

# ISSA Proceedings 2002 - “We Destroy Arguments...” (2 Corinthians 10:5): The Apostle Paul’s Use Of Epicheirematic Argumentation



## 1. Introduction

There was a moral crisis among the earliest Christians in Corinth. Intimately connected with this moral crisis was a criticism of Paul’s *modus operandi* (Litfin, 1994, 151-55; Long, 1999, 181-218; cf. Malherbe, 1983, 166-72) or more specifically Paul’s psychagogy (see Malherbe, 1987, 81-88; Stowers, 1990; Glad, 1995). Second Corinthians gives vivid testimony to this dual crisis, whatever we might conclude about the unity or sequencing of the Corinthian letters (see Long, 1999; Amador, 2000). In 2 Corinthians 10 Paul explains that he “destroys arguments (*logismous*).” Then he discloses a few sentences later (vv 9-10) a general evaluation of his letters as “weighty and strong” (*bareiai kai ischurai*). These comments are made in the context of Paul’s attempt to explain his rationale for his moral instruction and expectations of the Corinthians, as he explains in vv 3-6 (trans. Stowers, 1990, 267):

I do live in the flesh, but I do not make war as the flesh does; the weapons of my warfare are not weapons of the flesh, but divinely strong to demolish fortresses - I demolish reasonings [*logismoi*] and any rampart thrown up to resist the knowledge of God, I take captive every mind [or thought (*noēmata*)] to make it obey Christ, I am prepared to court-martial anyone who remains insubordinate, once your submission is complete.

Abraham Malherbe (1983) and others have investigated this passage identifying social connections with Hellenistic schools of philosophy. This passage, however, also speaks to the strategies of Paul’s previous epistolary correspondences, as Stowers (1990) has well noted. While Stowers has shown that Paul’s use of sarcasm, irony, and diatribe in the previous letter, 1 Corinthians, was in conformity to psychagogic strategies not dissimilar to Epicurean psychagogy,

another feature of Paul's manner of argumentation may be observed; namely, the use of epicheiremes. I surmise that this aspect of Paul's argumentation led to the conclusion that his letters were weighty and strong. Indeed, if Paul was interested in promoting "faith" or "persuasion" in the early fledgling Christian communities (see Kinneavy, 1987), we should not be surprised by this discovery of epicheirematic argumentation in Paul.

Formal argumentation was taught in the rhetorical schools scattered across the Mediterranean basin, particularly in Paul's hometown of Tarsus (see Du Toit, 2000), but also in Palestine itself (Kinneavy, 1987). Within these Mediterranean rhetorical cultures (Robbins, 1994, 82-88), Paul would have had ready access to examples of popular moralists, exercises in the progymnasmata, and/or theoretical rhetorical textbooks for suitable or appropriate styles and modes of argumentation. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (2.2), Cicero's *De Inventione* (I.61), and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (V.xiv.32; cf. V.x.1, 8) give extensive testimony to the vitality and interest in argumentation specifically among the Greeks.

Cicero in *De Inventione* discusses one argument form at length, the ratiocinatio or what Quintilian and others referred to as *epicheirema* (see Kroll, 1936). It is my contention that Paul's manner of argumentation in 1 Corinthians and elsewhere is epicheirematic in form. The rigorous employment of epicheiremes, in which paraenetic conclusions in the form of exhortations are causally derived from premises and proofs, was Paul's strategy to deal with the emerging moral crisis in the Corinthian community. And given Paul's own comments in 2 Corinthians 10 and the evaluation of his letters (possibly inclusive of 1 Thessalonians), we should not be surprised to find that many of Paul's other letters exhibit a rigorous and fairly consistent epicheirematic argumentation. So, after a survey of the epicheireme in ancient rhetorical theory of Cicero, I will investigate its use in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, 1 Corinthians 4-5, and Acts 20:18-35.

## 2. *The Epicheireme as a Deductive Argument Form*

There are to be found various descriptions of deductive argumentation in the extant rhetorical works around the time of Paul (Eriksson, 1998, 53-62; Alexandre, 1999, 76). Purportedly, the Greek Stoics, who wanted more precision in their argumentation, preferred the epicheireme form and eventually it is embraced by the early Cicero as described in *De Inventione* (Church and Cathcart, 1965, 141, 147; cf. Thompson, 1975, 40-41). Here Cicero explains that the epicheireme consists of a basic syllogistic structure consisting of five parts:

1. Major Premise (*propositio*)
2. Proof of Major Premise (*propositionis approbatio*)
3. Minor Premise (*assumptio*)
4. Proof of Minor Premise (*assumptionis approbatio*)
5. Conclusion (*conclusio*)

Cicero admits that each of these five parts need not be present, and gives examples of shorter formulations in which one or both proofs are omitted (*Inv.* I.57-77; cf. Quint. *Inst.* V.xiv.5-10) or even the conclusion omitted, although this is not encouraged (*Inv.* I.72, 74-75).

