current and ongoing phenomenon. The apostle makes the daring assertion that his experience of being afflicted, confused, persecuted, and humiliated is somehow connected with the story of Jesus. Indeed, it is this story that gives meaning to and offers an explanation of Paul's sufferings: he walks in the way of Jesus, whose ἀπόστολος he is (1:1). Moreover, this insistence on ongoing experience strongly suggests that the phrase "the putting to death of Jesus" connotes more than the crucifixion itself. Rather, the apostle's usage indicates that he intends to refer more broadly to Jesus' way of life.<sup>16</sup> This will be borne out by the verses that follow.

In 2 Cor 4:11 Paul offers the grounds—note the postpositive γάρ ("for")—for what he has claimed in the compound-complex statement in 4:7-10. The apostle now states that he is "continually being handed over unto death on account of Jesus." Observe the peculiar syntax of 4:11a: εἰς θάνατον παραδίδμεθα διὰ Ἰησοῦν.<sup>17</sup> Paul's phraseology not only leaves the phrase διὰ Ἰησοῦν ("on account of Jesus") in the prominent end position; it also juxtaposes Jesus with the verb παραδίδμεθα, the passive form of the verb παραδίδωμι ("hand over"). This association of Jesus with the verb παραδίδωμι is crucially important.

Elsewhere in his writings, Paul twice uses the passive voice of παραδίδωμι in connection with Jesus. In both instances the apostle is recalling traditions about Jesus. In 1 Cor 11:23 Paul recounts Jesus' words over the bread and cup "on the night he *was handed over*" (παραδίδετο). And in Rom 4:25 he cites the tradition that Jesus "*was handed over* (παρέδόθη) for our trespasses."<sup>18</sup> In neither case does Paul name the subject who handed Jesus over. The apostle, however, does so in Rom 8:32. There he identifies *God* as the one who did not spare God's Son, but "handed him over (παρέδωκεν) for our trespasses." According to Paul, Jesus' being handed over must be understood in light of *God's* plan of salvation, and hence in light of *God's* agency and will.

But this does not tell the whole story. Paul also insists in his writings that Jesus plays more than a passive role in God's plan of salvation. The apostle indicates Jesus' *active* participation in this plan by making him the subject of the active, reflexive form of παραδίδωμι. This active sense is expressed succinctly in Eph 5:2: "Christ loved us, and *gave himself up* (παρέδωκεν ἑαυτόν) for our sake" (cf.

<sup>16</sup> Linda L. Belleville (2 *Corinthians* [IVP New Testament Commentary; Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996] 122) states that Paul "has in mind the hardships, troubles and frustrations that Jesus faced during his . . . ministry." Cf. Victor P. Furnish (*II Corinthians*: Translated with introduction, notes, and commentary [AB 32A; New York: Doubleday, 1984] 283), who suggests that "Paul might be thinking of the whole course of Jesus' life as a 'dying,' a being given up to death."

<sup>17</sup> Rather than παραδίδμεθα εἰς θάνατον διὰ Ἰησοῦν.

<sup>18</sup> For reading Rom 4:25a as a formulaic tradition on which Paul draws, see, e.g., Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 128.

Eph 5:25).<sup>19</sup> Observe the linkage here between Christ's love and his active handing over of self. Indeed, Eph 5:2 intimates that the latter is an expression of the former. In fact, Paul employs these same words in Gal 2:20, where he describes "the Son of God" as the one "who loved me and *gave himself up* (παραδόντος ἑαυτὸν) for me." As additionally significant, Paul places this relative clause in apposition to his reference to Jesus' πίστις.<sup>20</sup> That is, "he loved me and gave himself for me" is what the apostle means by the phrase "the πίστις of the Son of God."<sup>21</sup>

I contend that Paul's connection of Jesus with παραδίδωμι in 2 Cor 4:11a evokes not only the latter's being handed over (by God), but also Jesus' giving himself in love for the sake of others. Notice, then, how Paul connects himself to Jesus: the apostle states that he is *continually* being handed over διὰ Ἰησοῦν. What does Paul mean by this compact expression? The answer, I suggest, is found in 2 Cor 5:15: Paul lives no longer for himself, but for the sake of Jesus. And living for the sake of Jesus entails participating in his self-giving in love for the sake of others, for their benefit and advantage.<sup>22</sup> Such self-giving is to be understood as a mode of existence, a manner of being (and not just a single, once-for-all action). Thus, the phrase διὰ Ἰησοῦν in 4:11a has rich connotations. In the first place, it means "for the sake of Jesus" in the sense that Paul is loyal in his service to the one whose apostle he is (1:1). Second, it also connotes "because of Jesus" in the sense that the apostle emulates the example of Jesus.<sup>23</sup>

Whereas in 2 Cor 4:11a Paul offers the reason for his self-giving apostolic existence—namely, he participates in the story of Jesus, who gave himself in love for others—in 4:12 the apostle reveals its *result* or consequence (observe the inferential particle ὥστε):<sup>24</sup> "Consequently, death is at work in us, but life in you." Because Paul embraces the way of Jesus—not only his suffering but also his giving himself in love for others—the Corinthians benefit. Observe that if the apostle were merely talking about his passive endurance of suffering and affliction in 4:7-11, it is difficult to understand how the Corinthians would thereby derive ben-

<sup>19</sup> The authenticity of Ephesians is, of course, disputed; however, Eph 5:2 states compactly what Paul writes in Gal 2:20.

<sup>20</sup> For reading the phrase πίστει τῇ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ as a subjective genitive, see, e.g., Frank J. Matera, *Galatians* (SacPag 9; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992) 101; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A new translation with introduction and commentary* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 259; and Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 153-56.

<sup>21</sup> Leander E. Keck ("Jesus" in Romans," *JBL* 108 [1989] 443-60, here 455) aptly observes that Paul here offers his own exegesis of Jesus' πίστις.

<sup>22</sup> Notice how Paul uses the dative of advantage in 5:15. Cf. 1 Cor 10:33-11:1.

<sup>23</sup> Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (*The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians* [NTT; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991] 46) captures well the rich sense of διὰ Ἰησοῦν: "[Paul] persists 'on account of Jesus,' not only because he has been called, but because he has been inspired and challenged by the ministry of Jesus."

<sup>24</sup> See Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 257.

efit. If, however, Paul is referring to his participation in the pattern of Jesus' self-giving, it becomes clear how the Corinthians receive life. They are the beneficiaries of Paul's apostolic ministry, a ministry marked by love, humility, and self-giving for their sake.

Readers have probably noticed that I have not yet treated 2 Cor 4:10b and 11b. In these verses, Paul claims that the purpose (note the ἵνα, "in order that") of his participating in "the putting to death of Jesus"/"being handed over because of Jesus" is so that "the life of Jesus" (ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ) might be made manifest in the apostle's enfleshed existence. Some commentators understand the phrase ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ as signifying the same thing as ἡ νέκρωσις τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, namely, Jesus' self-giving mode of existence. But this identification pushes the notion of paradox too far.<sup>25</sup> Rather, "the life of Jesus" here signifies the power of God as manifested in the *resurrection* of Jesus (cf. 4:14), the power that enables others to live as he lived.<sup>26</sup> This is the same power that Paul referred to in 4:7 as ἡ ὑπερβολὴ τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ θεοῦ. The apostle's embodiment of Jesus' self-giving (and suffering) in love points to the power of God at work in him (that is, in Paul). As we will see momentarily, the apostle is about to refer to this power again.

We now arrive at the pivotal verse, 2 Cor 4:13: ἔχοντες δὲ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πίστεως—κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον· ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα—καὶ ἡμεῖς πιστεύομεν, διὸ καὶ λαλοῦμεν. The Greek text presents several interpretive options. What is the nuance of the circumstantial participle ἔχοντες ("we have")? Does the particle δὲ serve a connective or contrastive function? What does the adjective αὐτό ("same") signify: Paul has the same spirit as whom? Does πνεῦμα refer to a human quality or to the Spirit of God? What does the πιστ- terminology in this verse denote: the narrower notion of belief/believing or the broader sense of faithfulness/being faithful? Finally, what precisely is meant by the verb λαλέω ("speak") in this context?

At the heart of 2 Cor 4:13 lies Paul's citation of Ps 115:1a LXX—ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα. These words appear at the midpoint of two psalms (Psalms 114–115 LXX) that, taken together, recount the plight of a righteous sufferer who calls out to God for deliverance from the threat of death and is saved.<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere I have

<sup>25</sup> As rightly argued by Jan Lambrecht ("The Nekrōsis of Jesus: Ministry and Suffering in 2 Cor 4, 7-15," in Reimund Bieringer and Jan Lambrecht, *Studies on 2 Corinthians* [BETL 112; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994] 309-33, here 320) against Erhardt Güttgemanns (*Der leidende Apostel und sein Herr: Studien zur paulinischen Christologie* [FRLANT 90; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966] 118, 122, 198).

<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Timothy B. Savage (*Power through Weakness: Paul's Understanding of the Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians* [SNTSMS 86; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996] 177) states, "Since ['the life of Jesus'] is a present manifestation of resurrection life, it serves to empower an entirely new way of existence."

<sup>27</sup> Psalms 114–115 LXX appear in the MT (and thus in English translations) as Ps 116: Psalm 114 LXX = Ps 116:1-9 MT, and Psalm 115 LXX = Ps 116:10-19 MT.

shown the impressive number of verbal, conceptual, and thematic echoes of Psalms 114–115 LXX that are found throughout the text of 2 Corinthians.<sup>28</sup> The number and distribution of these resonances suggest that these psalms influenced Paul as he wrote this letter.

More important than the allusive echoes is the *story* told in Psalms 114–115 LXX. The psalmist identifies himself twice as God’s “slave” (δοῦλος [115:7ab]).<sup>29</sup> He also refers twice to an experience of being “brought low” (ἐταπεινώθη [114:6b; 115:1b]). These references to his being brought low bracket the words Paul cites. The psalmist also portrays his affliction and suffering in vivid terms: “the throes of death encompassed” him, the “dangers of Hades found” him (114:3). In desperation, he appeals to God for help (“Save” [ῥῦσαι] my life!” [114:4b]). The psalmist then confesses that God did “save” him (114:6b) and deliver him “from death” (ἐκ θανάτου [114:8a]). Moreover, he raises up “the cup (ποτήριον) of salvation” (115:4a) and calls on the name of the Lord, declaring, “Precious before the Lord is the death of his holy ones” (115:6). At the very center of his recitation and confession, the psalmist declares, ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα (115:1a). Now, given the content of Psalms 114–115 LXX, how ought the verb πιστεύω be understood here? The story suggests two things: first, the psalmist *trusted* in God to rescue him; and second, he *has been faithful* to God, whose δοῦλος he is. Thus, according to the story line of Psalms 114–115 LXX, the psalmist speaks out as one who has been faithful to God; moreover, he has put his trust in God, who in turn vindicated him and saved him from death.

I argue that Paul intends the Corinthians to recall the entire story of Psalms 114–115 LXX. Why? Because, according to the apostle, *these psalms tell the story of Jesus*.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the story of Jesus that Paul employs in Phil 2:6–11 bears some striking similarities to the story of the righteous sufferer in Psalms 114–115 LXX.<sup>31</sup> The hymn in Philippians 2 describes Jesus as one who emptied himself, taking on the form of a “slave” (δοῦλος [2:7]). It recounts how Jesus “lowered” (ἐταπεινώσεν) himself, becoming obedient unto death (μέχρι θανάτου [2:8]). The Christ hymn makes clear that God regarded Jesus’ death as precious and vindicated him (“Therefore God highly exalted him . . . [2:9]). Furthermore, Paul’s

<sup>28</sup> See the chart in Stegman, *Character of Jesus*, 154–55. Richard B. Hays (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989] 20, 87–88, 155) refers to Paul’s use of allusive echoes as “metalepsis.”

<sup>29</sup> On the basis of the self-reference to υἱός (son) and (the masculine form) δοῦλος in Ps 115:7 LXX, I refer to the unnamed psalmist as “he,” “him,” etc.

<sup>30</sup> Pace, e.g., C. K. Barrett (*The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* [BNTC 8; London: A. & C. Black, 1973] 143), who argues that “Paul pays no heed to the context, but picks out the two significant words.”

<sup>31</sup> I presume that in Philippians 2 Paul took over and adapted for his own purposes a previously existing hymn.



recitation of the tradition of Jesus' taking the "cup" (ποτήριον) in 1 Cor 11:25—identified as "the covenant in my blood"—recalls the reference to taking up "the cup of salvation" in Ps 115:4a LXX.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, the reference in 1 Cor 11:23 to the night when Jesus "was handed over" parallels the psalmist's words in Ps 115:1b LXX ("I was brought exceedingly low"; cf. 114:6b).

Thus, Paul's citation of Ps 115:1a LXX in 2 Cor 4:13 evokes a specific christological story: how Jesus took on the form of a slave, lowered himself (even more), gave himself for others—even to the point of offering his life in obedience to God—and was then vindicated and exalted. As God's δοῦλος, it is thus *Jesus* who cries out, ἐπίστευσά (in the sense of being faithful to doing God's will and trusting in God to vindicate him).<sup>33</sup> The apostle's appropriation of Psalms 114–115 LXX in 2 Cor 4:13 functions to make the *risen* Jesus—the one whom God raised from the dead (4:14)—offer testimony to his own πίστις.<sup>34</sup> And this faith-

<sup>32</sup> Hays ("Christ Prays the Psalms," 108-9) also notes two of the similarities in vocabulary between Psalm 115 LXX and Philippians 2 and suggests that Ps 115:4-6 LXX can be construed as a prefiguration of the Lord's Supper.