Cicero's discussions may be evaluated in light of the examples he provides (see *Inv.* I.58-72). Only two are presented below. Since he does not identify individual components (although Quintilian does for Cicero's first fivefold example - *Inst.* V.xiv.7-9), I have designated them before the text as Premise A and Premise B, etc. Also in brackets are other relevant pieces of information, such as the conjunctions used to help demarcate the logic of the various components.

#### 1. First Fivefold Example (*Inv.* I.58-59)**[i]**

*PREMISE A:* Things that are done by design are managed better than those which are governed without design.

*Proof A:* The house that is managed in accordance with a reasoned plan, is in every respect better equipped and furnished than one which is governed in a haphazard way with a total lack of design. The army that is commanded by a wise and shrewd general is guided in all ways more advantageously than one which is governed by someone's folly and rashness. The same line of reasoning is applicable to navigation, for the ship which has the services of the most expert pilot makes the most successful voyage.

*PREMISE B:* Of all things nothing is better governed than the universe.

*Proof B:* For [*Nam*] the risings and the settings of the constellations keep a fixed order, and the changes of the seasons not only proceed in the same way by a fixed law but are also adapted to the advantage of all nature, and the alternation of night and day has never through any variations done any harm.

*CONCLUSION:* Therefore [*igitur*] the universe [B] is administered by design [A].  
[OR] Therefore if those things are administered better which are governed by design than those which are administered without design [A], and nothing is governed better than the universe [B], then [*igitur*] the universe [B] is governed

by design [A].

This example fits the form nicely. Proof A consists of a threefold example substantiating Premise A, which is more general in scope than Premise B. Proof B is initiated by *nam* which provides a threefold substantiation by considering particular components of the universe. Two alternative conclusions are provided. In each, *igitur* is used, indicating the causal connection. Also, both conclusions contain summarizing features such that one may detect the main idea in Premises A and B.

Cicero's second fivefold example is introduced with no other explanations. The distinct components are not as easily detected. My analysis would suggest that the example is indeed one epicheireme; however, it envelops two subordinate epicheiremes found within *Premise A* and *Proof B*. This complexity indicates the possibility of linking distinct epicheiremes together (e.g., the conclusion supplies the next premise) and the possibility of finding an epicheireme within an epicheireme.

## 2. Second Fivefold Example (*Inv.* I.68-69)

*PREMISE A with elaboration as an epicheireme*

[Premise A:] "It is right, gentlemen of the jury, to relate all laws to the advantage of the state and to interpret them with an eye to the public good and not according to their literal expression.

[Proof A:] For [*enim*] such was the uprightness and wisdom of our ancestors that in framing laws they had not object in view except the safety and welfare of the state.

[Premise B:] [*enim*] They did not themselves intend to write a law which would prove harmful, and they knew that if they did pass such a law, it would be repealed when the defect was recognized.

[Proof B:] For [*enim*] no one wishes laws to be upheld merely for their own sake, but for the sake of the state, because everyone believes that the state is best governed when administered according to law.

[Conclusion:] All written laws ought, then [*igitur*], [B] to be interpreted in relation to the object for which laws ought to be observed: [next *Premise A*=?] that is, since we are servants of the community, let us interpret the laws with an eye to the advantage and profit of the community.

*Proof A:* For [*Nam*] as it is right to think that the art of medicine produces nothing except what looks to the health of the body, since it is for this purpose that

medicine was founded, so we should believe that nothing comes from the laws except what conduces to the welfare of the state, since the laws were made for this purpose.

*PREMISE B*: Therefore [*ergo*], in this trial also, cease to search the letter of the law and rather, as is just, examine the law in relation to the public welfare.

*Proof B with elaboration as an epicheireme*:

[Premise A]: What was more useful to Thebes than the defeat of Sparta? What should Epaminondas, the Theban commander, have had in mind more than the victory of Thebes? What should he have regarded as dearer or more precious than such a glorious exploit of the Thebans, than a trophy so honourable, so magnificent?