<sup>33</sup> I recognize that, if my interpretation is correct, 2 Cor 4:13 would be the only instance in the NT where Jesus is the subject of the verb πιστεύω. This is not an insubstantial observation and would lead many to dismiss the interpretation out of hand. If, however, one understands Jesus' πίστις in terms of *fides qua* (concerning one's self-commitment to God) rather than in terms of *fides quae* (concerning the content of one's faith), the difficulty of Jesus being the subject of πιστεύω is diminished, if not eliminated. Indeed, this distinction undercuts the observation of, e.g., Veronica Kopersky ("The Meaning of *Pistis Christou* in Philippians 3:9," *LS* 18 [1993] 198-216, here 210) that Paul "does not speak of Christ . . . as one who needs to believe in order to obtain righteousness." Besides, the apostle's main concern in 2 Cor 4:13 is, as we will see, to insist that he has τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πίστεως. The allusion to Ps 115:1 LXX functions to illuminate *this* phrase. Paul is not concerned with the subtleties of theological formulations here.

<sup>34</sup> Anthony Tyrrell Hanson (*Paul's Understanding of Jesus: Invention or Interpretation?* [Hull: University of Hull Publications, 1963] 11-13; idem, *The Paradox of the Cross in the Thought of St. Paul* [JSNTSup 17; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987] 51-53) was the first to argue at any length for a christological interpretation of 2 Cor 4:13. My interpretation differs from Hanson's in several respects: (1) he takes ἐπίστευσά, διὸ ἐλάλησα as a prophetic utterance, whereas I regard Paul as assuming that these words were spoken by the risen Jesus; (2) he (like Hays) treats only the content of Psalm 115 LXX, whereas I argue that Paul draws on both Psalm 114 and Psalm 115 LXX (= MT Ps 116); (3) he renders ἐπίστευσά as "Jesus *believed*," whereas I argue that the apostle draws on the sense of "being *faithful*"; and (4) he takes πνεῦμα as referring to a human attitude or disposition, whereas I argue that it refers to the divine Spirit (see below for more on the last two points). The biggest difference between our interpretations is that I concentrate on the larger context of 2 Cor 4:7-15. In addition to Hays (who suggests rather than argues extensively for a christological interpretation), Morna D. Hooker ("Interchange and Suffering," in *Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament: Studies Presented to G. M. Styler by the Cambridge New Testament Seminar* [ed. William Horbury and Brian McNeil; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981] 70-83, here 78-79) and Gerald O'Collins and Daniel Kendall ("The Faith of Jesus," *TS* 53 [1992] 403-23, here 417 n. 57) intimate that 2 Cor 4:13 is a reference to Jesus' πίστις.

fulness is grounded in *love*, as the first word of the psalmist (= Jesus for Paul) indicates: ἡγάπησα (Ps 114:1 LXX).

That Paul reads Psalms 114–115 LXX christologically, and that he alludes to the story of Jesus in 2 Cor 4:13, make sense in view of his identification with the story of Jesus in 4:10–12. (It is important that modern readers use historical imagination and ask themselves how the apostle would have heard the words of these psalms. Needless to say, he was not constrained by the original meaning of the text.)<sup>35</sup> Paul's purpose in 4:13 is to explain *how* he is able to offer himself (and to suffer) after the manner of Jesus. This purpose becomes more clear in the consideration of the questions posed above.

How ought Paul's use of πιστ- terminology be understood in 2 Cor 4:13? Most translations and commentators render the two instances of πιστεύω here as "believe," in the sense of having conviction or certainty. The "content" of such conviction or certainty is then usually understood as given in what follows, in 4:14—namely, that God raises the dead to life.<sup>36</sup> But this principally cognitive understanding of πιστεύω in 4:13 fails to do justice to the content of the verses that immediately precede it. In 4:7–12 Paul has been discussing how he manifests *in action* the mode of human existence set forth by Jesus, one that was marked by suffering and by self-giving in love. Moreover, the usual interpretation of 4:13 fails to recognize that the apostle has been alluding to the story of Jesus and his πίστις since 4:10. And given that Paul offers no indication of changing the subject matter here, I propose that the verb πιστεύω in 4:13 is best translated "be faithful," understood primarily as living in constant fidelity and obedience to God and God's will.<sup>37</sup> Granted, such faithfulness and obedience also imply trusting God to vindicate one's fidelity.<sup>38</sup> In fact, Paul alludes to this sense of trusting in 4:14: *knowing* (εἰδότες) that God, who raised Jesus from the dead (thereby vindicating his faithfulness), will raise the apostle and others who have likewise been faithful to God. In 4:14, however, Paul employs a different verb—οἶδα.<sup>39</sup> This is because he has

<sup>35</sup> So, too, Hanson, *Paul's Understanding of Jesus*, 12; cf. Hays, "Christ Prays the Psalms," 112. As Wright (*Paul*, 9) observes in connection with 2 Cor 4:13, the implicit narrative evoked was "clear to Paul and would have been clear to his readers."

<sup>36</sup> See, e.g., Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 241.

<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Rudolf Bultmann (*The Theology of the New Testament* [2 vols.; trans. Kendrick Grobel; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951–55] 1. 314) insisted that Paul understood "the act of faith as an act of obedience."

<sup>38</sup> As Hays ("Christ Prays the Psalms," 113) rightly observes, "The life-pattern of suffering for others, defined by Christ in Paul's reading of Psalm 69 [in Rom 15:3], is possible only for those who hope in God's ultimate vindication."

<sup>39</sup> Jan Lambrecht (*Second Corinthians* [SacPag 8; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999] 74) also notes that Paul's use of οἶδα in 4:14 adds to what was meant by πιστεύω in 4:13 (although Lambrecht does not see the christological allusion).

just employed πιστεύω in 4:13 to mean faithfulness as manifested by the giving of oneself in love for others in fidelity to God's will.

What does Paul mean by the phrase τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πίστεως? In light of what has just been argued, I submit that the phrase ought to be interpreted to mean “πνεῦμα of *faithfulness*.” This, however, still leaves unanswered what sense of πνεῦμα is intended: Does it refer to a human state of mind or disposition—as 4:13 is usually understood<sup>40</sup>—or to the Holy Spirit? I contend that Paul refers here to the divine Spirit.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, in the verses immediately preceding 4:7-15, the apostle has identified the Spirit as the source of transformation of Christians “into the same image” (3:18), that is, into the likeness of Christ, who is named in 4:4 as “the image of God.” In other words, Paul has just referred to a process whereby the Spirit empowers people to appropriate more and more the ethos (ἦθος) of Jesus.<sup>42</sup> After depicting the paradoxical nature of this transformation (4:7-12), the apostle again mentions the Spirit in connection with Jesus' exemplary mode of self-giving existence (as told, in Psalms 114–115, in the story of the righteous sufferer). “The Spirit of faithfulness” thus refers to the Holy Spirit, who enables its recipients to walk in the ways of Jesus' faithfulness and trust.<sup>43</sup> In fact, this “Spirit of faithfulness” is the δύναμις of God referred to in 4:7, synonymous with “the life of [the risen] Jesus” mentioned in 4:10-11.<sup>44</sup>

What, then, does Paul mean by “the *same* (τὸ αὐτό) Spirit of faithfulness”? I submit that with this phrase the apostle intends to capture the dyadic nuances of a single reality. First, “the *same Spirit* of faithfulness” refers to the transforming Spirit named in 3:18—the “Spirit of the Lord.” Second, “the *same Spirit* of *faithfulness*” refers to what the Spirit empowers, namely, the loving, self-giving mode of existence manifested by Jesus. The expressions νέκρωσις τοῦ Ἰησοῦ and

<sup>40</sup> See, e.g., Thrall (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1. 339), who argues that πνεῦμα here means “spiritual state” or “disposition,” and Belleville (2 *Corinthians*, 124), who renders πνεῦμα as “attitude.”

<sup>41</sup> As noted by Alfred Plummer (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* [repr.; ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1985] 133), many of the Church Fathers read πνεῦμα as a reference to the Holy Spirit. See also Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994) 323-24.

<sup>42</sup> For a more complete examination of 2 Cor 3:18; 4:4; and 4:6, see Stegman, *Character of Jesus*, 233-47. As we will see below, Paul has already referred in the letter to the Spirit as the source of empowerment of his “amen”—that is, his faithful commitment—to God, patterned after the yes of Jesus (1:21-22).

<sup>43</sup> Scott J. Hafemann (2 *Corinthians* [NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000] 187) captures well Paul's sense here: “since it is the Spirit who creates faith and conforms one to Christ's faithfulness in the midst of adversity, the ‘spirit’ in view here is most likely the Holy Spirit as the source of faith.”

<sup>44</sup> Indeed, as Luke Timothy Johnson has aptly remarked (*The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* [rev. ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999] 116), “Th[e] Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force; it is the life-giving presence of the risen Lord.”

παραδιδόμεθα διὰ Ἰησοῦν and Paul's christological reading of Psalms 114–115 all allude to this mode of existence.

How ought the postpositive particle δέ and the circumstantial participle ἔχοντες be rendered in 2 Cor 4:13? Although δέ can have an adversative connotation (“but”), it can also serve a connective function.<sup>45</sup> The apostle intends the linking function here because he *continues* his self-presentation from the preceding verses.<sup>46</sup> That is, Paul brings the line of thought begun in 4:7 to its climactic conclusion in 4:13–15.<sup>47</sup> The apostle names the source and cause of his faithfulness—the Holy Spirit—and alludes to the exemplar of that faithfulness, Jesus’ πίστις. Indeed, it is through Paul’s faithfulness to his apostolic ministry, exercised for the sake of others, that grace extends to more and more people, resulting in increased thanksgiving offered to God (4:15). Hence, I render ἔχοντες as a *causal* participle, and translate ἔχοντες δέ as “That is, because . . .”<sup>48</sup>

Bringing together the various strands of 2 Cor 4:13, I propose the following translation: “That is, because we have the same Spirit of faithfulness according to what has been written—‘I have been faithful, therefore I have spoken’—so also are we faithful, and therefore we also speak.” Filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Paul (along with his coworkers) is faithful to incarnating the loving, self-giving manner of living revealed by Jesus, God’s faithful δοῦλος. This is, in effect, the apostle’s précis of his self-presentation in 4:7–12. Because he is thus faithful, and because he trusts in God to vindicate his manner of being apostle (4:14), Paul can “speak out” to the Corinthians that “all things are for your sake” (4:15). He can intimate that they are the beneficiaries of his self-emptying mode of existence.

We are now in position to answer the last question raised above: What precisely is meant by the verb λαλέω in this context? The general content of what Paul “speaks out” is found in 2 Cor 4:5: “For we proclaim not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord; and [we proclaim] ourselves as your slaves (δούλους) because of Jesus (διὰ Ἰησοῦν).” We can now more fully apprehend the significance of Paul’s

<sup>45</sup> BDAG, s.v. δέ, 1 and 2. For instances of δέ serving a linking function in 2 Corinthians, see, e.g., 1:13, 21; 2:10; 3:7, 17, 18; 4:5.

<sup>46</sup> Pace Barnett (*Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 240), who argues that Paul begins a new section in 4:13 and grounds this claim by appealing to his use of the particle δέ. The presence of δέ by itself, however, is not sufficient to support Barnett’s exegesis.

<sup>47</sup> Thus, I disagree with the translations (e.g., *RSV*, *NRSV*, *NAB*, *NJB*, and *NIV*) and the commentators (e.g., Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* [WBC 40; Waco: Word, 1986] 82; Barnett, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 238; and Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 71) who start a new paragraph at 4:13. Lambrecht’s remark (*Second Corinthians*, 74) that the “logical connection” between 4:13 and what precedes is not evident seems to be typical. But there *is* a connection between 4:7–12 and 4:13, namely, the underlying story of Jesus’ πίστις. Cf., e.g., Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “Faith and Resurrection in 2 Cor 4:13–14,” *RB* 95 (1988) 543–50, here 548.

<sup>48</sup> Furnish (*II Corinthians*, 257) and Thrall (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1. 338) also render ἔχοντες as causal.

claim. That he proclaims “Jesus Christ is Lord!” is not surprising. Recall that this is the same exclamation that appears at the climax of the story of Jesus as recounted in Phil 2:6-11, which is the same story that the apostle evokes with the implicit narrative of the righteous sufferer in 2 Cor 4:13. Furthermore, observe that Paul proclaims that he is δοῦλος to the Corinthians.<sup>49</sup> What he implies by this is that the way in which he proclaims Jesus’ lordship most eloquently is his loving, self-emptying apostolic service to the Corinthians. Moreover, as we found in 4:11a, Paul thus serves the Corinthians διὰ Ἰησοῦν—both *for the sake of Jesus*, whom he lovingly serves, and *because of Jesus*, who, as δοῦλος himself, lived and died for others so that they might have life (cf. 5:14-15).<sup>50</sup> Paul’s statement in 4:5 substantiates my interpretation of 4:7-15.

To summarize the argument up to this point: In 2 Cor 4:7-15 Paul aligns his own experience of suffering and of loving, self-giving service to others with the story of Jesus. The apostle brings this story to light by referring to “the putting to death of Jesus” in 4:10a and to “being handed over because of Jesus” in 4:11a. Furthermore, Paul adverts to the story of Jesus in 4:13 by alluding to Psalms 114–115 LXX. The depth of the apostle’s argument here is fully plumbed only when one appreciates that he evokes the entire context of these psalms, texts he interprets as telling the story of Jesus and his πίστις.