[Proof A] It is obvious that he was bound to forget the letter of the law and to consider the intent of the law-maker.

[Premise B] But certainly this point has been examined and established beyond a doubt, that no law has been passed except for the good of the state.

[Conclusion] He thought it, therefore [*igitur*], stark madness not to interpret a law with an eye to the safety of the state when that law had been passed for the safety of the state.

*CONCLUSION*: In view of this, if all laws ought to be related to the advantage of the state [A], and Epaminondas contributed to the safety of the state [pB], surely he cannot by the same act have promoted the common interest and have failed to obey the laws.

Once again we can see the conclusion as summarizing elements from A and B. As is indicated, both Premise A and Proof B are elaborated epicheirematically such that each contains its own conclusion with *igitur*.

From these examples and other comments in Cicero and Quintilian, several points may be presented here concerning the epicheireme argument form.

1. In keeping with the designation, the major premise is more general or broader in scope; the minor premise is more particular or an example of the major premise.
2. The proofs of the premises may *or* may not be demarcated by a causal conjunction indicating substantiation (*nam* or *enim*).
3. Furthermore, the proof may involve numerous examples and great elaboration. As Cicero explains this is accomplished "by a variety of reasons and the greatest possible fullness of expression" (I.58; cf. I.75).

4. The conclusion is regularly indicated by an inferential conjunction (*igitur*) and brings features of both the major and minor premises together to form the conclusion.

After providing examples of shorter and shorter possible forms in which one component of the *epicheireme* is missing, Cicero concludes by offering general recommendations. Quintilian also adds helpful information. These may be summarized as follow:

5. There should be variety in the conclusion (*Inv.* I.73-74). He suggests the following options:

a. combining major and minor premise into one sentence: *example*: “If, then, all laws should be related to the advantage of the state [A], and he contributed to the safety of the state [B], he certainly cannot by one and the same act have had regard for the common safety and have disobeyed the laws.”

b. making a contrary statement: *example*: “It is therefore the height of folly to place confidence in the promises of those whose treachery you have so often been deceived.” [rather than: “it is wise not to trust those by whom we have so often been deceived before”]

c. merely stating the deduction: *example*: “Let us therefore destroy the city.”

d. stating what is the necessary consequence of the deduction: *example argument*: “If she has born a child, she has lain with a man; but she has born a child.” *deductive conclusion*: “Therefore she has lain with a man.” *necessary consequence*: “Therefore she is unchaste.”

e. Quintilian would add that occasionally the conclusion will be identical with the major premise (*Inst.* 5.14.10—“The soul is immortal, since [*nam*] whatever derives its motion from itself is immortal. But the soul derives its motion from itself. Therefore, the soul is immortal.”). He considers this conclusions as still yet unproven.

6. Furthermore, there should be variety in the order of the argument to avoid boredom (*Quint. Inst.* 5.14.30). If not, then the discourse becomes more like “dialogues or dialectical controversies....with learned men seeking truth among men of learning” (*Quint. Inst.* 5.14.27-28).

7. In this regard, we should note that rhetorical questions may be used as premises (*Quint. Inst.* 5.14.19), proofs (*Cic. Inv.* I.69, 70; *Quint. Inst.* 5.14.19), and conclusions (*Cic. Inv.* I.70).

8. Specifically, Cicero urges variety and argues that it is not the basic fivefold argument that is sought after, but the greatest orators develop and expand the thought (Inv. I.75). He suggests the following (Inv. I.76):

- a. use different kinds of arguments in the discourse: inductive and deductive.
- b. when using deductive arguments, 1) do not always begin with the major premise; sometimes start with the minor premise; 2) nor employ all five parts; sometimes use only one of the two proofs, sometimes both; 3) nor embellish them in the same fashion; and 4) use different types of conclusions.

9. Finally, Quintilian argues that such careful argumentation drawing out of obvious inferences as conclusions, etc. is a characteristic of his contemporaneous Greek practitioners (Inst. 5.14.32). However, the use of epicheiremes and enthymemes should be limited (5.14.27), diversified (5.14.31-32), and hidden lest it become monotonous (5.14.30) and betrays a manufactured artifice (5.14.32-35).

### *3. The Epicheireme as a Formal Deductive Argument Pattern in Paul*

Now let us consider some examples of this type of argument in 1 Thess 4:13-5:11, 1 Corinthians 4-5, and Acts 20:18-35.