## II. 2 Corinthians 4:13 and Other Passages in the Letter

One way to test the plausibility of the foregoing interpretation of 2 Cor 4:13 is to see whether it concurs with and sheds light on other parts of the letter. I contend that it does. This section has three parts. First, I show that Paul’s opening prayer period (1:3-11) anticipates his christological reading of Psalms 114–115 LXX. Second, I indicate the manner in which 1:18-22—with the apostle’s cryptic reference to Jesus’ yes, to his (Paul’s) own amen, and to the anointing action of the divine Spirit—shares the same dynamics and logic as 4:7-15. Third, I demonstrate how my reading of the dynamic of faithfulness/speaking out in 4:13 illuminates Paul’s language of “speaking in Christ” (2:17 and 12:19) and “Christ speaking in him” (13:3).

<sup>49</sup> To be sure, Paul is first and foremost *God’s* δοῦλος (see the remarks on 1:22 and 2:14 below). But as was the case with Jesus, to love and serve God involves self-emptying service of others (cf. Mark 10:45).

<sup>50</sup> J. Paul Sampley’s exposition (“The Second Letter to the Corinthians,” *NIB*, 11. 1-180, here 74) of Paul’s depiction of himself as a slave διὰ Ἰησοῦν deserves to be quoted in full: “it accords with his picture of Christ and is, therefore, a Pauline imitation of Christ, who, as the *eikōn* (‘image/reflection’) of God (4:4), has just been mentioned as the focus of the gospel that Paul proclaims. So Paul, like the Christ he proclaims at the heart of his gospel, takes the role of the servant/slave (cf. ‘the form of a slave,’ Phil 2:7) in his relation to the Corinthians.”

### A. The Opening *bērākā* (1:3-11)

One of the unique features of 2 Corinthians is that Paul's opening prayer period takes the form of a blessing (*bērākā*) rather than his usual prayer of thanksgiving (cf. Eph 1:3-14). Nevertheless, despite this distinction, the blessing in 2 Cor 1:3-11, like the thanksgiving periods in other letters, foreshadows many of the important themes that the apostle develops in the course of this epistle.<sup>51</sup> In 1:3-4 Paul refers to the themes of "affliction" and "comfort/consolation" as he blesses God for conferring comfort on him in his affliction and for enabling him in turn to bring comfort to others (1:3-4).<sup>52</sup> Here the apostle foreshadows the divine power at work within him (4:7, 10b, 11b, 4:13—"the Spirit of faithfulness"). In 1:5 Paul makes the striking claim that he shares in "the sufferings of Christ" (τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ),<sup>53</sup> presaging the references to his bearing "the putting to death of Jesus" (4:10a) and to "being handed over because of Jesus" (4:11a)—shorthand expressions for participating in Jesus' suffering and giving himself in love for the sake of others. In 1:6a Paul suggests that his afflictions redound to the good of the Corinthians, thereby anticipating his claim in 4:12 that the community benefits from his self-emptying mode of apostleship.

Paul goes on in 2 Cor 1:8-11 to inform the Corinthians about some traumatic incident that occurred in Asia. His purpose here is to illustrate with a specific example what he has described in 1:3-7.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, the apostle's description is so opaque that we cannot know exactly what happened that caused him to fear for his life.<sup>55</sup> Paul's main point, however, is clear: the incident has resulted in his increased trust in God, whom he describes in 1:9 as "the One who raises the dead" (τὸ ἐγείροντι τοὺς νεκρούς). This characterization of God foreshadows 4:14a, where Paul depicts God as "the One who raised the Lord Jesus" (ὁ ἐγείρας τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν). As we saw in section I, the latter verse follows immediately and appro-

<sup>51</sup> See Peter T. O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul* (NovTSup 49; Leiden: Brill, 1977) esp. 247-57.

<sup>52</sup> Once again we encounter the problem of identifying the referent of the first person plural pronoun. On the basis of the identification of the letter's senders (1:1) and of the distinction Paul makes between "we/us" and the Corinthians (1:6-8; 11), I take "we/us" in the *bērākā* as referring to Paul and Timothy. As was the case in 4:7-15, I simplify the antecedent as referring to Paul.

<sup>53</sup> Thrall (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1. 107-10) outlines the different ways commentators have understood Paul's claim here. Her own position is correct: through the indwelling of the Spirit, Paul's character and existence conform with Christ's.

<sup>54</sup> See Matera (*II Corinthians*, 43), who rightly contends that 2 Cor 1:8-11 serves such an illustrative function. This passage thus belongs to the opening prayer period and not to the body of the letter.

<sup>55</sup> Three main hypotheses have been offered: (1) Paul was afflicted with a debilitating illness; (2) he was imprisoned in Ephesus; or (3) he refers here to the riot that Luke reports in Acts 19:23-41. A. E. Harvey (*Renewal through Suffering: A Study of 2 Corinthians* [Edinburgh: Clark, 1996]) argues that the incident in 2 Cor 1:8 holds the key to understanding the entire letter.

priately on the apostle's christological reading of Psalms 114–115 LXX and functions to show that God has vindicated Jesus, God's faithful δοῦλος. Moreover, Paul goes on in 2 Cor 4:14b to assert his own trust that God will also raise him with Jesus. Thus, with his reference in 1:9 to placing his reliance on the God who raises the dead, the apostle anticipates his own inclusion in the story of Jesus in 4:13–14.

That Paul has this story in mind in the opening *bērākā* is evident also from his conspicuous use in 2 Cor 1:10 of the verb ῥύομαι, the subject of which is God. Paul describes the God who *saves/delivers* in two relative clauses. First, God is the One “who delivered (ἐρρύσατο) us from such a terrible danger of death (ἐκ τηλικούτου θανάτου) and will deliver (ῥύσεται) us.” Second, God is the One “in whom we have placed our hope that he will deliver (ῥύσεται) [us] yet again.”<sup>56</sup> Paul's threefold use of ῥύομαι and his confession of having been rescued “from death” echo crucial elements of the story of Psalms 114–115 LXX.<sup>57</sup> In the midst of affliction, the psalmist (= Jesus) cried out, “O Lord, deliver (ῥύσαι) my life!” (Ps 114:4b), and later he recounted that God “delivered my life from death” (ἐκ θανάτου). The critical point here is that, once again, we see the apostle employing at the letter's outset language and concepts that he later evokes in 2 Cor 4:13–14. Hence, Paul's opening prayer period, in which he normally anticipates key thematic elements, foreshadows several images and ideas that are found in the analysis of 4:7–15, especially in the christological interpretation of 4:13.