#### 1. The Certainty of the Dead in Christ being Raised (1 Thess 4:13-18)

*PREMISE A:* 4:13 But [*de*] we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

*Proof A:* 14 For [*gar*] if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

*PREMISE B:* 15 For [*gar*] this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

*Proof B:* 16 For [*gar*] the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

*CONCLUSION:* 18 Therefore [*hōste*] comfort one another [A] with these words [B].

This argument may be simplified as follows:

*PREMISE A:* Be informed so as not to grieve about those who have died. [General]

*Proof A: For, as with Jesus, so also God will raise the dead in Jesus.*

*PREMISE B: Indeed, the dead will precede those still alive when the Lord comes.*  
[Specific]

*Proof B: For, this is the sequence: 1) Lord will descend, 2) The dead will rise first, 3) Then we will meet them all and be with the Lord forever.*

*CONCLUSION: Therefore, don't grieve, but comfort one another.*

*Notice Paul's careful use of conjunctions to present the deduction. Gars are used to introduce the Proofs and the conclusion is demarcated by the use of hōste with the imperative mood. Premise A is more general; Premise B is specific. The conclusion is a combination of two variations that Cicero discusses, namely that of contrary statement and necessary consequence. In other words, rather than saying "Therefore, do not grieve..." he exhorts "comforting" instead; and rather than saying "be comforted" he urges the necessary consequence "comfort one another" which is communal in nature. At the same time, one may also detect Paul bringing both major and minor premises together in the conclusion ("these words" refers to the theological elaboration of the sequence of events in Element B). This combination also accords with Cicero's description of how to conclude a deductive argument.*

## 2. The Certainty of Salvation (1 Thess 5:1-11)

*PREMISE A: 5:1 Now [de] as to the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. [GENERAL]*

*Proof A: 2 For [gar] you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. Elaboration on Proof A: 3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.*

*PREMISE B: 4 But [de] you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; [SPECIFIC]*

*Proof B: 5 for [gar] you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;*

*CONCLUSION and Next PREMISE A: 6 so then (ara oun) let us not sleep as others do [A], but let us be alert and sober [B].*

*Proof A: 7 For [gar] those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.*

*PREMISE B: 8 But [de] since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. [more*



## SPECIFIC]

*Proof B:* 9 For [*hoti*] God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.

*CONCLUSION:* 11 Therefore [*dio*] encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

In 5:1-11 we see two integrated epicheiremes. We should note the progression of premises followed by proofs which are introduced by *gars* or a *hoti*. The conclusions of each epicheireme is indicated by the inferential conjunctions *araoun* and *dio*.

The first conclusion in 5:6 contains three hortatory subjunctives (present tense). These hortatory subjunctives effectively call the Thessalonians to a continual communal response to Paul's injunctions, as in 4:18 and 5:11. The conclusion is a simple deduction where the two premises would lead. In other words, given that they know the day will come unexpectedly (premise A), and given that they belong to the Light and Day (premise B), they should not sleep (relating back to A) but rather be alert and sober (relating to B), thus effectively bringing both premises/proofs together. This conclusion accords with the examples Cicero described.

This conclusion in 5:6 then becomes premise A for the next epicheireme which comes to a conclusion in 5:11: "Therefore, encourage and build up one another." This conclusion in 5:11, however, is a necessary consequence according to one of the Cicero's variations. In other words, according to Cicero's description, Paul has introduced a conclusion in 5:11 which is in fact further derived from a more direct deduction. Such a deduction would be "Since we ought not to sleep, but be alert and sober, and since we have this hope of salvation, we, therefore, ought to continue to be sober in order to obtain our salvation." The conclusion Paul offers, however, is really the next step beyond this more direct conclusion: "Therefore, encourage and build up one another." This actual conclusion reinforces Paul's communal emphasis in the exhortations ("encourage and build up") by placing them within a corporate context ("one another"). This conclusion fittingly shows variety and, while urging them to encourage one another, Paul exemplifies this himself by adding, "just as you are doing."

Now I would like us to consider 1 Corinthians 4. Paul in chaps.1-3 has just

discussed the nature of the gospel message in relation to his evangelistic preaching. Now, in chapter 4 Paul turns to address the Corinthians directly about their criticism of him. Chapter 4 is thus pivotal for re-establishing Paul's authority before he is able to address the problems of immorality and lawsuits between believers in chaps. 5 and 6.