### *B. Jesus' Yes and Paul's Amen (1:18–22)*

Paul begins the body of his letter (2 Cor 1:12) by recounting some recent, painful incidents that have adversely affected his relationship with the Corinthian community. One misunderstanding involved his change in travel plans (1:15–16). It seems that the apostle has been accused of vacillating, thus calling into question the veracity and dependability of his word. Paul responds in two ways. First, he intimates in 1:17 that he operates under God's guidance and that it was necessary to change his original plans in order to follow the promptings of God.<sup>58</sup> Second, Paul offers in 1:18–22 a profound theological basis for his apostolic vocation and the dependability of the gospel message he proclaims.<sup>59</sup> I want to draw attention to certain elements of the apostle's theological *apologia*.

<sup>56</sup> Barnett (*Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 88) plausibly discerns a different emphasis in the two uses of the future ῥύσεται in 2 Cor 1:10. The first refers to Paul's trust that God will rescue him from other perils; the second refers to hope in the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>57</sup> Harvey (*Renewal through Suffering*, 18 n. 43) also sees the allusions to Psalm 114 LXX.

<sup>58</sup> My translation of 2 Cor 1:17—“Was I acting with fickleness when I wanted [to visit you]? Or do I plan the things that I plan at the human level, so that yes being yes and no being no is in my hands?”—is strongly influenced by the work of Frances Young (“Note on 2 Corinthians 1:17b,” *JTS* 37 [1986] 404–15).

<sup>59</sup> For a more thorough treatment of 2 Cor 1:18–22, see Stegman, *Character of Jesus*, 137–46, 218–33.

Paul begins in 2 Cor 1:18 with an appeal to God's fidelity (πιστὸς δὲ ὁ θεός). Notice, however, that he quickly turns the focus to "the Son of God, Jesus Christ" in 1:19. It is *Jesus* "who did not become (ἐγένετο) yes and no, but in him (ἐν αὐτῷ) the yes has come to be (γέγονεν)" (1:19). Moreover, Paul continues in 1:20a to insist that all God's promises have found their yes "in [Jesus]" (ἐν αὐτῷ). This raises the question: how is this yes—so closely linked with Jesus—to be understood? I submit that the apostle refers in 1:19-20a to the human Jesus' fundamental response to God.

Paul offers several clues in 2 Cor 1:19-20a that he is drawing on the story of Jesus in this passage. First, the two main verbs in 1:19 are forms of γίνομαι. This verb can function as a synonym of εἰμι ("be"), but γίνομαι also bears the stronger sense of "come to be," that is, "*become*." Used in reference to persons, γίνομαι can indicate an entry into a new condition (cf. Gal 3:13, Christ's "having become a curse for us").<sup>60</sup> Whereas Paul relates in 2 Cor 1:19a what Jesus did not become (ἐγένετο), in 1:19b he points to what "in Jesus" *did* come to be. At some time in the past, through an act or a series of acts that continues to have ramifications in the present (note the perfect tense γέγονεν),<sup>61</sup> Jesus' yes came to be in the world. Second, the prominence of the phrase ἐν αὐτῷ in 1:19b-20a is worth noting, as it serves to mark Jesus' *agency*.<sup>62</sup> Third, it is significant to appreciate the function of the particle ναί ("yes"). Here it expresses agreement with the statement or will expressed by someone else. Recalling that Paul has just intimated in 1:17 that his own yeses and nos have to do with his carrying out the will of God, it seems plausible that in referring to Jesus' yes in 1:19b-20a, the apostle alludes to Jesus' consent to obey God's will (cf. Phil 2:8; Rom 5:19). In fact, Paul will make clear in 2 Cor 5:14-21 that Jesus actively participated in God's plan of salvation for the world. Jesus' yes in 1:19b-20a thus signifies his fundamental *choice* to obey God, a decision he continued to confirm—"he did not become yes and no." Moreover, Jesus' faithful commitment to God's will is not just a fact relegated to the mists of history; rather, as noted above, the apostle's use of γέγονεν suggests that Jesus' action has brought about a new, *ongoing* possibility for human existence.

This new possibility is what Paul refers to as "the amen" in 2 Cor 1:20b: διὸ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ τὸ ἀμὴν τῷ θεῷ πρὸς δόξαν δι' ἡμῶν (literally, "therefore, also through [Christ] the amen [is] to God for glory through us"). What does Paul mean by "the amen" here? The key to understanding this verse is to recognize that the apostle is drawing on the notion of *faithfulness* throughout 1:18-20.<sup>63</sup> Recall that

<sup>60</sup> BDAG, s.v. γίνομαι, 5.a.

<sup>61</sup> See BDF, §§340 and 342 for the significance of the perfect tense.

<sup>62</sup> BDAG, s.v. ἐν, 6. Cf. Rom 3:24 and 1 Cor 6:2.

<sup>63</sup> The "liturgical interpretation" (e.g., the *RSV*—"that is why we utter the Amen through [Jesus], to the glory of God") is warranted neither by the Greek text nor by the immediate context. Paul is not concluding a prayer or blessing here.



Paul begins with a reference to God's faithfulness (1:18a) and then refers twice to Jesus' yes. The reference to Jesus' yes is an allusion to his obedience/fidelity to God (1:19b-20a). I submit that in 1:20b Paul continues to refer to faithfulness. The Greek word ἀμῖν is a transliteration of the Hebrew אָמֵן. From this root comes אִמּוּנָה, a word that denotes "steadfastness" and "fidelity." When employed in the MT to describe *human* character and conduct, אִמּוּנָה is often associated with צְדָקָה ("righteousness"), most notably in Hab 2:4.<sup>64</sup> Paul appeals to this notion of righteous human character and conduct in 2 Cor 1:20b. The notion connotes unwavering fidelity to live according to the commands and character of God, whose own character is marked by faithfulness. For the apostle, Jesus' yes *is* his amen to God, a faithfulness to God that has resulted in the possibility of faithfulness on the part of Paul (and Timothy and Silvanus).<sup>65</sup> Indeed, 1:20b is bracketed by the phrases "through (διὰ) [Jesus]" and "through (διὰ) us," thereby suggesting a synergism between Jesus and Paul. Jesus' faithfulness has created the possibility that others can now walk in the way of fidelity to God,<sup>66</sup> the way of faithfulness that the apostle dubs τὸ ἀμῖν.

Paul then explains in 2 Cor 1:21-22 that it is through God's gift of the Spirit that people are empowered to be faithful and obedient to God. The apostle describes this empowerment with striking language. In 1:21b he refers to his having been "anointed" (χρίσας) by God. This marks the only time that Paul uses the verb χρίω. Elsewhere in the NT, χρίω is used exclusively in connection with Jesus—especially in Luke-Acts, where the bestowal of the Spirit launches Jesus into his ministry of healing and proclaiming the good news.<sup>67</sup> That *Paul* is anointed intimates that he now participates in the story of Jesus.<sup>68</sup> Then, in 1:22a, Paul states

<sup>64</sup> BDB, s.v. אִמּוּנָה, 3.a. Cf. 1 Sam 26:23. Habakkuk 2:4 appears in Paul's pivotal statement about πίστις in Rom 1:17. See Douglas A. Campbell ("Romans 1:17—A *Crux Interpretum* for the ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ Debate," *JBL* 113 [1994] 265-85), who argues persuasively that Paul understands Hab 2:4 as referring to Jesus.