### 3. Stop Judging Paul (1 Cor 4:1-5)

*PREMISE A:* 4:1 Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. [GENERAL]

*Proof B:* [none needed; already established in 1 Cor 3:1-10]

*PREMISE B:* 3 But [*de*] to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. [SPECIFIC]

*Proof B:* 4 For [*gar*] I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.

*CONCLUSION:* 5 Therefore [*hōste*] do not go on passing *judgment* before the time [B], but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things *hidden* in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts [A]; and then each person's praise will come to him from God [necessary consequence].

This argument may be simplified as follows:

*PREMISE A:* We are servants of Christ and are expected to be found trustworthy (when judged by Him)

*Proof A:* [see 3:5; servants will be so judged (3:10-17)]

*PREMISE B:* Your judgment of me doesn't bother me.

*Proof B:* For I know nothing against myself; besides the Lord's judgment is what matters.

*CONCLUSION:* Therefore, stop judging; the Lord will judge and each person will receive praise from God.

Notice the movement from general to specific between the premise A and premise B. Also, the conclusion is formed by a combination of both A and B elements: the notion of "judgment" corresponds to the element B and the evaluation of things hidden by the Lord corresponds to element A. Additionally, the last clause of the conclusion contains a necessary consequence to the conclusion ("each person will receive praise from God").

### 4. Be Like Paul (1 Cor 4:6-16)

*PREMISE A:* 4:6 Now [*de*] these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

*Proof A:* 7 For [*gar*] who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive?

And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

*Further Embellishment of Proof A:*

8 You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you. 9 For [*gar*], I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. 11 To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; 12 and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; 13 when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.

*PREMISE B:* 14 I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as *my beloved children*.

*Proof B:* 15 For [*gar*] if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, *yet you would* not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus *I became your father* through the gospel.

*CONCLUSION:* 16 Therefore [*oun*] I exhort you, be imitators of me.

In this epicheireme one may note that the proofs are initiated with *gars* and the conclusion introduced with the *oun*. This conclusion is in the form of an exhortation. Paul shows his skill at embellishment through elaborate contrasts in proof A. Cicero understood the deductive argument as assisting one's embellishment (De Inv. I.75). Once again, this argument may be simplified as follows:

*PREMISE A:* I want to instruct you not to become arrogant one against the other by comparing Apollos and myself.

*Proof A:* For you certainly value yourselves way too highly (and you ought not) while we apostles are so meager and humble.

*PREMISE B:* I am not shaming you, but admonishing you as my beloved children.

*Proof B:* For I became your father in the gospel (despite the claims of others).

*CONCLUSION:* Therefore, imitate me.

(5) Paul will eventually come (1 Cor 4:17-21)

This epicheireme is logically connected to the previous argument by the transitional phrase *dia touto*. As a result of Paul's desire for the Corinthians to imitate himself, Paul discloses his plan to send Timothy to them.

*PREMISE A:* 17 For this reason [*dia touto*] I have sent to you Timothy, who is my *beloved* and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

*Proof A:* [None needed]

*PREMISE B:* 4:18 Now [*de*] as though I were not coming to you, some have become arrogant. 19 But [*de*] I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power.

*Proof B:* 20 For [*gar*] the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.

*CONCLUSION with Rhetorical Questions:* 21 What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod [B], or with love and a spirit of gentleness [A]?

The conclusion in this final epicheireme shows great versatility, although it is derived from the argument elements. We might have imagined a conclusion such as "Since therefore I am sending Timothy to remind you of my ways, and since I will come and confront the arrogant if need be, therefore listen carefully to Timothy in preparation for my arrival." Instead, Paul presents contrasting consequences determined by how the Corinthians should choose to receive Timothy as Paul's representative. If they reject Timothy's instruction, then Paul will bring a rod. If they accept Timothy, they should expect love and gentleness. In effect, the conclusion as stated functions to substantiate the unstated conclusion as I have reconstructed it by explaining why they should accept Timothy, because a rod awaits them if not.

This conclusion is rather severe. However, at the end of the letter Paul warns the Corinthians to treat Timothy appropriately (16:10 "Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am"). But, we also must understand that chapter 4 was constructed with three epicheiremes in an attempt to reestablish Paul's authority within the Corinthian community. The two previous conclusions in 4:5, 16 involve critical exhortations (stop judging me; and imitate me as your Father). The whole of

chapter 4, then, thereby prepares for the rebuke and judgment Paul must offer in 1 Corinthians 5, a chapter which is itself comprised of three epicheiremes.

## 6. Three Epicheiremes in 1 Corinthians 5

*PREMISE A:* 5:1 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.

*PREMISE B:* 2 You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.

*Proof B:* 3 For [*gar*] I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.

*CONCLUSION:* 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled [A], and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus [B], 5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus [A].

*PREMISE A:* 6 Your boasting is not good.

*Proof A:* Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?

*PREMISE B:* 7 Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened.

*Proof B:* For [*gar*] Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.

*CONCLUSION:* 8 Therefore [*hōste*] let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness [A], but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth [B].

*PREMISE A:* 9 I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; 10 I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters,

*Proof A:* for [*epei*] then you would have to go out of the world.

*PREMISE B:* 11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler - not even to eat with such a one.

*Proof B:* 12 For [*gar*] what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the *church*?

*CONCLUSION:* 13 But those who are outside, God judges [A]. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES [B].

A pattern of paraenesis exists in which the exhortative conclusions bring together the argumentative elements. Paul hoped to establish a proper communal response

to immorality. He did so first by his own example of issuing judgment upon the immoral man (5:4-5). Then, through a reconfiguration of the Passover celebration in view of Christ as the Pascal sacrifice, Paul exhorts the community to remove malice and wickedness and to replace them with truth and sincerity (5:8). Finally, Paul appeals to his teaching concerning the matters pertaining to discipline of body members, and creatively brings the argument to a conclusion through the citation of Jewish scripture (*Deut 21:21*): “Remove the wicked from your midst.” Notable too is Paul’s use of rhetorical questions as “proofs” found also in the examples of Cicero (*Inv. I.69, 70*) and Quintilian (*Inst. 5.14.19*).

### 7. Three Epicheiremes in Paul’s Farewell Address to the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:18-35)

Of the three speeches in Acts attributed to Paul, two involve Gentile/Greek audiences. Each contains epicheiremes. The last speech is displayed below. The author of Acts has probably depicted Paul employing epicheirematic argumentation through the literary procedure of *prosopopoieia* (i.e., the construction of a speech in character). This portrayal of Paul is consistent with his letter writing, as I have described above. In each epicheireme below, notice how the conclusions combine elements from respective premises. The last two conclusions are exhortative in nature.

*PREMISE A*: “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time,

*Proof A by particular elaboration*: 19 *serving* the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; 20 how I did not shrink from *declaring* to you anything that was profitable, and *teaching* you publicly and from house to house, 21 solemnly *testifying* to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

*PREMISE B*: 22 “And now, behold, [kai nun idou] bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

*Proof of B*: 24 “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

*CONCLUSION*: 25 “And now, behold, [kai nun idou] I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom [A], will no longer see my face [B].

*PREMISE A:* 26 “Therefore [*dioti*], I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

*Proof A:* 27 “For [*gar*] I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

*PREMISE B:* 28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

*Proof B:* 29 “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

*CONCLUSION:* 31 “Therefore [*dio*] be on the alert [B], remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears [A].

*PREMISE A:* 32 “And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace,

*Proof A:* which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

*PREMISE B:* 33 “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes.

*Proof B:* 34 “You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my *own needs* and to the men who were with me.

*CONCLUSION:* 35 “In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak [B] and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” [A]

#### *4. Conclusion*

I have sought to describe the epicheireme argument form as depicted by Cicero and to analyze sections within Paul’s letters which appear to conform to this form. My analysis demonstrates that Paul resourcefully employed this deductive argument form to achieve his God-directed ends within the recommendations and variety encouraged by Cicero. This is significant for Pauline studies, since it is currently debated whether Paul knew and utilized ancient rhetorical theory in his letters. Furthermore, epicheirematic analysis has shown that often Paul’s conclusions are of the variety of necessary consequence in which he exhorts his readers to certain courses of action. More comparative work is needed studying the epicheireme form in other ancient writers. Thus far, I have located epicheirematic argumentation in such writers as ps-Isocrates, Plutarch, Seneca, Dio Chrysostom, and Heirocles (Long, 2002). This research suggests that Paul

was using methods of persuasion consistent with the moral philosophers of his day. It seems likely that Paul “destroyed arguments” through the construction of his own, resulting in the evaluation of his letters as “weighty and strong.”

## NOTES

[i] The translations of classical authors are from the LCL. All biblical quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.

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