<sup>65</sup> Observe the inferential conjunction διό at the beginning of 2 Cor 1:20b. The referent to the first person plural pronoun is determined by Paul's statement in 1:19.

<sup>66</sup> Morna D. Hooker ("From God's Faithfulness to Ours: Another Look at 2 Corinthians 1:17-24," in *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict; Essays in Honour of Margaret Thrall* [ed. Trevor J. Burke and J. Keith Elliott; NovTSup 109; Leiden: Brill, 2003] 233-39, here 239) captures the dynamic of 2 Cor 1:18-20: "Christian faith is the response to God's faithfulness, but it is also a sharing in Christ's faithfulness."

<sup>67</sup> See Luke 4:18, 21; and Acts 10:38; cf. Acts 4:27 and Heb 1:9.

<sup>68</sup> Murphy-O'Connor (*Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 24-25) similarly argues that God has given to Paul the grace to be faithful as Jesus was. Indeed, Paul creates a play on words by his placement of the participle χρίσας next to the notion of "being established εἰς Χριστόν" in 1:21. As James D. G. Dunn (*Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* [SBT 2/15; Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1970] 132) comments, "This process εἰς Χριστόν is best understood in terms of a growing likeness to Christ."

that he has been “sealed” (σφραγισάμενος) by God. The verb σφραγίζω connotes two things in this context: (1) being “legally” marked as God’s slave (δοῦλος), and (2) receiving a seal or imprint.<sup>69</sup> Paul seems to suggest that God, through the gift of the Spirit (cf. 1:22b), has in effect “branded” him as God’s δοῦλος. This “mark” has left an indelible impression on the apostle. I propose that by this rich imagery Paul alludes to being “imprinted” with the character of Jesus, who is himself God’s faithful δοῦλος par excellence (cf. the christological reading of Ps 115:7 LXX). In other words, it is the Spirit—τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πίστεως (2 Cor 4:13)—who empowers its recipients to walk in the way of faithfulness that marked the life of the human Jesus. In this way, Jesus’ sustained yes to God, an assent that took place in the past, still has continuing effects.

Thus, in defending his own dependability and the truth of his proclamation in 2 Cor 1:18–22, Paul utilizes the story of Jesus’ faithfulness to God. The apostle claims to participate in Jesus’ yes/amen to God because he has been “christed” and “sealed” by God’s gift of the Spirit. In so doing, Paul draws on the same imagery and logic that he employs in 4:7–15, especially in his christological reading of Psalms 114–115 LXX.

### C. Paul’s “Speaking in Christ”/Christ’s “Speaking in Paul”

Paul’s citation of Ps 115:1a LXX—ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα—links the notions of speaking and being faithful. As noted near the end of section I, in 2 Cor 4:5 the apostle expressly identifies the content of his verbal proclamation: Jesus is Lord! (cf. Phil 2:11). In that same verse, Paul also proclaims himself as “slave” to the Corinthians “because of Jesus.” The apostle thus suggests by this linkage that an essential component of his proclamation of “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (4:4) is his own *embodiment* of self-giving in love for others as was manifested by Jesus. In fact, Paul reiterates this point throughout the letter. A brief analysis of the passages in which he refers to “speaking in Christ” (2:17 and 12:19) and to Christ’s “speaking in him” (13:3) underscores this point.

Paul attempts to distance himself, in 2 Cor 2:17, from those who are “peddlers” of God’s word, insisting that he speaks in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ λαλοῦμεν).<sup>70</sup> This statement comes at the conclusion of a section in which Paul employs two graphic metaphors that depict his apostolic ministry. The first metaphor is evoked by the participle θριαμβεύοντι (“being led in triumph”) in 2:14a. The verb θριαμβεύω pertains to a Roman triumphal procession. An important part of this celebratory procession involved parading the conquered enemies, leading them as

<sup>69</sup> For σφραγίζω in the sense of marking God’s “slaves,” see Rev 7:2–3. For σφραγίζω in the sense of making an impression or inscription, see 3 Kgdms 20:8 and 2 Tim 2:19.

<sup>70</sup> Thrall (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1. 195–96) is correct in taking the first person plural pronouns in 2:14–3:6 as epistolary (referring primarily to Paul himself).

slaves to death.<sup>71</sup> What is striking about the apostle's use of this metaphor is his own role in it: *Paul* is a captured prisoner or slave being led to death! Although initially shocking, the apostle's depiction of himself as God's slave makes sense when we recall how, in 4:7-15, he alludes to the story of Jesus as God's faithful δοῦλος. In fact, Paul immediately appends the phrase ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ to the metaphor in 2:14a.<sup>72</sup> The apostle's being led to death as God's slave aligns well with his descriptions of bearing "the putting to death of Jesus" (4:10a) and of "being handed over because of Jesus" (4:11a)—shorthand expressions for participating in Jesus' self-giving mode of existence.

A second metaphor, of "fragrance" (ὁσμὴ) and "aroma" (εὐωδία) being spread, follows quickly. In 2 Cor 2:14b Paul claims that he is a fragrance that God spreads, the fragrance "of the knowledge of [Christ]." The apostle seems to suggest that his manner of giving himself in love to others is revelatory of Christ.<sup>73</sup> He goes on to confirm this sense in 2:15a by stating that he is the "aroma of Christ" to God. Just as Jesus faithfully obeyed God's will, so now Paul's own life is a sacrifice to God. Indeed, the apostle juxtaposes these same terms, ὁσμὴ εὐωδίας, in Phil 4:18 to signify expressly a "fragrant offering."<sup>74</sup> Strikingly, this same phrase appears in Eph 5:2 in connection with Jesus. In Ephesians Jesus' ὁσμὴ εὐωδίας to God is explained by his giving himself in love for the sake of others. As noted in section I, Paul employs these same terms ("giving himself" and "loving") to define what he means by Jesus' πίστις in Gal 2:20. The apostle utilizes the fragrance/aroma metaphor, therefore, to indicate that he embodies Jesus' mode of self-giving existence. In connection with the image of being God's δοῦλος, Paul intimates that he partakes in the story of Jesus, particularly in the latter's *faithfulness*, which is the underlying subject of 2 Cor 4:7-15. Because he is faithful in this way, the apostle insists that he, not the "peddlers," truly speaks "in Christ."

Paul goes on to maintain that he speaks in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ λαλοῦμεν) in 2 Cor 12:19.<sup>75</sup> As in 2:17, the immediately preceding context is telling. In 12:14b the apostle portrays himself as a father to the Corinthians, seeking their well-being. Then, in 12:15a, he tells them that he "will gladly spend and be utterly expended" for them. Paul's use of δαπανᾶω ("spend"—active voice) and ἐκδαπανᾶομαι ("be expended"—passive voice) echoes his statements in 4:10-11. "I will gladly spend

<sup>71</sup> See Scott J. Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit: Paul's Defense of His Ministry in II Corinthians 2:14-3:3* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 16-34.

<sup>72</sup> The force of the prepositional phrase ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ is "in close association with/under the influence of the Messiah." Cf. Gal 2:20 and Phil 3:9.

<sup>73</sup> Although most commentators read the pronoun αὐτοῦ as referring to God, not Christ, I agree with Plummer (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 70), who argues that "the preceding ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ and the Χριστοῦ εὐωδία which follows make the reference to Christ more probable."

<sup>74</sup> See Barrett (*Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 99) for a list of LXX texts that contain the phrase ὁσμὴ εὐωδίας as a technical term that translates נִחִיחַ רִיחַ.

<sup>75</sup> Again, Paul uses the epistolary first person plural in 12:19.

for you Corinthians” recalls the apostle’s claim that he bears “the putting to death of Jesus” (= his self-giving mode of existence). “I will gladly be spent for you” echoes Paul’s “being handed over because of Jesus.” The apostle also makes clear that he will spend and be spent *for the sake of* (ὕπέρ) the Corinthians (12:15a) and that he does so out of *love* (12:15b). Paul thus once more repeats the dynamic of Jesus’ πίστις.<sup>76</sup> The apostle goes on in 12:16-18 to allude to another contentious issue between himself and the community, namely, that he has refused remuneration from the Corinthians for his ministry to them.<sup>77</sup> But as he makes clear in 11:7, Paul preaches the gospel free of charge because he feels called to “lower myself” (ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινῆν) so that the community might be “raised up” (cf. 4:12). Again, the apostle insists on doing so because he loves the Corinthians (11:11). What is most impressive about Paul’s language here is that he uses the construction ταπεινῆν + a reflexive pronoun in only one other place: Phil 2:8, where it is *Jesus* who “lowered himself,” becoming obedient even unto death. As is the case in 2 Cor 2:17, I argue that in 12:19 the apostle claims to speak “in Christ” because he has made clear that he conducts himself after the manner of Jesus (cf. 4:13).

By the time we reach the climax of the letter, the rhetoric has been ratcheted up to a final tension. Paul refers to a challenge issued by the Corinthians: they seek “proof” (δοκιμή) that “Christ speaks in him” (τοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ λαλοῦντος Χριστοῦ [2 Cor 13:3a]). The apostle responds to the challenge in three steps. First, he reminds the Corinthians that Christ is powerful in dealing with them (13:3b). Second, he refers for the last time to the story of Jesus (“he was crucified out of weakness, yet lives by the power of God” [13:4a]) and then aligns himself with this story (“we likewise are weak in him, but we shall live with [Christ] by the power of God for you” [13:4b]).<sup>78</sup> The key point to observe here is Paul’s explanation of *how* Christ speaks in him: he participates in the story of Jesus. Moreover, the apostle does so for the Corinthians’ sake (εἰς ὑμᾶς).<sup>79</sup> Third, he responds to the community’s challenge by throwing it right back at them (13:5). The Corinthians

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes (*Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962] 463), who remarks, “The magnitude of [Paul’s] love for [the Corinthians] is, indeed, a reflection of the love of Christ, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to expend His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).”

<sup>77</sup> As Matera (*II Corinthians*, 294-95) rightly observes, Paul insists on his role of founder/father of the community (at least in part) in order to avoid entering into the dynamics of a patron-client relationship with the Corinthians. See also Peter Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul’s Relations with the Corinthians* (WUNT 2/23; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987).

<sup>78</sup> See Stegman, *Character of Jesus*, 205-11, for reading 13:4a as an encapsulation of all Paul’s previous references to Jesus’ story and character in 2 Corinthians.

<sup>79</sup> Savage (*Power through Weakness*, 174-75) conveys well Paul’s meaning here: “to be weak in Christ means to share in his un-self-striving, self-negating, servant-like, God-centred faith.” For εἰς as expressing the equivalent of the dative of advantage, see BDAG, s.v. εἰς, 4.g; cf. 2 Cor 8:4; 9:1, 13.

should test themselves to see whether or not they are ἐν τῇ πίστει. Notice Paul's use of the definite article here. It raises the question: to *what* or *whose* πίστις does he refer? Given the allusion in 13:4 to the story of Jesus and to Paul's claim to be included in this story, I propose that the apostle challenges the Corinthians to look in the mirror to ascertain whether or not they are participating in Jesus' faithfulness by embodying the latter's loving, self-giving mode of existence.

To sum up: The christological reading of Psalms 114–115 LXX in 2 Cor 4:13 coheres with and illuminates other parts of 2 Corinthians. The opening *bērākā* anticipates several of the themes and images that Paul develops in 4:7–15. His theological rationale in defense of the veracity of his word (1:18–22) echoes what he claims about bearing the image of Jesus in an earthen vessel. The apostle shows the relationship between “speaking” and “being faithful” (cf. 4:13) by insisting that he “speaks in Christ” primarily by incarnating the latter's self-offering in love for others (2:17; 12:19). Paul responds to the Corinthians' final challenge and issues a counterchallenge in terms of Jesus' faithfulness (13:3–5). In each case, the apostle draws on the story of Jesus, God's faithful δοῦλος, as was outlined in the analysis of 4:7–15 in section I.

### III. Conclusion

The foregoing analysis substantiates and develops Hays's suggestion that in 2 Cor 4:13 Paul engages in “christological ventriloquism.” We can therefore add this text to the list of NT passages in which Jesus is portrayed as praying the psalms. Moreover—and more important—it establishes that Paul, in describing his apostolic vocation in 2 Cor 4:7–15, draws on an underlying narrative christology that emphasizes Jesus' faithfulness. The apostle makes a critical claim in 2 Cor 4:13: he has the same Spirit of faithfulness that animated Jesus and is thus empowered to embody the latter's loving, self-giving mode of existence.

Finally, this study speaks to the issue of the “core” or “basis” of Pauline theology.<sup>80</sup> Paul's understanding of the Spirit-empowered loving, self-giving mode of existence after the manner of Jesus lies at the heart of his presentation in 2 Corinthians, in both his apostolic *apologia* and in his exhortations to the community. Any compilation of the “basics” of Pauline theology must include both the centrality of the Spirit's anointing empowerment and the critical importance of Jesus' πίστις—understood not only as saying something about Christ himself but also as pointing to a pattern for Christian living.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup> See Joseph Plevnik, “The Understanding of God at the Basis of Pauline Theology,” *CBQ* 65 (2003) 554–67.

<sup>81</sup> Thus, although I applaud Plevnik's inclusion (“Understanding of God as the Basis of Pauline Theology,” 562–63) of the Holy Spirit as belonging to the center of Pauline theology, I question whether he fully appreciates Paul's use of πίστις in connection with Jesus in the letter to the Romans (p. 567).

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